



12 January 2009

DESPERATION AND HARD SALES TECHNIQUES WILL COST UK COMPANIES

NEW BUSINESS WINS IN 2009

Many UK companies will miss out on winning new business because their pitches employ the wrong sales techniques and suggest a level of desperation, warns Jack Downton, Managing Director of *The Influence Business*. As the downturn intensifies in 2009, businesses will become more and more selective of the firms they hire and competition for business is going to increase. Some firms react to the pressure by jumping straight into selling. As a result they fail to address the individual needs and expectations of the prospective client ('prospect').

According to Jack Downton, an ex Colonel of the Royal Marines who now trains businesses across the UK, Europe and the Middle East:

"Pitches should be made as simple as possible. Teams try to communicate far too much information to prospects and 'sell'. This can often come across as desperate. One mistake often made is striking too early in a pitch with a hard sell: teams often pounce at the first sign of interest, when instead they should hold back and listen, and use what they hear to inform their next questions.

"Those pitching ought to find out more about what the prospect really wants. The result is a prospect who sees an interested team. The prospect learns, the team pitching learns and the team has built value into their proposition. Price, therefore, becomes less of an issue."

Jack Downton's advice for winning business in 2009 includes:

1. Do as much ground work as possible before any pitches - rapport between a buyer and seller is particularly important as, in many cases, they are buying into people. Therefore try to build your relationships long before you pitch for business.
2. A short visit or phone call before the meeting to find out more about your prospect's needs is a useful way to focus your pitch on their requirements. By talking through in advance what they are, your pitch will address their concerns directly and will enable you to present around what they are looking for.
3. All too often, those selling fail to present themselves as a team and this is worsened when the leader introduces 'his team'. Instead, the team should introduce themselves - no one person should take the limelight and sellers must appear united.



THE INFLUENCE BUSINESS

4. Bear in mind the 'So what?' question. It might be impressive that your firm is one of the top ten firms in your industry, and that you have just opened a bureau in Los Angeles but does this have any relevance to the client?
5. Explore the prospect's issues. This has much more impact than simply stating what services you offer. By asking questions, the prospect feels listened to, rather than sold to. You learn, they learn and they take away with them the feeling that you are interested in them.
6. Credential documents are often far too detailed, confusing, and contain too much irrelevant information. They should be kept to a maximum of 10 pages and be tailored to meet the prospect's needs.
7. Beware of technology. Computer presentations, for example, can be a barrier to connecting with your prospect.
8. Listen more than you talk. The more the prospect talks, the more you learn and the better he feels. Listen really carefully and show you are listening.

Lastly Jack advises: "Pitches are not just opportunities to close deals, but a chance to establish relationships. Therefore, the aim is to leave the prospect feeling really good about meeting you and positive about doing business with you in the future."

- ends -

Issued by Kelso Consulting (PR advisers) on behalf of The Influence Business

Sam Pepper/Will Richardson at Kelso Consulting (PR advisers) on 020 7242 2272

Notes to Editors:

About Jack Downton :

Formerly a Colonel in the Royal Marines, Jack Downton is the Managing Director of The Influence Business Ltd (www.TheInfluenceBusiness.com). For the past eight years, he has worked with businesses in the UK, Europe, Middle East and Asia helping executives raise their level of influence with clients. Their new skills lead to stronger networks, more engaging presentations and speeches, more successful outcomes at new business meetings and better terms when negotiating.

Jack is a frequent contributor to industry journals.