

DISLODGING YOUR COMPETITOR

A GAME OF STRATEGY— NOT DODGEBALL

EDITORIAL | BILL BROOKS



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You have a huge account you want to win — but one of your competitors is already servicing the account. Dislodging your competitor is going to be a long-term, strategic process that requires persistence, patience and more than a little creativity.

And once you win the account, you'll have to work hard to retain it — eventually someone is going to try to dislodge *you* too.

If you really want to win an account away from your competitor, you can. Let's take a look at some strategies that can help you get these hard-to-win accounts and keep them.

First, the "don'ts":

- ✱ **Don't disparage or badmouth your competition.** Not only does it reflect poorly on you, but also it's an insult to your prospect. By badmouthing your competitor, you're questioning your prospect's judgment, implying that they made a bad choice in selecting your competitor's products or services.
- ✱ **Don't try to buy the account with low pricing.** This tactic will only create the expectation of more concessions and price-cutting from you in the future, and if you do win the account solely because you offer the lowest price, you'll be vulnerable to any other discounter who comes along and offers a better deal.
- ✱ **Don't give your product/service away to create demand.** You can't create a demand without building value. Giving your product away sends the message that it doesn't have value, and it positions you poorly with the prospect from the outset.

- ✱ **Don't try to convince your prospect that having a single supplier is bad business.** By that logic, your prospect shouldn't choose you as a sole supplier either.

Now, the "do's":

- ✱ **Determine specifically why your prospect is buying from your competitor.** It's almost never solely price. Is it service, delivery, compatibility of equipment, loyalty, or something else? Study it, and be able to do it better.
- ✱ **Continue to develop regular, ongoing opportunities for you to have a physical and psychological presence in the account.** Send meaningful, relevant updates on products, progress or new services you provide. Find valid reasons to "walk the halls."
- ✱ **Position yourself as a top-notch, unflappable professional who provides only high-quality service and products.** Be the person your prospect can trust to implement meaningful solutions quickly, adeptly, and with little loss of time or productivity.
- ✱ **Become a student of your competition.** Learn your competitor's product benefits and how they sell and retain accounts. Then develop a strategy that helps *you* do what they do, but do it even better.
- ✱ **When studying your competition, do your best to determine their vulnerability.** Is it slow service? Inconvenient technical support hours? Pricing inconsistency? Billing problems? If you discover the current supplier has vulnerabilities, find out who's affected by them in your prospect's organization. The person who's frustrated with the current supplier will be most likely to champion your cause.
- ✱ **Position yourself as a real, true industry expert.** Be the one whom others "in the know" rely on for advice. Word gets around — and will likely find its way to your prospect as well. Be available to provide valuable insight, knowledge and assistance. Make yourself an important resource to their industry. 