

# THE

# PREEM

# ADVISOR

IN LAST MONTH'S INTERVIEW, **JAY ABRAHAM**, the marketing leader and sought-after consultant, mapped out the four steps to greatness. In part two, Jay explores another important concept – pre-eminence, which is about distinguishing business, marketing and advertising as the standard of what is possible. It's the concept at the center of his best-known work, *Getting Everything You Can Out of All You've Got*.



# INNEVENT

**P**REEMINENCE comes from the Latin word “praeeminer,” which means “rise above or excel.” It’s a type of high status or distinction for anyone considered to be the best at something. People with preeminence include the president, billionaires, and legendary athletes such as Michael Jordan, whose preeminence filled stadiums with raving fans and drove fear into the hearts of his opponents.

For insurance advisors, being preeminent is based on empathy. It’s knowing how clients think and feel, building a practice from that understanding, and then fulfilling that need like no one else.

Figuring out what people want and need is always the hard part. It’s easy to imagine devoting many hours and dollars researching the market, surveying prospective buyers, yada, yada, yada. But Jay says you don’t need to do that. In fact, he argues that you can take the same time, effort and money that you are already spending and simply tweak what you’re doing for enormous gain.

Great, you say, how do you figure out what the magic tweak is? That’s the process that Jay talks about in this interview with *InsuranceNewsNet* Publisher Paul Feldman.

**FELDMAN:** We have talked about the four steps to greatness but I also wanted to discuss preeminence, which has always been a key concept of yours. How does that concept apply to people and their business?

**ABRAHAM:** The strategy of preeminence is a powerful yet simple strategy that can transform your business or career. It draws people to work with you instead of your competitors.

It gives you uncanny insight into what people want and why they act and react the way they do. It turns clients into friends for life. It strengthens your passion and connection with everyone in your life, inside and outside of business.

Preeminence is based on one thing – empathy – but I don’t believe one size of preeminence fits all. It’s a dynamic concept that has to be translated to the role you are going to play in the market.

You can be a preeminent ice cream vendor because you make a wonderful process out of stopping for 10 minutes for a beleaguered adult who is stressed out of his gourd. You acknowledge the person and you make that moment regenerative and nostalgic. You’ve got to understand what role you are playing.

So, I am not at all suggesting that it’s the same answer for everybody. But there is an answer for everybody. There are many examples of mediocre companies catapulting themselves to positions of preeminence by analyzing what it takes relative to their market niche.

**FELDMAN:** Can you give us an example of that?

**ABRAHAM:** We had a client that was a very large furniture store generating \$40 million in business.

We saw that they were spending a couple of hundred thousand dollars a month in full-page ads in their newspaper on Sunday. Those ads would drive a finite number of leads into their store.

We wanted to find the easiest first step for the business to make a difference. So, that wasn’t going to be changing the ad, although we could have done that. It was changing the dynamic that occurred when people walked into the store.

The normal dynamic people are used to is, “Hello, can I help you? Is there something you want?” And most people say no and then there’s disengagement and the power is lost, correct?

**FELDMAN:** Sure. That is a typical experience in most stores.

## → FURTHER READING

Get the full scoop and read **part 1** of the Jay Abraham interview featured in the March issue of *InsuranceNewsNet Magazine* at

[www.bitly.com/INNMO313\\_Abraham](http://www.bitly.com/INNMO313_Abraham)



**ABRAHAM:** We tested 33 different ways of greeting people in the store. We used the same lead flow, same person and the same time so there was no real change other than what they said. We didn't do anything to their business model that might have been intimidating to the business.

The winning greeting tripled the number of buyers from the people who went into the store. So, of the 2,000 visitors a month, instead of closing 150, they closed 450, three times more. This by doing nothing different other than changing what was said in the beginning of the relationship.

But that's not even the biggest impact. The average sale went up. And that's not even the biggest impact. People kept coming back. That's not even the biggest impact. People coming back told other people and it's on and on. And it was only the first thing we changed because we wanted to be nonthreatening to the business.

**FELDMAN:** That's amazing example of big impact occurring from a small change. But I have to ask: What was the winning greeting?

**ABRAHAM:** The winning phrase was this: "And what ad brought you into the store today?"

Now, we didn't know this would work, which is why we tested many greetings. I come from a school that understands variability, where we find the different ways to do the same thing to discover the one that will out produce others by as much as 21 times. That different method will take the same time and effort with the same interaction and capital and leverage it for as much as 21 times better result. But then it gets mind-blowing because that's true of almost every one of the 20 or 30 impact points with customers and clients.

There are so many ways that you can take the same time, effort, money and multiply and re-multiply the yield. The opportunity is fixed – what you do with it is variable.

**FELDMAN:** Do you have any idea why that greeting worked better than the others?

**ABRAHAM:** We realized that it put control of the selling situation in the hands of the salesperson. The visitor is going to answer, "Well, I'm here for a French bedroom suite." Then the salesperson says, "Oh, is this replacing another one? Do

same full page for an ad but realized that some of them had five times the impact of another while others actually had a negative impact. So, I learned testing and variability.

So once we had that process working, we moved to their advertisements and begun testing new headlines. The headline is really 80 percent of the ad. It can double, triple, quadruple, up to 21 times the effectiveness. Then we tested the description of the furniture.

Each one of these tests multiplied the yield. We didn't spend another dime on advertising or on the furniture store. Didn't spend another minute embracing them at the door but we changed the dynamics. In that case, there were about 10 different leverageable dynamics.

**FELDMAN:** You are well known for the work you have done when it comes to leads and marketing. What is the one thing every one of our readers should know?

**ABRAHAM:** I used to be in the lead generation business – I've done so many things in my life. It was 30 years ago and to this day most people still don't understand. A lead is not a lead. There is a different quality of leads, different convertibility, leads that turn

into different categories or types of business, leads that produce different kinds of referrals and so on.

Most marketing people and business owners think tactically when it comes to leads, but in order to grow exponentially, you must think strategically. I have found that when it comes to lead generation and marketing you need to have multiple support columns like the Parthenon in Athens. I call this the Parthenon model, because it is built around several pillars of activity. It is majestic, strong, stable, sustaining and robust.

Unfortunately most businesses have one primary column for lead generation and marketing that leads to 90 to 100

## Four Steps to Greatness



"There are **four reasons** that few if any perform even remotely close to greatness. When you realize how to operate in that rarefied strata of greatness, the impact, the performance, the results, the connection, the relevancy that emanate from it is asymmetric. It's geometric."

you have French furniture in the rest of your home? Is it a condo? Are you moving in?" And then it's an advisory role. That ties to being a trusted advisor.

**FELDMAN:** That shows the power of testing, because you can stumble on the right answer and figure out the reason later. What else did you do with this client?

**ABRAHAM:** First, I should tell you about how my life changed in 1960 when I read *Reality in Advertising*, a book written by the advertising legend Rosser Reeves in which he did all these analyses of ads and commercials. He saw that the community had the same 60 seconds or the

# POWER PARTHENON



When it comes to lead generation and marketing, you need to have multiple support columns like the Parthenon in Athens. This is the Parthenon model, built on several pillars of activity to be majestic, strong, stable, sustaining and robust.

percent of their business. I call this the “diving board” which can only lead to gradual business growth.

If you can move your business from the diving board model to the Parthenon model, you will no longer be dependent on that one primary activity. But that one activity will actually improve as all the other activities will reach out and impact that one activity.

**FELDMAN:** How do you help clients do things differently? Even though they approached you, I would think there is still a reluctance to do things differently.

**ABRAHAM:** The first thing is they have to see how much more is possible. They’ve got to be able to see objectively without being embarrassed or self-conscious about what they are doing now

versus what they could be doing differently. And that requires them to sort of travel a little or a lot outside their own world and see what’s different.

**FELDMAN:** How do you help people see that path?

**ABRAHAM:** I say, let’s look at your perspective – what’s your philosophy on this? That’s the first question: What’s your ideology? And then the second thing is: Why? The third is: How are you acting on it? What are you doing every day? How are you using your time? How are you using your opportunities? What is the driving force? What are alternative ways to do these things?

**FELDMAN:** You made the point that the alternative ways of doing things don’t

have to cost more money, time or effort. How do you get that point across?

**ABRAHAM:** Well, I can use for an example a health/exercise regimen that’s very popular now – the *P90X*.

Everyone basically comes up with a particular exercise regimen. You’re going to be a weightlifter or a runner or do yoga or whatever. And this guy did research and found out that’s good, but if you break it up and you do different workouts every day, your muscles don’t get lazy. You can just multiply the outcome for the same or less effort and it has more sustainability.

But it can’t happen until you question, in a constructive way, how you are using the elements of your situation. First, you’ve got to break down forensically and question what you are doing.



do that. I've got none of the muscle anymore but I was happy because I had done it. Then he makes me do 12 push-ups and three sit-ups. I used to be able to do 800 push-ups. He doesn't say, "Jay, do 800 push-ups."

We tell people, "Don't just jump in and do something." Get a context of all that's possible so you can get excited. And that's the stimulus and the carrot that will drive you on. But first, find the easiest, simple change that will require no additional effort.

**FELDMAN:** You're talking about vision a little bit there. And something we talked about last time was getting a vision of what greatness looks like – the first step to greatness. It seems like some people have a very specific picture, like making \$2 million a year and having a 10-person agency in two years. If people are envisioning something like that, is that what you mean or might that be limiting?

**ABRAHAM:** There are three implications of what you said. When somebody says something like that to me, I ask, "Why?"

## Nothing happens unless you have a keen it pragmatically **in a way that reinforces**

**FELDMAN:** What do you mean by breaking it down forensically?

**ABRAHAM:** It requires critical thinking, which most people don't do. It requires thinking about every time you have an interaction or just a meeting, discussion, observation with anyone who has a piece of the puzzle that you don't. It is being able to take a moment of reflection and say, "Wow, what is it about that person and that interaction that was special?"

I'm not talking merely in the context of your profession. If I go to McDonald's and have an extraordinary experience, the first thing that I do is stop in mid-stream and think: What did that young woman or man do that was so engaging that I felt special? That they made me

feel that they were personally making this meal something wonderful for me or my family? Or they were personally taking care of it?

**FELDMAN:** One of the messages I got from what you have been saying is that it's important to have small successes, learn from them and move onto the next one. Is that right?

**ABRAHAM:** Yes. I had my neck operated on about two years ago. And I used to be just an animal. I had a 44-inch chest and a 28-inch waist and I could do – I'm not saying to be a braggart – but I could do 400 dips at a time. Now I'm in physical therapy and the therapist asks me to do 10 slow push-ups and he makes me feel proud that I can

And they will say, "Well, because my average person produces \$100,000 of profit for me and I want to make \$1 million, so I need 10." And I say, "OK, but what if you could get your average person to produce \$300,000 and generate five referrals each a month and you didn't have to do have all the overhead?" So the first question is why.

Second is: Why are you accepting your current standard as being the fullest potential possible?

Third is when you start shifting their focus to this greatness or preeminence and being value-based. Everyone says, "Well, we give great value." But it's nowhere even remotely close to what it's like to be operating in a preeminent role.

Once you infuse your organization with this sense that they are the most trusted advisor for life for not just everybody they sell to but everybody they interact with, it fuses their being with a whole heightened sense of purpose and a whole different distinction.

Then you grow people who have to maximize because they are on a crusade to add value. They know that your organization protects, advises and contributes so much on a higher level to the prospective client that it's a disservice to that client to allow your competitor to sell to them. It's not because you hate the competitor but because you guys are so much more heightened in what you do for clients. Then you grow faster because everyone is performing at optimum.

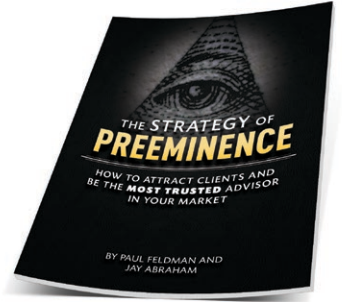
It doesn't happen instantly. It's not like the book *The Secret* where you think and you utter some kind of a meditative thing and everything just manifests itself. Nothing happens unless you have a keen understanding of the factors and you do it pragmatically in a way that reinforces your belief in yourself and the process.

# → GET THIS

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As a special gift to InsuranceNewsNet readers, we have created an **exclusive 36-page report** that could transform and transcend your business to new heights. Download it for free today!

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agencies? Can I really stay in the game long enough to retire with security?

He says when you realize how much more is possible, you will shift the question. It will no longer be: Am I worthy of this goal? It will become: Is the goal worthy of me? Because you can raise your game many times. I've seen people

Look up in Webster's the definition of a customer. It's trite. It's someone who buys a commodity or a service. When you refer to them as a customer, it means you are not treating them as anything more than that and you have accepted that you are nothing more than a commodity.

## understanding of the factors and you do **your belief in yourself** and the process.

But, that stated, why only 10 employees when you can have 20? Most people suspend such a low ceiling of aspiration and performance on themselves because they don't realize how much is possible.

**FELDMAN:** How can people realize what is possible and then act on it?

**ABRAHAM:** Here's a great quote from Bob Proctor, a coach and speaker. He said, "Most people in business struggle in life with the wrong non-verbalized question." They are tormented with the question: Am I worthy of this? Can I really grow from two salespeople to 10 in four years? Can I really grow my income in this commoditized, ultracompetitive market? Can I really compete against these bigger

redouble and double again their results once they shifted their focus from mediocrity to preeminence.

It starts with the commitment to yourself that you are not going to accept a fraction of what life has to give you and what you have to contribute to it.

**FELDMAN:** How does being preeminent transform a business – and a life for that matter?

**ABRAHAM:** When you are preeminent, you think of your role as being the benefactor, the multiplier, the creator of value for your client. The reason it's about the client is if you call them a customer, then you've already submitted to the world of marginalization and commoditization.

If you call them a client and you see your role as their most trusted advisor for life and you really understand not just abstractly but in a granular way what executing that role looks like, you will start treating them always as a client. When you look up the definition of client, it is someone who was under the care, the protection, the well-being of the market.

Now, am I saying that everybody is going to do it? Of course not. I'm saying the ones who do will inherit the world. They distinguish themselves. They are not price-oriented because they are preeminent. They are seen as the greatest, most trusted source to whom their clients want to turn. [in](#)