

# Winning the Deal

*Why complex products require a specialized approach and time*

BY KAY COLSON



**EVERY SAVVY** sales person knows that winning a deal starts with getting the client's attention, establishing a connection and listening to understand what the client really needs ... then crafting a strategy to align your product with their needs to define a winning solution. Once the solution begins to take shape, you can actually start to "sell." But selling is not the same in every situation. And if you are selling complex solutions like managed services and recruitment process outsourcing, the selling process becomes more protracted. How you approach and handle the next phase of the sale will not only determine if you win ... but will also help establish a firm foundation for successfully delivering the service once it is sold. It can also be the key to assuring future client sales as well!

## The Differences

Complex products generally require that your team members essentially become part of the client's "extended" family. Strategic products like MSP and RPO are bound to change the inter-workings of the client's daily operations and require knowledge and planning to enable your team to move in and work successfully alongside your client's personnel.

I have heard some staffing professionals liken the process to making an acquisition. Existing processes, systems and even people will have to be assessed and then decisions made. Any and all may be embraced and kept; retained and/or fine tuned; or replaced altogether.



Other staffing veterans have described being part of a strategic transition team as becoming an "in-law"—part of the family ... but not quite. While you may be selling to a strategic-thinking leader, you will ultimately need the agreement and buy-in of those who may have little interest in yet another corporate initiative to complicate their lives. Change management becomes key here.

In all cases, at some point midway through the selling process the proverbial light bulb will begin to go off with your client's workers. At that point, the selling process will begin to take a turn and you will be asked for more details. If the foundation of your relationship has been built on honesty, integrity and solid listening, then you will be ready to begin broadening their perspective and teaching them what you know from experience. Done effectively, this next phase will help lay the groundwork for effective assessment and transition process planning.

## Guide the Decision-Making

There are several ways to move your sales pitch to a different level in order to help guide your client to the right decision.

**1. You need a team.** Pull together a team of experts to support you and the client. While the client may love you ... the client knows you are in sales. Your team's knowledge establishes credibility and sells for you.

Your colleagues' expertise will also help to begin the change management process as you are invited to interact with a broader audience within the client's organization.

**2. Collaborate and be flexible.** Listen through the client's lens ... not yours. Put the right questions in front of the client and be sure to listen to what he or she is saying. It is not unusual to be told information is not available, so help to compile it or analyze available data if that will help. Collaboration as part of the selling cycle begins the process of building a partnership that will be crucial once you get the deal and start working on the transition.

**3. Effective recruiting.** It's all about effective recruiting, but it's not just about effective recruiting. Remember that complex products require a more complex foundation to work. Define your organization's approach to service-level agreements, transition planning, change management, governance, recruitment branding and creative sourcing. Showcase your organization's expertise and it will sell your solution.

**4. Don't oversell.** Answer the client's questions thoroughly and honestly. Now is the time to establish the partnership. In the end this relationship will be built on how well the client's and your teams get to know and understand each other.

Ultimately, complex products are bigger, involve greater risk taking and offer significant rewards. They also take a lot longer to sell, so take advantage of that extra time. Happy big game hunting! ■

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