Cutting through the clutter by linking to the client's existing priorities

Client organizations have lots going on. In most organizations (and in most parts of most organizations) there are more ideas about how to profitably grow and how to invest in money-saving improvements than the company can execute. Your prospective client has a lot on their plate besides the service you'd like to offer. Even the possibility of a great return on investment isn't enough nowadays to get your clients to think about buying -- they need to see the link to their already established priorities.

Understand their priorities

If you are already serving an organization, you can learn about their priorities by asking. Even if you are pursuing a narrow task, it is legitimate (and good client service) to ask about the context in which you are working -- which includes understanding the company's highest priority initiatives.

If you are trying to start a relationship with a new prospective client, you can often learn, before you contact them, what is most important to them. For example, if the client is a public company, you can listen to or read a transcript of their earnings calls, or look at investor presentations they have given. These are usually available on a company's website. Non-profit organizations sometimes make their strategic plans available too. Privately held companies and smaller organizations are least likely to publicly describe their priorities.

If you don't know what a prospect's priorities are, you can at least understand the pressures organizations in their industry are facing. This will help you hypothesize about their priorities, and to be ready to connect to the most likely ones.

Link to those priorities

Connect your service to their priorities. Don't talk about what you do, but rather about how they can progress on solving an issue they've already identified as high priority. They already know addressing the issue is important; you are helping them decide the best way to tackle that issue (and to decide if involving you should be part of that "best way").

Be able to respond somehow to all the turns in the client's business cycle
Organizations have different needs at different times. If a client would only use your service when the organization is prospering, then you'll be out of synch when inevitable downturns occur in their business. It's important therefore, if possible, to have a range of services (or at least a range of positionings) that let you be relevant in different business conditions.

What to do this week

For existing clients, be sure that you understand their highest priorities (for the people you are serving directly and for the organization as a whole). How does this affect the way you should be talking about what you should be doing next for that client?

For prospective new clients, learn about their priorities, and think about how this might make an initial meeting different or even possible.

Think about the conditions under which you can be very valuable to a client. Do those conditions include a range of business situations or just one? Think about the risks with which that leaves you, and whether you can do anything to reduce those risks.

What are these tips?

These monthly tips help professionals create more business and enjoy their work more. We focus on how to start relationships, how to build relationships, and how to convert those relationships into sales. Visit our archives to learn more.

1422 W. Wolfram Street Chicago, IL 60657 773-551-0682 www.bridgewellpartners.com