



## **Know Who's Calling the Shots**

All of us have a contact at our prospect companies we refer to as our "sponsor", or "champion". This is typically the person with whom we have our initial conversation and meeting. In all but the smallest, deals, though, there will be other people involved with the evaluation and, ultimately, the selection of vendors. It stands to reason, then, that we ought to find out something about these folks, right? But what?

We need to find out three things: first, of course, is who they are - their names, titles, and responsibilities, and the departments they represent. Next, both the business and personal needs of each (see last year's issue #9 [www.sales-solutions.biz/tips/salessolution\\_issue9.shtml](http://www.sales-solutions.biz/tips/salessolution_issue9.shtml) for an explanation of the difference between business and personal needs, and the significance of determining both). And third, what role will each play in the evaluation of competing solutions, how much influence on the final decision will each have, and who the ultimate decision-maker is. Now, you might say, "Wait - this is obvious. If a guy's a Senior Vice President, he's obviously going to have more clout than a mid-level manager. So that's the guy I'm going to target!"

Do that, and not infrequently you'll sell yourself out of a deal. Why? Let's illustrate it with an example. Let's say there are five people assigned to a team to evaluate you and three of your competitors. There is an SVP of Finance, a VP of Sales, a VP of Marketing, and two Operations people. One of the Operations people happens to be a rising star in the company - he just doesn't have the title yet. So you didn't pick this up when studying their org chart. Nor did you pick up that he's a favorite of the CEO, nor that the CEO has appointed him to be the team leader for this project. Nor that this fellow has been vested with the authority to make the final determination, and present the team's recommendation to the CEO. A recommendation the CEO will then rubber stamp. But there you are - selling the VP of Finance like there's no tomorrow. A woman who's only there to make sure the company gets a good deal on the purchase. Meanwhile, one of your smart competitors asked the right questions and figured out where the real power lay - and now has the inside track on you. Leaving you to finish - second. And out of the money.

**ACTION ITEM** Sometimes things are not what they seem to be on the surface. Go back and review your top 3-4 deals. Are you 100% sure you're talking to the person who's running the show and calling the shots? If not, find an excuse to get over there and start asking questions - questions that will lead you to the nexus of the power base for the evaluation of your offering.

Good Selling!

Craig

Note: These concepts draw on Holden's Power Base Selling, a must-read.