

You come out of your first meeting with your new Sales Director armed, as he phrased it, with your opportunities over the next three months. He showed you the three logos on the badges he wants to capture next. It goes without saying that he expects results straight away and you already know that one of them is too big for a short term win, one was campaigned a year ago and no one has talked to them since you lost and the third was a major company account that threw you out three years ago. At the end of the day all he really wants is to achieve his numbers.

This set of articles will cover the challenges thrown up by these opportunities. In the second article we will examine the different engagement styles required in a large account. The final article will examine the importance of clear structured messaging to the customer.

The first challenge that hits as you walk out the door is how confident do you feel about winning some new business. Another challenge is what do you know about them and where can you find out more. Finally, these are all significant accounts that someone must have relationships with in some shape or form - how do you discover that someone?

Industry statistics support these challenges, less than 5 % of organisations rate themselves as world class at targeting and qualifying new prospects and 65% rate themselves only average or less. It takes 7 times longer to re-win a lost account than to win a new name. Nearly 70% of all leads are generated by existing relationships and well over half of these are directly through the individual sales person.

In a recent TV documentary a model was used to illustrate that an ugly man can get the pretty woman. A top playboy model was asked to sit on a wall and flirt with all passing men. In two hours she was only approached once by a charming but ugly man. Afterwards she reported that there were many men she would have gone out with but none had the confidence to approach what, to them, was a daunting opportunity. We almost all suffer from a lack of confidence when challenged with a big opportunity what can we do?

Beliefs are a state of mind not of the world and you can improve your state of mind through a number of things. Any effective motivational program starts with creating a vision and setting big goals. It is imperative to map out the detail of your vision and to arrive at an achievable set of milestones to get there. Then, taking the first step starts to positively reinforce the vision and builds momentum towards the goal.

Never has there been so much information available as there is today you can easily find your prospects business plans, key personnel, customers and partners. The internet is a good source of information but can be overwhelming. One of our customers changed its entire management team in the middle of a campaign. You learn very quickly the importance of capturing and organising valid data in a manner that works for you and the team.

We have successfully used a “war room” approach to organise all the information and planning for major campaigns which takes campaign planning beyond current standards. Walls, whiteboards and flipcharts are all used to give a powerful and collaborative approach which can be further enhanced using current hardware and software technology.

Chris Burke ex Vodaphone CTO says “getting to me through a friend will always get you first kick of the cat”. Your customers place great reliance on their networks to help them move forward and to make decisions. They usually are members of forums that allow them to connect with industry peers that allow them to share experiences.

Investing your time internally and externally on networks is the most valuable thing that you can do. Your immediate friends, business colleagues and partners can be surprisingly productive in leading you to new opportunities. Beyond this using networks such as Linked In will provide a can significantly expand your network and the value you realise from it. Linked In will allow you to keep track and locate key individuals past and present. Consider expanding even further by leveraging the formal networks of professionals in your organisation. For example we recently had a board level client introduction via a member of the CMO Council. Consider other indirect networks such as purchasing, accounting and legal bodies to expand your reach into your target clients.

Understanding your self, others and the context they operate in is a crucial first step in moving your campaigns forward. Applying the suggestions above will build your confidence, your knowledge and your network which will significantly increase your chance of getting that critical hour in front of your customer