



MARKETING MINUTE

Business Lessons from *Mary Poppins* and *Secretariat*!



JEFF PINYOT

Jeff Pinyot, President of ECO Parking Lights/ECO Lighting Solutions. Contact him at Jspinyot@ecoparkinglights.com or (317) 501-2892.

“

The character Mary Poppins was much like Walt Disney himself.

”

It was family night. Ruth figured that we all needed to be together last Friday night, so she scheduled us all to go see *Mary Poppins* at a local church. Christopher had guard duty weekend and had to get up super early on Saturday but he went anyway, begrudgingly.

JP wouldn't leave Purdue. He was busy knocking on doors ahead of election day as part of his internship. Caroline came from Anderson University and sat there expressionless. Justin, my 6'3" sophomore in high school went because he would never upset his mother. I went because I am contractually obligated to go.

I grew up with musicals. My mother and sisters would play Barbra Streisand musicals from *Funny Girl* to *A Star is Born*. They recited lines from the *Music Man* to *Fiddler on the Roof*. Fill in this line. "You got T_____ My Friend!" (hint: Right here in River City). Sancho Panza is Don Quixote's rounded donkey riding Squire from the musical, *Man of La Mancha*. Sancho Panza was a humorous and witty realist that entered and retreated from his master's fantasy world. In other words, a good business partner! Dave Packard is my Sancho Panza.

Mary Poppins is a delightful character.

Walt Disney first discovered *Mary Poppins* one evening when he was checking on his daughters at bedtime. He found them giggling under the covers while reading the novel by P.L. Travers about an umbrella-toting nanny called Mary. He vowed to his girls that he would make a movie of *Mary Poppins*. Some 20 years later, and two centuries of negotiation with the author, his persistence paid off and he created the blockbuster, *Mary Poppins*.

The character *Mary Poppins* was much like Walt Disney himself. Her **Passion** for her work, even forgoing pay for the sheer pleasure of her vocation; **Persistence** in her vision of pursuing happiness; her **Understanding** of time and mutual benefits; and finally, her ability to gain **Trust**, a trait earned, not freely given, characterized both *Mary Poppins* and Walt Disney to a "T." I didn't complain about missing the Pitt vs Virginia game on ESPN2. I did lower the brightness on my iPhone and caught some of the game during the play. But I also found the game easy to turn off so that I could

continue to enjoy the musical and learn some good business lessons from *Mary Poppins*.

After returning home from *Mary Poppins* and watching the last of the game (We won of course... Hail to Pitt!), I decided to turn on Netflix and watch the movie *Secretariat*. I recalled my twin brother Steve say that the movie was one of his all-time favorites. I also recalled that our accountant, who raises horses, told me once that the jockey who rode *Secretariat* in the movie is a friend who works with him and his horses to this day. With *Mary Poppins* still on my mind, I was thrilled to watch the story of *Secretariat* develop across my screen... a familiar story of **Passion, Persistence, Understanding, and Trust**, now no longer fiction, but real life.

Penny Chenery, the owner of Big Red, later called *Secretariat*, was faced with a huge estate-tax bill upon the death of her father. Against the family wishes, Penny risked it all on *Secretariat*. Rejecting a generous offer to buy her unproven horse for an amount greater than the tax burden, Penny showed the same deeply rooted characteristics of *Mary Poppins*, Sancho Panza, Walt Disney, and many successful business leaders.

You know how the story ends. The first Triple Crown winner in 25 years, *Secretariat* continues to hold the Kentucky Derby, the Preakness, and the Belmont course records to this day. His 31-Length victory at Belmont will never be repeated. The first non-human to be included in the 50 Greatest Athletes of the Century by ESPN, the horse itself showed the same characteristics of a champion.

Big Red had a **Passion** for racing. Almost always coming from the back, he **Persisted** until victory. He **Understood** how to win, and his **Trust** of Penny the owner, his trainer, and his jockey resulted in success likely never to be repeated. Upon his death, it was discovered that his 21-pound heart was double the size of a normal thoroughbred's heart.

So, if you have the **Heart of a Champion**, consider developing these traits for Triple Crown success in your business!

