

“You Never Get a Second Chance to Make a First Impression”

From a business perspective, there is no role that understands the trueness of the quote above more than Business Development. There are three keys that are critical to maximizing the impact of Business Development in the selling process:

Business Development Resources “set the stage” for initial perceptions and create a lasting impression with the prospective customer. Business Development is such an integral part of a company's success, yet in many cases, organizations and the individuals in this role may not have clear insight into how they are being perceived or what the message is they're trying to communicate.

How well equipped are your Business Development resources to make the impression and begin the dialogue? In order for Business Development to yield the kind of results needed to meet revenue goals, it is important that the approach to this function is aligned with skills, compensation and recognition. You need to examine whether your Business Development focus is on quantity or quality. How is your business development team compensated? Is it by number of appointments or meetings? Or is it around opportunities that culminate into business for you? Wouldn't you rather have five solid leads than 20 long-shots?

How consistent is the Business Development experience? Many organizations don't consider that effective, long-term strategic business development campaigns are more than “drive-by” conversations with 'C' level or Line of Business executives.

Once you look at financial alignment, then you need to ask yourself how well equipped your Business Development team is from a skills perspective. It is one thing to have high levels of activity, but what types of yields are you realizing from those activities?

Some things that are essential to those early conversations:

- ❑ Your message needs to be compelling – not just aligned with their industry or their company needs. It needs to consider the role and responsibilities of the person that you are calling and how you can get their attention.
- ❑ A conversation needs to be mutually beneficial. You need to provide them with information that is new and interesting to them, while also uncovering what you need in order to move the opportunity to the appropriate next steps.
- ❑ You need to be well rehearsed and confident for challenging questions or objections. Be clear in stating the value that you bring to them and be able to defend it.
- ❑ Listen. Listen, then talk. You need to gain enough insight so that you can continue to engage and can figure out whom else you need to be speaking with.