

Are you talking to the right people?

Having worked in an operational sales and client management role within the professional services sector for the last 5 years and prior to that as a consultant with many of the top law firms, I recently found myself asking why is selling into complex organisations so much more difficult now? Why do decisions take so much longer and why is it that opportunities that look incredibly positive seem to end as “no decision”? Or worse still, despite being led to believe you are the chosen supplier, a competitor comes from the left field and for some reason gets the decision to go their way?

Recognise this?

So, I dug a little deeper to understand the changes in how decisions are made and how sellers of professional services need to respond. I talked to buyers and sellers and this is what I discovered.

The seller's landscape has changed beyond recognition and though recession is, to all intents and purposes, in the rear view mirror, the way that buyers of professional services behave is unlikely to return to pre-recession times. Today's buyers of complex solutions:

- Have access to information – primarily through the internet – that only a few years ago they would have relied on suppliers to provide, so gaining access is more difficult
- Are in a much more complex network of stakeholders who have an influence over decisions
- Are more sophisticated and only want to spend time and talk to suppliers who can provide them with value, in the form of insights and other information they don't know
- Are increasingly sceptical and risk adverse
- Have to be more collaborative and they need to be able to gain the commitment and support of others to make decisions and get budget approved.

So what does this mean for sellers of professional services?

There are essentially 2 groups of people who make and influence decisions – the people who are collectively known as Mobilisers and those who are collectively known as Talkers

Mobilisers – they make it happen

These people are interested in continual improvement. They are interested in changes that will improve the business performance. They value suppliers for their insight and opinions. A conversation with a mobiliser is often lively and maybe challenging. They want evidence of success and will push back if something doesn't sound right and at first glance may appear anything but an advocate. They have the ability and are likely to want to initiate change and implement new ideas. They are well connected and have the ability to achieve agreement and gain commitment for change and decisions within their organisation

Talkers – they would like to make it happen but can't

These people are often well networked in an organisation and understand the business priorities. They will understand the need for change and for the actions that are required for business improvement and will often be very supportive of you and your solutions. However, they don't have the ability, influence or on occasions the motivation to drive change or implementation of new ideas. Conversations are pleasant and very positive and because they are often senior people it is easy to believe the decision will go your way.



But how often do you have a great relationship with someone senior who understands what you have to offer but somehow the decision is never made or your competitors win?

Not surprisingly great sellers gravitate towards the Mobilisers and get decisions to go their way.

It is apparent that to up your win rate, increasingly it is not only important what you talk about to clients but who you are talking to. Spending time learning about the Mobilisers in a client organisations is time well spent.

And finally you have **the Blockers**. These are people who are happy with the status quo and are not really interested in people who want to sell to them. They may even feel threatened if they think they may lose control or influence if the status quo was to change – even for the better.

So ask yourself three questions;

- Do you have access to and are you influencing the Mobilisers?
- Are you spending too much time selling to Talkers in the belief they can and will make a decision in your favour?
- Are your day to day contacts happy to live with the status quo and the familiarity around them?

If you want to learn more about the world of selling professional services into medium and large organisations and understand more about how to successfully navigate complex networks of stakeholders contact

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