

Visiting Catholic Executives (and Multimillionaires) Say:

Ethics Equal Profits

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Students who doubted that honest businessmen finish first got a new perspective April 12 in Assistant Professor Andrew Abela's senior marketing class, after a visit from two of Philadelphia's most successful Catholic businessmen.

Charles "Chuck" Piola and James "Jim" Longon, both self-admitted "millionaires with rosaries," addressed two questions Abela says come up time and again in his Marketing and Community course: "Can one succeed as an entrepreneur without compromising one's values? And is it possible to use marketing techniques such as cold calling honorably and effectively?"

Piola and Longon were in agreement: yes and yes. The two men — both members of Legatus, a nationwide association of Catholic CEOs — are in Washington to attend the National Catholic Prayer Breakfast on Friday, April 13. "Since they were in town, we thought it was a great opportunity for my students and for them," Abela said.

Piola, author with Jay Finegan of the book "Going in Cold," was named the King of Cold Calling by Inc. magazine. After a brief career as a teacher, he took a commission-only sales job, selling advertising door to door. Successful from the beginning, eventually he became a partner in NCO Financial Systems.



Catholic businessmen Charles Piola, left, and James Longon talk to a marketing class.



Chuck Piola shares tips on *Going in Cold*

"I love the Yogi Berra statement 'when you come to a fork in the road, take it.' Risk can be lot of fun," said Piola, veteran of approximately 15,000 cold calls. "Sales is always about helping the customer get what they want or need even when they don't know they need it."

Coming off an internship telemarketing for a supplemental insurance company, senior marketing major Whitney Dachelet asked, "How do you get to the person you need to? I would be so frustrated!" Answered Piola, "Go crazy. Think that, after all, you have nothing to lose and engage the person."

Longon readily admitted that sales wasn't his forte, but that finding the right people, treating them well and always being honest were keys to his success. Founder of a company that rents office suites and provides support personnel to businesses, Longon posed the question, "Can profits and ethics be in the same sentence? Yes. In fact, being ethical can make you more profitable," he said.

"My first boss set me up for life in business," Longon added. "He told me there were two kinds of people in the world, honest ones and dishonest ones. Once someone decides to become dishonest — cheat on taxes, pad the expense account — they start rationalizing. But to really succeed, you must lead. To lead you have to be trusted. Successful businessmen are well-respected."