

**“MIX WITH THE PLAYERS”**

(Develop relationships with people influence your clients)

If you want to be known as a “player” in your industry, you’d better be known by the other players in your field. In most professional service industries, there are people outside of your potential client list who should always be on your “hit list.” These are people who are visible to, have influence on, regulate, frequently work with, or are respected by your clients.

Such hit list contacts can consist of attorneys, lobbyists, government agency personnel, key politicians, trade association staff, or community leaders, to name a few.

Why is knowing these people important? Think of it this way: If a prospective client walked up to one of these people of influence and asked what he or she thought about you or your firm, what would that person say? Would the person of influence even know you exist? If so, would he or she know you personally? Would this person value your opinion if he or she was assembling a workgroup or panel of various professionals in your field? Would this person recommend you or your firm to an associate?

When I first entered the professional services world, I soon realized there were key contacts in trade associations in my geographic area and area of expertise. I made it a point to seek them out and converse with them at every professional function. To find the players in your own industry, ask your clients which organizations they regularly participate in to stay on top of recent developments and who are the key staff from those organizations. Ask the staff from those organizations which experts (attorneys, political leaders, or regulatory agency staff) they look to for insight on recent developments in your field. These are the “players.”

Once you’ve identified the players, seek them out and develop an ongoing dialogue. Offer your insights on industry developments based on your experience, and ask what they’ve heard recently. The key is to demonstrate that you and your firm have considerable domain expertise and that developing a business relationship and an ongoing dialogue will be mutually beneficial.

## Sales Solutions

You can easily develop the relationship with these key people the following ways:

- Give them a helping hand on occasion
- Buy them lunch
- Offer to speak or to assist in some other way when they are coordinating a professional gathering
- Refer clients to them
- Allow them to speak at your functions
- Give them insight into what they can do to better serve their client base, or whatever might be appropriate, given their responsibilities and the nature of their organization.

Determine who the influential “non-clients” are in your market and sell yourself and your firm to them as well.

### **ABOUT THE AUTHOR:**

This article is an adapted excerpt from *Selling the Fuzzy Widget: Secrets of Selling Professional Services* by Craig Cortello. Craig is the President and founder of Fuzzy Widget Sales Solutions, a sales consulting and training firm dedicated to serving professional service industries. He is also the National Sales Manager of Trinity Consultants, a nationwide environmental consulting firm, an author, an entrepreneur, a Rotarian, a husband & father, and an accomplished musician.

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