

## **Are you Column Fodder?**

*If you are a Seller, how do you determine whether the Buyer views you as  
Column A - the preferred Vendor?*

### **Part II What to do if you are Column B (or even Z)?**

*By Henry Ching, Sales Trainer & Coach @ Progress-U Limited*



It may be nice being green but it's not that nice being fodder...

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### **Are you Column Fodder? – Part II**

## Are you Column Fodder? (Part 2)

Let's re-cap from the last article.

If you have qualified with the Buyer that you are Column A (the preferred Vendor), then keep working on closing the deal. The job is not done yet. Remember, more salespeople lose to 'no decision' than to anything else.

However, what do you do if you are Column B (or even Z) and NOT winning?

But first things first.

**How** do you know that you are not winning?

I have a belief that you intuitively know when you are not winning. It just does not feel right. There is not an environment of trust, care or openness when you deal with the Buyer. The Buyer treats you with a level of detachment that is telling your intuition that you are being considered but you are not their chosen one. You are doing all the work and they are just in evaluation mode. There is not a true joint investment from both parties.

You can back this up with your logic as well. Keep testing by asking your sponsor qualifying questions like:

- Can we meet the final decision maker?
- Do you like what you see so far?
- Can we meet to sort any final details?
- Does our proposal meet all your needs?

You can probably think of another few questions for your situation or industry.

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## **Are you Column Fodder? – Part II**

So what is your next move when you are losing?

You have only two choices. The first choice is probably the harder choice.

### **Walk away.**

There is an old saying in sales: 'If you are going to lose, lose early'. This is a truism but does not mean it is not valid. In essence, it reminds salespeople that if you are not going to win, then do not over-invest in coming a close second. There is no second in sales. Unlike the Olympics, there is no Silver Medal. By the way, Muhammad Ali won the Gold Medal in Boxing in the 1960 Olympics. Who came second?

Exactly!

Second in sales is even WORSE than not competing. At least Zbigniew Pietryskowsky from Poland had a Silver Medal for his trophy cabinet (you won't get one in sales).

### **Winning Strategy**

If you are Column B to Z the other viable option is to work out what you are going to do to position your offer against the current winning Vendor so they seriously re-consider your offer. What is your winning strategy to get the deal?

(Please note the word 'position' is not the same as 'compete'. You should not compete in that if Vendor A says 'they can do x' you also say 'you can do x'. This is a sure way of wasting your time and resources because in the mind of the Buyer, you are just copying the winner).

What to do? What to do?

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## **Are you Column Fodder? – Part II**

I believe this situation calls for boldness. You must be prepared to ask some 'hard questions' so that you can minimise your weaknesses and maximise your strengths. Firstly, work with your sponsor to determine what is required to get the deal. If the bar is too high, then you have a tough decision to make on how much you can invest. You must decide if you can make an offer that the Buyer accepts is superior to the current winning proposal

How do we do this? Be different. Be creative. Be innovative. Ask questions that really gets the Buyer to discover needs that are important - that they have not thought about until you helped them discover them.

I'll give you a real life example.

A big automobile distributor in Australia was considering a storage system for all their PCs and midrange computers (there were hundreds of them). They looked at many Vendors and it came down to HP and IBM. The HP had the edge in price/performance, reliability, ease of upgrades and their solution was slightly cheaper to run and maintain. There was not much in it but HP looked like they had the business. Until the IBM representative asked the customer what are they going to do about connecting the mainframe? There was silence from the customer. You can't connect a mainframe to these kinds of storage solution? Can you?

You could with the IBM solution. IBM got the deal.

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## **Are you Column Fodder? – Part II**



Henry Ching is a Sales Trainer and Coach at Progress-U Limited. Henry works with sales managers, salespeople, entrepreneurs and anyone else who want to further develop their sales skills and methods using Best Practice thinking.

Today, even top sales performers face ever-increasing challenges in:

- How to shorten the sales cycles;
- How to avoid being drawn into a margin destroying price war;
- How to qualify better so they work on higher quality deals;
- How to close effectively, and
- How to maximize the return on investment on the sales efforts made.

Henry assists his clients in tackling these challenges through Progress-U's innovative and unique "Stop Selling!" approach and by sharing his extensive experience gathered during his corporate career.

Henry is known for his creativity and humour when it comes to tackling difficult sales situations or working on complex deals. He has developed sales strategies and training that have helped many clients address their sales challenges.

During his corporate sales career at IBM Australia, Fujitsu and Information Builders, Henry has worked with Blue Chip clients like Mercedes Benz, HJ Heinz, Dun & Bradstreet and the Australian Defence Force. He succeeded in highly competitive sales environments that required thinking 'outside the box'.

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