

“Hunting”

By Roger Bostdorff

There are two terms used that describe two different types of selling. You have “farming,” which is developing/extending the relationship with a company where you are already doing business so that you can increase the revenue stream from that existing customer. The second term is “hunting.” “Farming” is typically recognized to be easier and much more appealing. Think about it, would you rather try to talk with someone that already likes and trusts you or would you rather attempt to meet someone new that does not know you from Adam? If a company expects the same salesperson to do both “farming” and “hunting,” typically what happens is that the Sales person ends up doing much more “farming” than hunting because it is easier and more appealing. However, that is a very short term strategy that can have extremely bad consequences. If you expand your relationship as far as it can go with your customer’s, you have no room for market growth. Therefore, it is imperative for a company to make sure that the “hunting” part of the equation is also performed.

So how does one go about “hunting?” Some of the challenge here is that there is no roadmap, there is no structure defined. I would like to create a structure for your sales team to follow. I do not want to suggest that this makes “hunting” easy. However, this structured approach should help.

When calling on an account where you are not doing business today, you should assume that they are getting a competitive product or service from somebody else. Therefore, when talking to the prospective customer, I am suggesting that you ask them that question. For example, you might start with “Good Morning, I am Roger Bostdorff from the XYZ Company. We recently have had significant success with our product or service in the _____ industry (same industry that the person you called is in). I was wondering if I could talk with you about how you are currently obtaining this product or service?” “May I ask you who you are currently doing business with? Are you satisfied with them?” At this juncture the answer is either “YES” or “NO.”

If the answer is “NO,” you ask them, “why not or what is it that is making you dissatisfied?” After their explanation you then can explain how your company does business to avoid these issues. If the company is truly dissatisfied, you now have a foot in the door to gain a new customer with an increase in your revenue stream.

What if the answer to the question is “YES?” Our next question should be “Why?” We want to understand what makes the customer happy or satisfied. After listening very carefully you then ask, “Is there anything they could do to make you even more satisfied?” If they can identify something, you again have the opportunity to explain how your company addresses this issue. However, more times than not they may say that there is nothing they could do to make them more satisfied. This is where your competitor knowledge comes into play. You know who the incumbent is and if you have competed with them in the past you should know some weaknesses. You don’t want to say that you heard the competitor does a poor job in the following areas. However, you do want to pick those areas and reference them as follows: “We have had several companies in your industry change from other

companies to us because of the following reasons...Do you have any issues or challenges in those same areas?" At this juncture you are attempting to set the hook of interest. If others are changing and you happen to hit an issue they have, but did not identify, you once again have opened the door to a possible new account.

I do not want to draw the picture that this approach has a high percentage of success. If this job was easy you would not have to drag someone to do it. However, with a documented process your odds do go up and your frustration should be reduced.

Good luck and good selling.

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