

Are You Reaching Executive-Level Decision Makers Too Late?

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Applying First-Mover Advantage to B2B Sales

The same first-mover advantage applies to sales of complex B2B products, services and solutions. The first sales person to work with an executive-level decision-maker to help them solve a problem successfully is light years ahead of competitors who sit on the sidelines until they see a Request for Proposal (RFP).

And today many sales people are sideline-sitters. That's because there's a widely circulating myth that buyers are 60-70% of the way through their buying cycle by the time they want to talk with a sales person. So, sales people delay their sales calls.

However, according to Mark Lindwall of Forrester Research, not *all* buyers know what they need. Forrester's research backs up this assertion, showing that most executive-level buyers are seeking help in understanding complex problems before they even start to think about products.

Given this, who is likely to win the sale?

The sales person who arrives on the scene once the executive and a supporting cast of managers have sorted through the dilemma, chosen a solution and are issuing an RFP? Or is it the salesperson who reaches out to the executive when his vision is clouded, and he's seeking integrated concepts rather than a single product to untangle an intricate knot of issues?

The salesperson who waits until the company issues an RFP throws him or herself into the competitive fray, chasing the sale.

On the other hand, a salesperson who works through the problems with the executive in the early stages becomes a trusted advisor, developing a relationship and helping to shape a solution around the products or solutions that he sells. He's able to gain a complete picture of the problems that the company faces and deduce which products could be of interest in the near future.

He has first-mover advantage...as long as he does it right.

The Wrong Way to Reach Out to Executives

While marketing and sales leaders appear to be aware that they need to include executives in the conversation, they often approach this task the wrong way.

- **Executive Events**

Perhaps they organize occasional executive events. If so, they likely end up being disappointed by the low number of registrations and attendees. Some executives may not see the value in attending since events are often not scheduled at the right

point in their decision-making cycle. Others, with jam-packed schedules, cannot make it to the event.

- **Product-Oriented Telemarketing**

Many companies reach out to high-level decision-makers every other month through telemarketing. Rather than being proactive and helping executives solve a problem, they pick a different product each time and test the reaction to it. It's like throwing mud against the wall to see what sticks.

The Consultative Approach that Wins the Sale

What works?

You can use telemarketing to communicate, but do it the right way. Use a consultative approach with executive decision makers. Talk with them about their ideas and goals.

Make sure your business development specialists are prepared to respond to the early orientation needs of strategic decision makers. They need to be able to look at the big picture and discover the best integrated-solutions, rather than focusing on resolving individual problems with single products.

So when building your lead generation system, find a way to use telemarketing to reach out to executives when they're confronting tough problems with which your company can help.

For a free consultation on how to use business-to-business telemarketing to boost your sales, call us now at 718-709-0900 (Americas) / +39 06-978446-20(EMEA).

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