

The first of the red-hot senior account consultants

By Trudy Kelly Forsythe

Good job, Bob – now burn in hell.

Investors Group in Saint John, New Brunswick, has found an unusual way to motivate its salespeople – an incentive program that includes walking on fire.

The program, called Further Faster For Fabulous Fun, was developed by Weir Consulting in Saint John. Says owner Lori Weir: “[Investors Group] rewards the top nine performers every quarter, and each event is planned to be more exciting than the last.”

The most recent event, in late January, was the second for Investors Group. Labelled Fire and Ice. Its highlights included a snow-sculpting competition and firewalking on a bed of coals approximately 3.6 metres long and between 400 and 650 degrees Celsius.

Roy Gould, an experienced firewalker joined Weir to help prepare the participants using a technique called “state management.” Participants are told to think of a time when they were at their most resourceful (find their “happy place”) and anchor it to a particular action: finding their way across the coals.

Brice Belyea, senior account consultant with investors Group, used an experience from 1990, when he was in Italy addressing the executives and sales leaders of several large corporations.

“Now that I’ve learned about anchoring,” he says, “I feel I can revisit the moment by taking a deep breath and making a tight fist while allowing my mind to take me to that podium in Italy. It actually gives me a rush of joy, which can change my state of mind as needed.”

Just before taking the first step into the hot coals, each participant was told to think of cool moss, “fire their anchor” and go. How did it feel? “I remember my first thought after walking through the fire was ‘Gee, it wasn’t as hot as I thought it would be,’” says senior account consultant Greg Russell.

“The firewalk was a real challenge of overcoming fear in a controlled manner,” says Belyea. “It felt good to have accomplished that.”