

Class Starters & Enders

Making the Most of Instructional Time Five Minute Lessons

Class Starters and Enders help utilize the last minutes of class when a lesson ends but there is not enough time to start another, or for an interest approach at the beginning of class. Mini-lessons correlate to GPS in the programs areas below.

A Serendipitous Discovery

Program Areas: Business and Marketing

Concepts: Salesmanship- Serendipity (ser-uhn-dip-i-tee) - Branding

Instructions: Read the material and make notes of important points, answer the questions, and be ready to discuss this topic.

Ed Cox of San Francisco was an aluminum pot salesman. For years he had poor sales. Cox had trouble selling his pots because customers complained about food sticking to the pans. As any business person would, he wanted to make money and be remembered. To increase sales, he had to find a solution to the food sticking problem to make customers fully satisfied with his pans.

In 1917 Cox invented a pre-soaped pad to go along with his pots. He soaked steel wool pads in detergent in his kitchen and started giving his customers a free soap pad when he demonstrated his pots. He hoped that these pads would help increase his sales. Plus, customers would remember him since the soap pads were one-of-a-kind. It would be his brand. Branding is important in business so that customers remember and purchase your product above all others. His wife named the soap pads "Save Our Saucepans" or S.O.S.



Cox soon found that he had serendipitously discovered a hot product—his soap pads. The soap pads sold much better than his pots. Cox became highly successful, but in a totally unexpected way—a truly serendipitous discovery.

It is commonly believed that an error was made in the name's punctuation. However, this spelling was chosen by design. Cox tried to use his wife's clever trademark "S.O.S.", but there was trouble. S.O.S. is the famous Morse Code distress signal and could not be trademarked. Avoiding conflict, he removed the last period and registered it with the United States Patent and Trademark Office.

In a stroke of luck, a box of S.O.S pads appeared in photos of a U.S. demonstration kitchen in Moscow during a U.S. Trade and Cultural Fair. U.S. Vice President Nixon and Soviet Premier Khrushchev appeared in some of the photographs during the now famous Kitchen Debate. The photos of the kitchen with an S.O.S box on the counter made S.O.S soap pads famous world-wide.

Review

1. What are soap pads made of?
2. Why did Cox invent soap pads?
3. What does the brand S.O.S stand for?
4. Why is 'branding' a product important?
5. Why is it important to patent inventions?
6. What does the term serendipitous mean?
7. How does the story of S.O.S Pads relate to business and marketing?
8. Why was it necessary for Cox to change to original name "S.O.S. Pads"?
9. Why was Cox's great success selling soap pads described as serendipity?
10. Explain the value of having your product appear in new papers world-wide with someone famous.

Language Connection

- How many syllables does serendipity contain?
- List two words that have as many or more syllables as serendipity.

Critical Thinking

Since the name S.O.S. was already used by Morse Code, what is another brand name the Cox could have used for his soap pads? Be original and creative.

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