

Must-Do Tips No 24: Selling – A Contact Sport

By which we don't mean that it is about a bunch of macho, muscle-bound, testosterone-filled types bashing lumps out of each other. It IS, though, about making, keeping and planning contact with potential clients to ensure that their business has a better chance of being placed with your firm (rather than your competitors). This month we offer three tips for creating better try or goal-scoring opportunities (and conversions) to make your professionals a top performing sales team. They are very simple – but most firms still don't do them.*

* In a recent survey conducted by London Business School, 53% of clients surveyed thought that professionals were 'Poor' at selling to them; none (0%) thought that they were 'Excellent'.

Tip 1: make contact

“You know what? Many of our partners and fee earners just don't get it. They can't see the connection between who they know (or don't) and new instructions coming in (or not). It's almost autistic”.

The best performing firms do all that they can to encourage their professionals to make more connections. Give them targets and guidelines for how many contacts that they must have overall, and each time that they have a contact-making opportunity. Appraise and recognise them for this achievement. Help them to feel more confident in doing the contacting. And set an example for how to do it and what it achieves. To this extent it is a numbers game, so do everything you can to make and play the numbers.

Tip 2: keep in contact

“We pitched for a big new client last year and were unsuccessful. But some of our partners made some really good contacts with this organisation at the time. I can guarantee you that not a single one has maintained any sort of contact with who they met or spoke to since then”.

There is an old selling adage that 'No' just means 'Not at this time'. This is the change in attitude needed for many of the professionals that we come across. Good business developers never take no for the final answer. They engineer regular opportunities to keep in contact with individual prospects (and we don't just mean by inviting them to more corporate hospitality or events). They seek out chances to show and provide value added that the incumbent providers almost certainly are too busy or complacent to offer. And they wait for the opportunities to present themselves...which invariably they do.

Tip 3: plan contact

"I don't have hours in the day to spend on business development: I have fee-earning work to do!"

Thus, we have the professional's typical cri de coeur when asked to sell. And it is rubbish. Keeping in contact with a prospect base takes considerably less than the time that many professionals waste in travelling to/from so-called business development events (let alone attending them). Just 15 minutes a day planned and spent at the right time is all they need.

People Scope provides consulting advice and training programmes for professional firms looking to improve sales performance. For more information just hit 'Reply' and type **Sales Contact**.

For more general information about what we do, go to www.peoplescope.com.

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Best regards.

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