

Turning the Gatekeeper into a Door Opener

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As everybody knows Executives are very busy people. They attend meeting after meeting. Their time is valuable, and it's no secret they rarely take calls from random individuals, vendors or salespeople of any kind. Their administrative assistants act as Gatekeepers. You, on the other hand, have a great idea or have been mandated to call at higher levels in the organization in order to grow your revenue stream. The million dollar question is how to get the decision maker to talk to you in the first place!

Make friends with the Administrative Assistant

One sure-fire way is to make friends with the Administrative Assistant. Being warm and friendly opens a lot of doors, so does saying "Thank You." Being demanding makes the gatekeeper sound the alarm.

Executives depend on their administrative assistants. Most say they live and breathe by their administrative assistants. Often, they describe their administrative assistant as "my eyes and ears." "If you want a meeting with me, you need to go through her first. If you sell her, you sell me, and I will take your call."

While the Administrative Assistant is supposed to act as a "gatekeeper," he/she will connect you if your pitch resonates with what the person knows are the Decision Maker's priorities. Additionally, if they don't feel your pitch is appropriate to their boss, they will connect you with the right person if you ask for their assistance.

Something worth remembering

The Administrative Assistant can be your tour guide to the Executive Suite. If you can develop a relationship with them, they have the answer to everything you want know:

- The executive's communication style
- The way the individual makes decisions

- The person's vision
- The person's priorities and personal preferences
- The names of everyone who reports to their boss
- The person's schedule

Develop a Compelling "Elevator Pitch"

A strong "Elevator Pitch" acts as the bait to hook the administrative assistant into connecting you with the boss. It is one of the most important business messages you will ever develop. It is called an "Elevator Pitch" because it should be delivered in approximately one minute or the amount of time it would take to ride an elevator down from the twentieth floor. It is a carefully constructed statement about your value proposition.

What constitutes a good elevator pitch?

There are three parts: the Problem Statement, the Solution Statement and Action Statement.

The Problem Statement

A compelling elevator pitch begins with a one or two sentence statement about your understanding of what the exec is trying to accomplish and any problems that might impact that vision or goal, from the perspective of your particular line of business. This opening statement demonstrates that you have done your homework, and there is a common understanding. It might sound something like this:

I am Dr. Dave Smith in the Cardiology Department. I know the Administrator's personal goal is for our hospital to be recognized as the Number One Children's Cancer Treatment Center in the Midwest. Our cardiology team is concerned top-flight doctors are not likely to be attracted to our center unless the imaging equipment is updated.

The Solution Statement

The opening statements are followed by one or two

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sentences on how you or your organization can help. However, Execs and their Gatekeepers are used to people speaking in glowing terms. What really resonates with them is the person who can provide a solution with clear benefits.”

I would like to talk to Mr. XXX about a new Scanner which provides 72 different views or scans of the heart, instead of usual three, enabling our surgeons to more accurately diagnose and treat their young patients and thus dramatically increasing patient survival rates by as much as 23% in the hospitals that are using them.

The Action Statement

The action statement clearly defines what you want from the Gatekeeper. Is it a face-to-face meeting or a phone appointment with the Exec? Being very clear on what you want avoids the risk of you being disappointed.

I would like to schedule a 15 minute phone meeting with Mr. XXX to discuss our teams' concerns and our belief the S Scanner can attract more patients and doctors of the highest caliber. When can I get on his calendar?

Understanding how Gatekeepers function and their role in the Decision Maker world should help you to overcome your reluctance to placing a call to the top person. If you do a good job of selling them on your idea, the chances are they will put you on the Exec's schedule.

Impact Communications, Inc. consults with individuals and businesses to improve their face-to-face and over the phone communication skills. It is not what you know but how you communicate it that makes a difference. When you have to have impact, phone (847) 438-4480 or visit our website, www.ImpactCommunicationsInc.com.