

Successful Selling despite the Firewall

Successful Selling despite the Firewall:

How to Overcome the Biggest Obstacle between You and Your Customer by Marty Rolnick



This article is based on the wisdom I have gained in my more than twenty-five years of sales experience, primarily in the media centric world of advertising. I have experienced sales not only from inside the corporate world but also from smaller concerns, including even fledgling start-ups, and I have taken notes along the way. I'm thrilled to share with you my insights and to offer some practical solutions to help enhance the probability for your success.

Please note that there are three key themes that recur throughout this article: the importance of your honoring a process, the need for your patience, and the need for you to demonstrate empathy for your customer.

There are basically two types of sales communities. One is closed, where the buyers and sellers all know one another and where they spend most of their time competing for a larger share of the industry pie. The product is perceived as a commodity, and its value is primarily based on price. A growing trend in a closed sales community is the quest to create viable technical solutions—solutions that will essentially eliminate the salesperson.

The other sales situation, the open sales community, is more prevalent; it also presents the most daunting of challenges. Most of the efforts of an open sales community are directed toward seeking new business, in particular the perpetual search for “low hanging fruit.” In this community, 60 percent of a salesperson's success is just in getting the appointment. But that is a significant and challenging *just!* It is this open sales community that I am focusing on.

Today's innovative technologies, designed to make everyone more productive, have the unintended consequence of building a firewall between you and your customer. If you are clever enough to surmount the firewall and develop a strong relationship with your customer, you will be toasting your success.

For you to achieve maximum results, it is critical that you have the knowledge and resources available to help break through the firewall and secure that critical first meeting with your prospect. Getting that knowledge and those resources is a time-consuming endeavor. Because it has its own life cycle, or process, your success will demand patience.

A Disconnect between What a Sales Force Says It Wants and Its Ability to Achieve It

Every Christmas meant a special pot roast dinner for a particular young couple. The wife prepared a family heirloom recipe that had already spanned three generations. She would always cut off approximately 20 percent of the meat on one side before basting it in the pan and cooking it in the oven. One Christmas she decided to solve the mystery of this unusual tradition. Her mother didn't know the answer. Since her mother's mother was no longer living but her mother's sister was, the wife decided to call her aunt. When asked why precisely 20 percent of the roast was always cut off, the aunt responded in a matter-of-fact manner: “Our mother didn't have a pan large enough for the entire roast.”

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The foregoing story is a metaphor that describes many aspects of our culture, particularly those aspects related to selling. Old traditions live on, never to be questioned. Some are positive, such as paid sick days, holidays, and personal days. Others hang on to the detriment of the sales force. Many times there is a sizable gap between what a sales force says it wants to accomplish and its ability to effectively achieve it due to its rigid organizational design and infrastructure.

It's 2007, and our world is rapidly changing. Even in our incredibly competitive global economy, where only the most leading-edge and adaptable companies survive, there are still many archaic attitudes and corporate behaviors that can prevent a sales force from achieving the success it is seeking. Such attitudes and behaviors unfortunately underlie many a sales force's attempt to short-circuit the all-important and inescapable sales process; ironically, the very pressure to deliver immediate revenues can often prevent the attainment of the desired results. Stress is created in this type of environment, stress that will cause salespeople to circumvent a proven path to success, stress that ultimately will result in disappointing returns and professional discouragement.

Selling Is Both a Science and an Art



A friend of mine once told me that between the conception of a good idea and its reality lies a big shadow. Actualizing the idea involves the shrinking of that shadow. The same can be said of the sales process.

Selling is both a science and an art, with no silver bullet. It is a recipe for a great meal (science), and yet the *pièce de résistance* might be a dash of a special spice (art). Deciding which action to take during the process is different in every situation and may well depend on instinct. Your wisdom and your ability to “dance” with your customer is critical toward your eliminating the shadow. Your customer will likely need more information to make a decision, and a talented salesperson (you?) will figure out what that information is. Earning business is not a single act; it is the process of shrinking the shadow.

The Difference between New Business and Business Development

The future of great business lies in man's comprehension of the principle of Balance ... and his determination to work with it instead of against it.... [The] go-getter salesman who selfishly thinks that the sale he makes is the only thing that counts is not giving equally for what he takes.

---Dr. Walter Russell

The Man Who Tapped the Secrets of the Universe, by Glen Clark, 1999

There are two ways for a company to grow its sales revenue: You can solicit new business, or you can build relationships through business development. You can build relationships either with new clients or with existing clients (with the goal of increasing their investment in what you have to offer).

Soliciting new business is about finding clients for existing inventory or services, and it is usually a more short-term activity. Business development, on the other hand, demands a longer investment of time. It is more about building a relationship, about providing a viable solution for your client, and about using your assets to execute that solution. There is a subtle difference of philosophy here: Soliciting new business expresses the belief that your customer exists for you to make a sale to him or her. In contrast, business development expresses the belief that you are

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relevant only when you sustain your customer. When you can be of service, you will earn your customer's business. A business development professional must position him or herself from square one as truly interested in a partnership that will benefit the customer and then be willing to "walk the talk" throughout the whole sales process.

In the game of business, many companies are mediocre actors who pretend to represent the customer's best interests. Customers, however, are rarely fooled; they can usually see the clear reflection of dollar signs in the salesperson's eyes. Understandably, there is a fine and precarious line between the need to monetize the low hanging fruit in the short term, on the one hand, and maintaining sufficient patience to stay the course with business development efforts (and reap the well-earned benefits for having done so), on the other hand. Therefore, to prevent any potential breach of its integrity, a winning company will have a distinct team of sales specialists and business development experts.

Like two circles that overlap, there often might be a narrow commonality of shared results between the endeavors of the new-business team and the business development team. Additionally, it is reasonable to expect that the journey toward business development might also discover a windfall of new business.

Attraction versus Manipulation

"If you build it they will come!" There has been a subtle shift in the sales arena: The conventional attitude of sales manipulation is being transformed to the contemporary philosophy of attraction! Yesterday you were competing for a share of the pie; today you can be helping the pie to grow.

Once you recognize that the customer is in control, you should foster a communication that will convince that customer to be receptive to you and your company. Ideally, your company should invest some of its "cost of sales" resources to help in this endeavor. The more your company can create for itself a positive perception as a brand, the more welcoming your customer will be toward you when you initiate contact. Any efforts your company can do to help market its sales force will be rewarded—anything from advertisements in trade publications and Web sites to frequent, relevant, and subtle "professional" email blasts to an ongoing database of targeted prospects and clients.

Gradualness and the Importance of the Sales Process

Many times, the expectation of considerable revenue can overwhelm the salesperson. Sometimes it helps if you drop back and lower your sights a bit, to gain confidence with a feeling of ease. You can gain that confidence-with-ease feeling, relieving the stress of striving for the expected revenue, by embracing gradualness with patience, by following the sales process.

The principle of the sales process is about taking action steps in a proper sequence. The more you focus your attention on the steps in the process, the more likely it is that desired results will follow. A visionary sales team leader who understands this will break down the sales process for his or her team into smaller steps, focus on those steps as subsidiary goals, and provide consistent feedback toward the achievement of those goals. The desired result at the end, the final sale, will simply be a by-product of sustained integrity throughout the sales process. Salespeople respond more favorably when they have a roadmap (there's that recipe that makes selling a science

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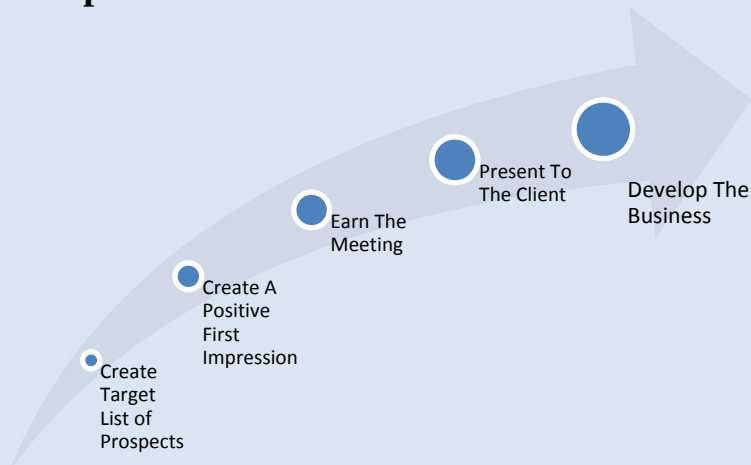
as well as an art) and are given guidance throughout their performance rather than a results-only evaluation at the end.

The successful sales team will:

- Understand the reality of the firewall and appreciate the challenges for reaching the customer
- Set up checkpoints in the process and focus on achieving those checkpoints, understanding that striving for excellence in the process will make results happen
- Provide the necessary support tools
- Reinforce salespeople in public, criticize them in private

Once you have attained that confidence-with-ease feeling simply by following the sales process step by step, you will be able to focus on the larger goals. The principle of gradualness is fundamental to the process. Each success throughout the process begets a new success.

The Steps of the Sales Process



There are five steps in the sales process:

1. Create a target list of prospects.
2. Create a positive first impression.
3. Earn the meeting.
4. Present to the client.
5. Develop the business.

Step 1. Create a Target List of Prospects

The sales process begins with the *sales funnel*, which is filled with suspects, prospects, and qualified leads. Opportunity fills the top of the funnel with suspects, and out of the bottom, after encountering the proposed solutions in the funnel's neck, comes the reality of customers.



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¹So what do I mean, then, by suspects, prospects, and qualified leads?

A **suspect** is someone you deem as a potential customer, based on very limited information. Suspects are the yet-to-be-qualified opportunities. Think of the top of the funnel as the "catch-all" level, which contains anybody who you think might ever consider buying what you're selling.

A **prospect** is someone you determine has a greater probability of becoming a customer, based on information you have acquired through some up-front investigation. Prospects are the people who you have selected to focus your time and energy on to earn an appointment. The more thorough you are with your up-front investigation, the higher your potential batting average (conversion rate) will be after each appointment.

A prospect can be considered a **qualified lead** only after you have first contacted him or her (by email or phone) and then set up a meeting. The actual selling part of the sales funnel should happen only after someone has first been determined to be a qualified lead.

Selling to *anyone* who isn't a qualified lead is a waste of time! You don't sell to suspects. Instead, you determine if they are a prospect. You don't sell to prospects either, but rather you turn them into qualified leads (which you do in steps 2 and 3 of the sales process). You *do* sell to qualified leads, because these are the people who will buy from you. It is critical that you know it is still a numbers game! The more qualified leads you can get out of the bottom of the funnel, the greater your chance for success.

Can one customer or account be transformed from suspect to qualified lead in a single meeting or phone call? Yes, and this is the rule for the inside salesperson; when customers come into your business in need of what you're selling, they have essentially prequalified themselves, to a certain extent. For the outside salesperson, however, the suspect-to-qualified-lead transformation in a single meeting or call is a very rare exception. Nothing is likely to happen until you take some action.

So, how should you go about filling the top level of the sales funnel?

First, of course, you need to create a list of suspects—that is, all the possible target accounts you believe might be potential customers. Remember, this is a numbers game, and it is in your interest to make this list as large as possible, because it will need considerable trimming.

Your next task is to confirm your suspicions about these suspects by doing some nominal research. At the very least, you should explore each suspect's Web site. Additionally, depending on your instincts, it might make sense for you to visit a suspect's industry site. Cross off the suspects and refresh the list of your prospects. Add the phone number, Web site URL, and address info into a contact management software database. I prefer ACT! (from Sage Software), which is compatible with my Microsoft Outlook, but many people are comfortable with only Outlook.

You have now created a viable list of prospects, each with initial contact information. You should also include (and this is critical) an administrative person for each prospect, and that name should go into your database. Try to identify the highest-ranking person in the company as well as his or her assistant. Sometimes it might make sense to call the assistant to the CEO or to the president and ask him or her to direct you to the appropriate person (including the appropriate person's assistant). Ask for your high-ranking contact's email address as well as for approval to include him or her in the initial email correspondence. I've discovered it most effective in my email introduction to copy both the high-ranking assistant as well as the assistant to my prospect.

¹ I would like to acknowledge Dominic Rubino for use of his "sales funnel and his well articulated insight in defining suspects, prospects and qualified leads.

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I also might call the prospect's assistant and give him or her a heads up that I will be sending an introduction email requesting a meeting and will then follow up with a phone call. This will enable me to create a positive first impression during my initial attempt to get on my prospect's radar screen, which is step 2 of the sales process.

Step 2. Create a Positive First Impression



Now that you have a viable list of prospects, annotated with administrative contacts, you are ready to expose each prospect for the first time to your name—to get on the prospect's radar screen. The way you go about doing this is critical. In step 2, you create a positive first impression (as you know, no one is ever given a second chance to do this), you lead with some sizzle in your initial contact to capture your prospect's imagination, and you distinguish yourself above the clutter and your competition.

According to conventional wisdom, your best chance for developing a fruitful business relationship with your prospect is for you to meet with him or her in person. Nowadays, however, that conventional wisdom applies only to the ideal world. Your challenge is that there are so many more sellers than there are buyers—all of them trying to get through to the same prospects. Also, in an age where these prospects are being asked to do so much more work in less time, most of them feel they can't finish their internal work, let alone schedule meetings with new people who want to earn their business.

Our technology-filled world enables us to be more productive and professional. Unfortunately, technology has also raised the firewall barrier, preventing you from developing that all-important personal relationship with your prospects, many of whom are hunkered down at their desks, protected by caller ID, voice mail, network servers, and personal gatekeepers. Your prospects get to decide whom they want to speak to and when they want to speak with them. So how do you break through the firewall, create the important first impression, earn the meeting, and develop a relationship that will result in increased revenue and new business?

You certainly don't do it by calling your prospect out of the blue. The days of traditional cold calling as we have known it are over! It is the rare exception where a salesperson can call a prospect cold, reach him or her with the first couple of efforts, and successfully secure the initial meeting let alone sell something. Today, it usually takes several positive and frequent communications to warm up your future customer before you can set up that first face-to-face encounter. This is a game in which a number of obstacles have been set up to filter out you and your competition. The salesperson who remains patient while maintaining a great attitude will eventually break through the firewall and be in a favorable position to move forward. In this game, patience is a virtue. The turtle will usually beat the hare.

All communications, particularly the very first one (where you create your first impression), can effectively surmount the firewall with appropriately framed, sustentative, and compelling emails. These emails should be well constructed and should contain a warm, personalized introduction followed by the purpose of the communication and a request for a call to action. Your follow-up should proceed precisely as you had communicated in the email. If your prospect has an assistant, you should call him or her and ask to be connected. Ask to be put into voice mail whenever your prospect is unavailable. Leave a relaxed and enthusiastic message that is congruent to the preceding email while reiterating the purpose of your call.

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So how do you make that initial, first-impression contact compelling and enthusiastic? You should lead with the “sizzle” before you present the “steak,” or the substance of your value proposition. Only after your prospect has been sold on the sizzle and is open to learning more—that is, only after your prospect has become a qualified lead—will it be necessary for you to demonstrate the steak. In fact, the steak should wait for the actual closing, which is when you demonstrate your solution during step 4 of the sales process, presenting to the client. Again, patience is extremely important if you want to be successful.

Unfortunately, most salespeople try to lead with the steak first. How many times have you seen a salesperson validate his or her value proposition (the steak) by presenting proprietary and compelling research—all before the prospect is ready to be sold?

So what is this sizzle? There are actually two components to the sizzle, the emotional and the empathetic. The emotional component is important when you are making your first contacts with your prospect, making that all-important first impression. (The empathetic component of the sizzle is covered under step 3, earning the meeting.) In your initial contacts, you need to capture your prospect’s imagination with energetic and inspiring language that frames your basic idea like a teaser and that motivates your prospect to want more information. It is through your deft and patient handling of your initial contacts, peppered with teaser language to inspire your prospect’s curiosity, that you can distinguish yourself above your competition.

Good Voice Mail Technique



Let's talk about voice mail. You either love it or dread it, but it is a recognized part of our business lives that demands some rules to make your encounters with it more effective and efficient. Good voice-mail technique is a required business skill that is often lacking, so let's look at some simple rules.

When you are leaving a message, you have a very short window of opportunity to capture the attention of your target prospect. Remember, your goal is to have your prospect call you back, but unfortunately, a significant portion of all voice mails are deleted within the first 20 seconds. Because 75 percent of all business phone calls end up in voice mail, you need to plan your message with the same care that you give any other business communication. Do the following:

1. Greet the person by name. Include an element of warmth. (ex: "I hope all is well")
2. Keep your message short, but don't rush it. Tell your prospect in advance how short the message will be. (expresses respect and empathy for his/her time)
3. Immediately after your greeting and your announcement about how short the message will be, identify yourself and your company.
4. Talk about your prospect, not about yourself.
5. Use a nicely paced, professional, and courteous delivery.
6. Use exciting verbs that convey action. In other words, use emotional sizzle to entice the prospect to want to learn more.
7. Surprise your prospect with unusual combinations of words (more sizzle).
8. Leave a clear phone number, putting pauses between each section of the number. Before you begin, tell your prospect that you will repeat the number. Be sure to repeat it.
9. Invite your prospect to call you back.
10. Thank your prospect, using his or her name. I like to end my message with, "I hope you have a great day."

Examples:

Poor: "Bill, this is Marty, calling to follow up on that email I sent last week."

Typical: "Hello, Bill. This is Marty with MZR, calling to follow up on the email I sent last week."

Better: "Hello, Bill. I hope all is well. I'll keep this message short. (Pause) This is Marty Rolnick from MZR Consulting in Scarsdale."

Step 3. Earn the Meeting



It is very important that you frame and control the perceptions of your potential customer (who is now being transformed from a prospect into a qualified lead). It's not what you say, it's what your prospect hears. Ironically, you control what he or she "hears" by active, careful listening. By actively listening to what your prospect tells you about his or her needs, you are building mutual equity in the sales process: You are convincing your prospect that he or she has as much to gain from the process as you do. By building mutual equity, you are earning a face-to-face meeting.

Today, through the competent use of technology, it is not only possible but necessary to develop a positive perception prior to your first face-to-face meeting with your prospect and to lay a strong foundation for going forward with developing a continuing business relationship. You do this by building equity in the sales process and by demonstrating your respect and empathy for your prospect's reality. Try to walk in your prospect's shoes and understand his or her world. Your prospect will appreciate your effort.

The follow-up after your initial contacts is critical. Because of caller ID, it is usually best to make your follow-up phone calls through the switchboard or a restricted number—for example, one available through Skype or another VoIP (Voice over Internet Protocol) carrier. Be very careful about leaving too many email or voice-mail messages that are not spaced evenly over time. It is better to be perceived as pleasantly persistent rather than as selfish and aggressive. Remember, patience is a virtue.

All your messages, email or voice, should be positive, without any hint of frustration. Stay the course, and the eventual contact with your prospect will come to fruition. When you finally do get a response, use the same language that you have been using in your email or voice message. Ask to get on your prospect's calendar at a convenient time for a meeting.

During the follow-up contacts, you use the empathetic component of sizzle: the development of a positive attachment with your prospect. A prospect who likes you will actively look for reasons to do business with you.

Be prepared for some cancellations. It is normal for 30 percent of all meetings to be postponed and rescheduled. Your patience with these delays is all part of your building your prospect's equity in the sales process.

Step 4. Present to the Client



The great news is that, after completing step 3 of the sales process, you have succeeded in securing your first meeting with a qualified lead, whom we can now call your potential client. So now what can you do now to enhance your chances for success? In step 4, we explore the best ways to present at last your custom solution, your "steak" after you have provided the "sizzle."

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According to Jill Konrath*, “the biggest mistake sellers make is in thinking that a sales presentation is about them.” They erroneously believe that the more they can impress a prospective client with their capabilities, technology, high-level degrees, and comprehensive portfolio of services, the more likely it is that they’ll get the order. Nothing could be further from the truth. Your prospective client, who is always thinking “What’s in it for me”, would not have taken the time from an undoubtedly busy schedule if he or she didn’t already believe that you could do the job. Your presentation should be about the client and should demonstrate that you did your homework and that you can provide a custom solution (“big idea”) that is based on your knowledge of his or her business.

Here is what your prospective client is really looking for in the company you represent:

- Does this company really understand our business, goals and objectives, marketplace, and critical success factors and challenges?
- What would it be like working with this company for an extended period of time? How would it feel to be in a business relationship with them?
- What kind of impact would their solution have on our operation? What business problems can they solve? How can they help us achieve our desired future?
- If we decide to do business with them, what is the return on our investment? Do they bring value over and above their product or service offering? Do they offer knowledge, insights, and ideas that can help us solve the latent problems that we’re currently dealing with and take our business to the next level?

So how does all this affect your sales presentation? The following are seven tips I highly recommend you embrace to increase your batting average.

Tip 1. Do extensive research prior to any presentation. Make sure you know as much as you possibly can about your prospective client’s company before you make any presentation. Read articles in the business press or trade journals. Check the Internet. Review the company’s annual report and what they say about themselves on their Web site. Then stop and think: “How can my company make a difference in their business?” And really think this through in depth, because you’ll want to include this in your presentation.

Tip 2. Prepare your sales team thoroughly. It is much more effective if you make your presentation as a team—with at least two people rather than just you by yourself. And if this *is* a team presentation, make sure to prep all your presenters with your knowledge of the prospective client and with your goals and objectives for the presentation. Discuss with them any points that should be stressed (as well as any areas that should be avoided). Offer insights into the different people attending from the client’s side and what’s important to each of them.

Of course, you should review each team member’s contribution to the presentation before the actual meeting with the client. It is always good to rehearse the entire presentation.

As closely as you can, follow the “20/10/3 rule”: Aim to make your presentation 20 minutes long, using 10 slides, with 3 succinct bullet points (pictures) per slide. In general, the more multimedia you can use in the presentation, the better; however, do not try to dazzle your prospective client with so many technical effects that he or she pays no attention to the content of your message. If you make the presentation too long, if you include too many slides, or if you stuff

* “Presentations of Mass Destruction,” Concept Marketing Group, Inc., 2007, <http://www.marketingsource.com/articles/view/1538>, accessed 21 May 2007. I would like to acknowledge Jill Konrath for her well-articulated insight into the importance of the sales presentation.

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each slide with too many bullet points, you are likely to overwhelm your client, diminish the effect of the presentation, and lose the sale.

Tip 3. Stand up during your presentation. Research shows that if you stand, your prospective client will listen better and will remember more. Since that's what you want to happen, stand up.

Tip 4. Start with your understanding of your prospective client's business. Explain that you've been doing lots of research to prepare for the meeting. After briefly providing the agenda, you need to cover the following:

- An overview of your prospective client's business
- The marketplace trends impacting that business
- Your client's goals and objectives
- All the problems and resulting business ramifications of the current methodology or products
- The value your client will realize from using your offering

Be as specific as possible.

Tip 5. Create a dialogue. The best presentations are highly interactive. This means you have to plan how you can get your prospective client involved in a discussion right from the start. Before you show any slides, tell the client personnel that they're the experts on their business and that their input is essential. After you cover the bullet points on each slide, ask such questions as the following:

- Did we understand this correctly?
- Are these numbers correct—or close?
- What did we miss?
- What else is important?
- Which of these issues are of primary importance?
- How do you feel about this?
- Any other opinions?

Write these questions in your notes so that you don't forget to ask them. Make sure that you build enough time in your schedule for this dialogue. It shows your prospective client what it would be like to work with you, and it helps build your relationship at the same time.

Most new ideas will require a collective concession of multiple people in the client's organization. During (or before) the meeting, try to secure a champion from among the client personnel, and determine if there are other stakeholders whom you can include in the sales process.

Tip 6. Demonstrate your solution. Here is where you provide a viable solution for your prospective client. Here, at last, is where you “close with the steak.” Finally—but only after there has been a meaningful discussion of your understanding of your client's business (see tips 4 and 5)—you get to show the details of how your company can help. In this portion of the presentation, you need to cover the following:

- Your product or service offering
- What differentiates you from your competition
- Your implementation plan
- Pricing, warranties, and any other details
- The logical next steps

Tip 7. Offer ideas and insights throughout. Intersperse your presentations with any ideas and insights that can help your prospective client improve his or her business. Such insights need not be totally related to your offering, but they are important, since you're demonstrating your commitment to helping your client be the best that he or she can possibly be.

Take these suggestions to heart and you will have a great client meeting. You'll impress your new customer with your knowledge of his or her business and your commitment to helping achieve the goals and objectives of that business. You'll engage your customer with your interactive style, and you'll build a strong relationship in the process. And most importantly, you'll differentiate yourself from competitors who are focused only on covering all the excruciating details of their product or service.

Tip 8. Follow-up “Thank you” note. It is critical that you follow-up (with-in 24 hours) the meeting with a well thought out thank you note to all participants. I would recommend an email followed by a hard copy sent by traditional mail. One recommendation I have is to address the email to your point person and include everyone else in the cc. The same would be true with the hard copy. Kim T. Gordon from Entrepreneur.com gives four (4) great points for an effective follow-up letter.

1. Personalize your letter

Sales letters should always remain personal in nature. I always thank them for being generous with their time and for providing some proprietary information about their company if it is appropriate. I also make sure to reference anything personal the potential client might have shared as well. This element can usually be accomplished in three short sentences.

2. Focus on benefits.

To be effective, your sales letter must focus on the benefits the reader will gain from engaging your services or buying your products. Remember your prospective client is always thinking “What’s in it for me?” The benefits—or what the prospect will gain—are always contained in the first paragraph or two of a good sales letter.

3. Make your letter outer-directed.

Resist the temptation to write about what “we offer” and instead focus on what “you’ll get.” Do you see the difference? No one wants to read a litany of what you do, how you do it, or what you provide. They do want to read about how what you do will make their lives or work easier or better. Try eliminating most uses of the words “we” and “I,” and replacing them with “you.”

4. Take responsibility for the next step.

Give the prospective client the opportunity to contact you, but don’t expect it. Always state exactly what action you plan to take and be sure to follow through.

Step 5. Develop the Business

The best way for your company to grow its sales revenue is to build relationships through business development—either with a new client you have gained during step 4 of the sales process or with existing clients who will want to increase their investment in your product or service. Business development demands a considerable time investment, where you demonstrate your continuing relevance to your client through helping to sustain his or her business. You begin the

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business development by under-promising during the client meeting and its follow-up, and you over-deliver the results that the client expects. You continue the development—continue earning your client's business—by being of service to that business.

Demonstrate that you are truly interested in a partnership that serves your client's best interests. Through a patient development of a business relationship with your client, you will usually be rewarded with a windfall of new business with that client. By patiently following the five-step business process, measuring your success at the end of each of the steps (and thereby avoiding the stress of expecting considerable revenue from a quick sale), you will surmount firewall obstacles, secure meetings with prospective clients, and build a strong and profitable business relationship where the clients are mutual stakeholders in the process.

