

## Connect With the Buyer

6

By Joe Takash

Ten-year old Billy Johnson just got home from school. He's been thinking about an ice cream bar all day. He wants it bad. Unfortunately, the only person at the Johnson house is his teenage sister, Susie. As Billy approaches her, she quickly anticipates his agenda and cuts him off. "Billy, you can't have an ice cream bar. It's too close to dinner and it will ruin your appetite."

It's over. Billy's cooked without a chance to negotiate or be heard? Why? He didn't reach the ultimate decision maker. But wait...who's that walking in the house in good spirits and a bounce in his step? It's Dad!

Billy rushes to the big guy with a hug and says, "Hey Dad, can I have an ice cream bar?"

Dad's golden response: "Sure sport and I'll tell you what, get me one too."

Yee-haw, sale closed!

Think of all the time you have put in and the energy you've exhausted on attempts to cajole client contacts who love to say "no" but can't really say "yes." It can be a frustrating, morale-beating process. It also happens to be bad for your business' bottom line.

Making a connection with the buyer, the individual who can say "yes," isn't always easy but the first question I challenge you with is, "Who are you asking for an ice cream bar from?" Aim low or aim high and, well, you know what you get.

The following tips are both necessary and instrumental for getting bigger deals in less time, from the people who have the

authority to say "yes!"

### 1. See yourself as a peer.

Before we get into approach, answer this: Are you confident enough to dialogue on equal ground with the big wheels who run the show? You would be shocked at the number of grown adults who will answer this with a "yes" to others, but say "no" to themselves in subtle, counterproductive ways.

*Trigger Tip:* To view yourself as a peer, use positive self-talk and manage that internal cynic. Remember, how you present yourself is stronger than any service or product you offer. A strong handshake, a confident personality and voice, and the right mental attitude can make a huge difference.

### 2. Do your homework.

A lack of preparation may be the biggest deal killer there is. When it comes to connecting with buyers, you must know three areas - and know them well. This includes: Their company. Their competition. Your product or service. Do these seem like no-brainers? You'd be surprised how many service providers don't know when a company was founded, what their mission statement says, who their biggest clients are or how they fare against the competition. As far as knowing your own product and service, read on.

*Trigger Tip:* If you haven't made Google your best buddy, start today. It will swiftly allow you to collect information about the companies you target, and often the professional resumes and personal interests of your buyers.

### 3. Speak in sound bites.

When you have the chance to speak

to the buyer, get to the point and remember that less is more. Too many service providers ramble on aimlessly about what they're selling and can kill their credibility because of the confusion they create about their product or service. Decision-makers want you to be brief. Granted, when you get those few moments to audition, it can feel like a pressure cooker. So, prepare ONLY information that demonstrates how buyers will benefit and what their return on investment will be. If you don't have this ready to be delivered in 15 seconds or less, practice.

*Trigger Tip:* For every piece of information about your service or company you prepare, ask the questions that your buyer would ask, such as: "So what?" or "What's in it for me?" These force you to always speak in benefits-focused, buyer-friendly language.

### 4. Ask great questions.

Conventional sales jargon used to be "ABC" which stood for "Always Be Closing." People are more perceptive than ever and most folks know when they're being manipulated. Today's world of collaborative, relationship selling, especially with high level buyers, should be more about "ABO," or "Always Be Opening." The more accurate diagnostic you make on a buyer's needs is always a reflection of the quality of data you can learn from them. Questions are the golden nuggets that lead you down the path to "yes!"

*Trigger Tip:* Be sure your questions are open-ended, (which allow buyers to elaborate), and make certain they tie directly into the objectives the buyer has and how they will know when successful

results are realized.

### 5. Saying "No" can get the "Yes!"

When trying to impress a buyer, it's easy to try too hard. We've all done it, but it's crucial to be yourself. If you disagree with something he or she says, tactfully push back and challenge them. Authentic candor has elevated many sales people from yes-(wo)man status who don't get the business to peer status who get the "yes" simply by serving as counsel a buyer can trust and respect.

*Trigger Tip:* Don't try to be too enthused or eager right away. Think about how turned off you get when a telemarketer tries to impress you with glib, cheesy-speak. You want to run the other way. Be genuine and be honest at all times.

High-level buyers are usually a tougher sale than Billy Johnson asking his Dad for an ice cream bar. They require an eclectic approach of preparation, self-talk and smart behaviors. But the common ground with you and Billy is when you are able to make that connection and get the right answer from the person in charge is that yes, means yes!

*Joe Takash is a keynote speaker and the CEO of performance management firm of LaGrange Park, IL - based Victory Consulting. His forthcoming book from Wiley, "Results through Relationships: Building Trust, Performance and Profit through People," will be out in 2008. Visit [www.joetakash.com](http://www.joetakash.com).*