

WHEN PURCHASING AGENTS BLOCK THE DOOR

What do you do when an indifferent purchasing agent is blocking you? This sounds like a purchasing agent that is "retired" on the job. When a purchasing agent is change-resistant, it is a special problem for salespeople. Strategy number two in *Value-Added Selling* is to penetrate your accounts thoroughly. This means high-wide-deep. You must penetrate deep to create pull for your idea and high to generate funding for your solution. Most salespeople penetrate beyond purchasing, meeting with users and influencers. Few salespeople penetrate at high levels.

Salespeople are afraid of offending lower-level contacts, intimidated by high-level decision makers (HLDMs) or do not know what to discuss when meeting HLDMs. One of the most effective ways to "get around" this purchasing gatekeeper is to promote a high-level schmooze. To schmooze is to meet, chat, self-promote, or socialize. A high-level schmooze means that you want your management to meet with the customer's management to ensure that your company is sculpting itself for the evolving needs of customers. Eighty-eight percent of HLDMs say they will meet with their high-level counterparts. You may need to be persistent with the gatekeeper by telling him or her that your management really wants to have this meeting (and may initiate contact on their own).

Gatekeepers guard the status quo—actively or passively. You are a change agent. People invested in the status quo may need some productive nudging to break the inertia. Once you have established the high-level contact, you can now have a different conversation on how your solution creates value for the customer. HLDMs are more focused on value (profit, cash flow, money) than price. They buy partnerships, not products.

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