



THOUGHTS OF THE ALCHEMIST

NO ONE builds a RELATIONSHIP WITH a CUSTOMER?

"Oh, I have a great relationship with the customer", exudes the Sales Professional in their effort to get through qualification. No, you have not; no one has ever built a relationship with the customer. It is just not possible. The entity we call the customer, is an organisation. There it is in your CRM, customer name: ACME Corporation! Organisations are inorganic, non-sentient beings. They do not have the capability to like someone.

What the Sales Professional means is that they a great relationship with people who work for the customer, even own the customer.

However, not that you should doubt the words of a Sales Professional but let us assess it.

1. Can you name the people (buyers) in the customer who are making the buying decision? It is going to be several people (usually).
2. How do you know these are the right people (buying circle)? Are we just naming the people we know, or do we have evidence that this is the case?
3. Who holds the power in the decision-making process? It is easy to say it is the CEO, but often they are the person who is signing the contract.
4. Are you sure that is the person holding the power? Often, we like to think it is the person that we have the best relationship with.
5. Who in this buying circle likes us, who is ambivalent and who just does not like us? It is a hard world out there. Not everyone loves us!
6. Who is going to be voting for us? Do they have a win if we win? If they do, then they will be an advocate and sounding board for us.
7. What do we need to do to get all of them to want to vote for us?
8. What are we going to do about those who want to scupper our opportunities and we cannot get to love us?

These are hard questions that we regularly treat lightly. *"Trust me, they are on our side", "I have known them for years", "I know they are making the decision, stop doubting me"*. It is not that I am doubting anyone, it is just we like to think that people like us and that saves the hard thinking and hard truths that not everyone does and not everyone is going to want to buy from us.

I remember one time, when the Sales Professional was getting annoyed with my questioning around the relationship they had with the most powerful buy. *"I have known them for years; we have been out to the football together and had plenty of dinners. They alone make the decision; the others just go along with it."*

If it sounds to be too good to be true, in the world of Bid Alchemy, then it may not be true, so test it and test it again.

"So how many children does she have? What are their names and when are their birthdays?"

"What has that got to do with it, I am not a bloody walking diary!"

Well you see the thing is, if the relationship were that strong, it would be like having a friend, no it would be having a friend. I know how many children my friends have, I know their names, I am God father to many, so I need to know their birthdays.

Later, in the deal, I was visiting the person that the Sales Professional was talking about.

"It's good to see you alone, Martin. I have to be honest, I dread the visits from the Sales Professional (name withheld to save their feelings), if it wasn't for the free football tickets and the fine dining, I wouldn't give them time".