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# Those With The “In” Win: Getting Connected And Closing The Sale

by SAM MANFER

**M**y coffee shop was offering a free quarter-pound of coffee as part of a celebration. As the attendant handed me a regular coffee from their prepared stack, I asked if I could have decaf. He said there was only regular. Since I’m not one to settle for rejection and since I know Kelly, the manager, from my daily visits, I asked her if I could have decaf instead. No problem — she went to the bean area, measured some decaf, ground it for a cone filter and smiled warmly as she handed it to me.

See, it pays to know people. We all know this. Yet, we do little to expand our spheres of influence.

Here are a few easy steps to get “in”:

- **Convince yourself that it’s worth the effort.**

Anything over \$50,000 is approved by the top person. No matter how influential the subordinates or the committees are, the chief says yes or no. Someone has to bring your message or nothing will happen. It should be you. Anything under \$50,000 can be strongly influenced by the senior person. If you don’t believe me ask yourself, “What happens if my competitor gets there?” Do the math.

- **Set your sights for the top and you’ll figure a way to get there.**

Focus — It’s part of your job responsibilities to get to the manager responsible for profit and loss. Just as giving a price, a presentation or answering a spec is what’s expected from you, so is impacting the people at the top. Caution: Do not ignore the subordinates or committee. They have to be covered, but you can’t get stuck there. It’s like leaving a man on base in baseball — you won’t score.

- **Believe you belong there.**

Get over any doubt, and you will get there. Confidence is your greatest asset; people pick up on it and perceive you as credible. Subordinates know where the message has to go; they are more afraid of going up than you. If the subordinate feels in control of you, he or she will sit on your message. So say up front, “Who else is involved, and when will I get to meet him or her so I can better understand the situation from all perspectives?” Obviously you can’t make a presentation or give a price if you don’t know what the approver expects of your stuff.

Rehearse that line. Reprogram your thinking. You’re a professional and you deserve to know the expectations of the one who will say yes or no.

- **Use the people you know to get you to the C-Suite.**

A recent survey showed that 99% of all senior executives say they will see someone if a person they trust sets it up. You need someone in your network to move you forward. It’s okay to ask people you’ve connected with to meet their boss. You might have to do a lot of meeting to eventually get to the top, but that’s the job. However, once you’re with the boss, quickly establish your own credibility.

The surefire approach is to keep the discussion on the executive’s wants and needs. Tell him or her in 15 words or less how you became so smart and quickly move to asking questions about his situation, desires and expectations as they relate to your generic services. Capture all his or her emotions. Then say, “Based on what you’ve told me, I’d like to put together details of how I might help you get these ex-

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pectations. May I come back next week with a plan?" Now you've shown that you're a confident professional rather than a walking advertisement.

- **Perform to his/her expectations.**

Show the person how you can deliver his or her wants better than anyone else. It doesn't matter how well you answered the spec as long as you complied. Keep the deliverable focused on the executive and his or her measurement system. Nothing else counts. If he wins, he's happy. If only the company wins, he's not. Then, once you've performed, tie yourself and your company to the wins. The executive must associate you with this happiness. Otherwise the subordinates get the "in" and you're left on base.

It's worth it, so the effort will pay off. It requires focus, so keep your eye on home plate as you touch the bases. Believe you belong at the top, so pump yourself up and go in with attitude. Use your network and get over the idea that you can't ask for help. Keep the focus on the leader. If he or she wins with you, you're "in." □

#### ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

*Sam Manfer is a sales consultant and author with more than a decade of experience. He's shared his techniques with companies such as Apple, Marriott, Fidelity and Blue Shield. Author of the book, Take Me to Your Leaders, he helps clients develop customer relationships, improve sales and prospecting skills, and learn how to negotiate and communicate effectively. To find out more about his speaking, consulting or book, please visit: [www.sammanfer.com](http://www.sammanfer.com) or call: (949) 364-6263.*

