

Sexy Ferrari may be temperamental but it's hot

You can tell a lot about a man by his shoes, his wife and his car, according to Danny DeVito in one of those bits of movie dialogue that keep coming to mind at odd moments.

Tony, my new brother-in-law, pretty much had to write off the shoes when he proposed to my wife's sister. You probably don't want to look at a doctor's shoes when he works night shift in an emergency room anyway, which was what Tony was doing when he met Anita, who drives an ambulance as a paramedic.

THIS MADE the car part a little tough, too. Anita has been tough to impress with cars ever since she topped 117 mph in a four-wheel-

drive Dodge EMS unit, including the stretcher and oxygen bottles.

Which is why Tony rented a Ferrari for the wedding.

As it turned out, the rental business in 308 Ferraris is a little slow for Hertz, but Tony found a guy who ran a one-car lease business out of his garage, charging rates in the neighborhood of renting a light airplane.

THE CHECKOUT in the Ferrari, in fact, was just short of the preflight for a Grumman Gulfstream, including a lecture on the rows of switches and finishing with a demonstration of the door handles. But by the time he pulled out of the driveway, Tony was in car heaven. At least until he stopped for a cup of



auto talk
Dan McCosh

coffee and shut off the engine.

"Were you listening?" he said to Anita.

"What did you say?" Anita said.

"About the doors," Tony said, poking at the armrest with his elbow. "How do you get the doors open?"

"What doors?"

"LET'S BE cool about this," Tony said, noting a small crowd was gathering to look at the car. "I'll run the

window down, and you kind of reach out and get the handle on the outside. But be cool." That was when the battery went dead and along with it the electric windows.

Now the windows began to steam up, and it seemed like there was a solid row of strangers knees out there. Tony thought fast.

"I'll push the roof open, and then you stand up and lean over the side and open the door. But be cool."

Which was what Anita did. As soon as she could stop laughing.

The crowd seemed even bigger when the tow truck arrived to jumpstart the battery. "OK," says the tow-truck guy. "Where's the battery?"

"BATTERY?" TONY says, looking at the row of strangers faces, thinking that nobody has any sympathy for you when you're driving a Ferrari. "What battery?"

Finding the battery turned out to be something like customs doing a drug search, but it eventually was located up front underneath the spare tire. By then the crowd was beginning to thin out.

A few hours later the battery was replaced and Tony, Anita and the

Ferrari were back on the road, heading for the wedding. A Porsche was coming up in the rear-view mirror and Tony was relaxed again, thinking, "That guy's only driving a Porsche, and I'm driving a Ferrari." Then again, he remembered, that guy probably owns the Porsche.

BY THEN Anita had more or less recovered her composure. Suddenly, she realized they were in a red Ferrari tooling along at half the cruising speed of the EMS unit.

"Hey," she said, breaking Tony's reverie. "Let's see what this thing will do."

And so they did.

Dan McCosh is the author and editor of *Popular Science*.

Wearing mental blinders will kill a small business

All of us have a tendency to become locked into standard ways of doing things. This locked-in approach is the result of finding a comfort zone in which to conduct our daily lives.

As a result, change can come to represent a threat that individuals avoid. Instead of viewing change as a positive or necessary step toward growth, people prefer to maintain the status quo no matter the consequences.

Business owners and managers who cling to the comfortable way of conducting business often do so long after it becomes outdated, inefficient, and detrimental to the future of the enterprise.

Regardless of the type of business, owners and managers will focus attention on whatever needs to be done immediately. This behavior is often a result of survival.

MOST WILL say they are open to and encourage change, but when faced with doing so, they find change threatens what they are doing today.

All too often we permit ourselves to be bound by real-world con-



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trains. Before we have a chance to anticipate what might be better or different, we quickly avoid new ideas based on real work concerns.

If you hear yourself constantly saying, "It won't work" or "That's not practical" or "We can't afford it" before you've had a chance to think a new idea through, then

you've developed a reactive rather than proactive philosophy toward your business.

All creative, progressive thinking that results in effective change starts with the "what-if" process. Asking yourself "what-if" questions is an ideal way to get your imagination started.

IT FORCES you to think beyond the immediate confinements of operating your business. The purpose of the "what-if" process is to force yourself to think differently.

If you question a situation that is an immediate concern to you or your business, the process won't be as effective.

To become skilled in the "what-if" creative thinking process, go away by yourself for an hour or so and write down "what-if" questions. Talk to yourself and record your answers on paper. Let your imagination go.

Look for new possibilities in any situation and refrain from apprais-

ing your answers. Be as free with yourself and your thinking as possible. By doing so, you will begin to remove many of the deeply ingrained and often inaccurate assumptions you have about yourself, your work and your business.

"What-if" thinking will help generate ideas that can later be realistically evaluated for future consideration.

Mary DiPaolo is the owner of *MarketTrends*, a Farmington Hills-based business consulting firm. She is also producer and host of the cable television series, "Chamber Perspectives."

Free classes will teach money facts

A free three-session financial training program begins Wednesday, Feb. 7. The sessions are 7-8:30 p.m. at the Troy Public Library, Big Room, east of I-75.

The first program is on investment. The second program (Wednesday, Feb. 14) is on paying for college. The third session (Wednesday, Feb. 21) is on retirement planning.

Reservations are required. This can be made by calling 524-3538.

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