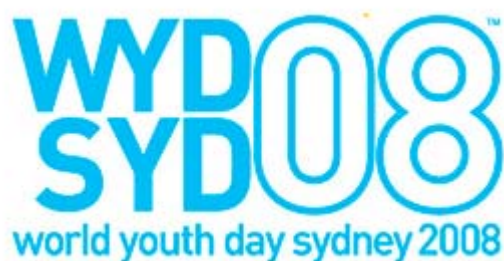


B2B lessons learned from World Youth Day: Part III - business relationships in B2B selling

Article by *Sam Hunter*



This post is part three of a three-part series

1. World Youth Day: the Event Marketing Lessons Learned
2. World Youth Day: the Distribution Lessons Learned
3. **World Youth Day: the Business Relationships Lessons Learned**

In this three-part series, Sam Hunter, the managing director of Bout Time Solutions explores some of the learnings he took from helping the World Youth Day (WYD) organisers deliver one of the great events Australia has staged. Papal visits are right up there with the Olympics when it comes to numbers of visitors and disturbance to a city. But WYD presents a different challenge - 225,000 pilgrims to bed, feed and water.

When John Moore, former marketing director of the Sydney Olympics, asked Sam in 2006 how he would feed 225,000 pilgrims, Sam's response was to go direct to the manufacturer avoiding the caterers. This simple answer became the strategic thrust of the WYD organising committee, and now Sam discusses what can be learned from the staging of a religious event that can be applied to current business problems.

Quick Background

John Moore, the former marketing director of the Sydney Olympics asked Sam casually while in Sam's kitchen in 2006 how would you feed 225,000 people? Sam's response to John was to go directly to the manufacturers, avoiding the caterers. This simple answer started quite a journey through corporate Australia. Sam did not know it at the time but John took the strategic thrust suggested that night to the organising committee of WYD and subsequently told Sam his idea was accepted and he was to implement it.

What can be learned from the staging of a religious event that can be allied to current business problems?

How do you open the door and get someone to listen?

Selling WYD reinforced the need for a great selling process.

I had been given the task of negotiating the deals to supply food for 225,000 people at the lowest possible

price. Having decided what type of food was required the next step was to create a list of who to sell the partnership and its benefits to.

This process of selling initially was what looked like, at the outset to be the hardest job I had ever accepted, and reemphasised to me the importance of a great selling technique. So here are my insights.

Build a target list

I decided I needed a team of companies that liked each other, therefore I needed to establish a 'exclusivity' rule within the management of WYD. For instance if we did a deal with Coke then we didn't go to Pepsi.

Sounds easy and sensible but for the egalitarian Catholic Church wanting to minimise cost, it was hard to accept. So the list was made up based on what we needed and category exclusivity. Having decided what the benefits were, it was time to lift the phone. Some of the companies were existing clients, so it was easy to make an approach to people with whom I had pre-established credibility. Others were cold calls. Let's focus on them. But you have to know who to call, and even if you do, what's the phone number? Ever tried to call someone in a bank or say Telstra when you don't have the number or a name just a title.

These issues seem trivial, trust me they are not, many a sale is lost without a word being uttered to the target.

Use your network to have other people help you 'who knows someone at'

Simple again, but most don't do it, always ask and remember where people work. It's a small place and someone knows someone. But if you have to then cold call it is. Without a doubt, this is usually the most challenging way to market a proposal - I know very few people who actually enjoy cold calling. I learned long ago that a cold call must have a have a good first line a line which delivers the benefits that the targets wants, or you are shot. So be sure to start your conversation with a good opening to capture the other person's attention. I now conduct a course called First Contact devoted to this issue - www.firstcontact.com.au.

I recall the Sanitarium scenario, 'hello my name is Sam - you don't know me but I would like to buy 750,000 packs of cereal please, may I speak with your sales director?', or something close to that. I am sure they thought I was a nutter; no matter how hard I tried once they found out I was connected to an event they thought I wanted sponsorship money and that was death to the sale. A month or so later I sent an email which simply asked if I understood correctly that they were unwilling to sell me cereal for WYD. Problem solved and I am pleased that Sanitarium proved to be the one of the best partners of the event.

This story makes the point that big companies get proposals from all sorts of directions, most looking for contributions, they in turn have developed sophisticated barriers to solicitation which makes selling hard.

Be smart, be persistent

If you have a good product, they see it, they will want it, so don't give up.

Build Rapport

If relationships are the foundation of sales then building rapport is the foundation of relationships and a finer appreciation of rapport can lead to a positive impact on your performance. Building rapport is a process of establishing trust and understanding. If your prospect trusts you, they are more likely to share information with you which gives you the opportunity to provide a tailored and unique solution to meet their needs.


In the case of WYD it was the ability to talk sales growth that shifted the dialogue. These guys wanted to know what was in it for them.

Now how about a relationship

If you develop a relationship with someone it gives you permission to go back to them again. However if you don't develop a relationship and you try and sell someone something and they don't want to buy it, what have you got left? Answer - nothing!

The WYD prospects did not sign up right away - most took up to to 18 months after the first meeting. We had to get comfortable, the event needed to be understood, they needed to see that the benefits I promised were real. If I was not able to go back again and again through the process then the eventual sale would have been lost.

Networking, telling the absolute truth and having a good product to sell are the prerequisites to sales success.

Article links 

www.marketingmag.com.au