

WHITE PAPER

Presented by
Partnership Group – Sponsorship Specialists™

How to Sell Face to Face

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Between March and May, I delivered a series of SMCC One-Day Workshops on behalf of the Partnership Group - Sponsorship Specialists™. They were on conducting discovery sessions with prospects. The full-day events were on how to prospect, how to get the meeting (for those who attended... remember "How is Tuesday at 2:00?") and finally, how to conduct the meeting when you get it. Many times, I was asked, "Do you need to be face-to-face?" Or sometimes, people asked, "Can I just do these by phone, email, or Skype?" I got comments like, "The people I am trying to reach are too busy to meet with me. They want to do it by email or phone."

To this I say, "Hogwash." (I am not sure I have ever actually used that term before... it is usually something more expletive.) This is a big mistake. As Rene Shimada Siegel, founder and president of High Tech Connect in the Silicon Valley wrote, "We are all in the people business." Though people say they want to meet by WebEx, phone, email, or text, you need to ensure that you get face-to-face. Here are the top five reasons Rene sites why you need to meet in person.

1. You are off the record. Often the people you deal with do not have private offices where they can chat freely and openly without others hearing. They may have vital information they cannot share about the decision maker, the plan, or the competition, etc. If you meet over coffee at your office, over lunch, or a walk around the block, they can share anything they want with you. With phone and email, they cannot always do this.
2. Make use of not-so-small-talk. On the phone or email, it is all business. It is "cut to the chase" and "let's be really business efficient." When you are face-to-face, you learn about the person. You understand their issues and their life. You create a bond and a relationship. Sponsorship sales are about relationships. Relationships are built face-to-face, not on the phone or by email. Small talk about your favourite teams, children's activities, or religious beliefs create connections. Such associations lend better to long-term partnerships and deals. The more you are personally connected, the better the bond.
3. Make an impression. The way you dress, what you order for lunch, the portfolio you carry, or the tablet you use are all conversation starters. I am not a tekky person, but I have a Galaxy Samsung Tab. Every time I pull it out, people ask me about it. I tell them why I have it over a Playbook, even though I have a Blackberry as a phone. We discuss why I need a tablet, a laptop, and a Blackberry. Never in all my days did I think I would be discussing technology like this. I'm sorry, but I cannot make an impression with my new cool suit, or Tab, or by ordering quinoa at lunch over the phone or on Skype. If I want to make a lasting impression, it must be face-to-face.

4. Read the body language. Crossed arms, facial expressions, crossed legs, eye movement-these all tell you something about a person. Perhaps for your first meeting or two, their arms are folded across their chest. Then at next meeting, they are not. That tells me they are more relaxed, more open to conversation and ideas. I am not sure how you can read body language over the phone. If you want to know the person you are dealing with (which you do!), then you need to meet face-to-face.
5. Learn where the action is. When you visit their office, you learn about them, their culture, and their team. In the office, do they have family photos or pictures of celebrities with them? That tells you something. Is the lobby bright and cheery? How about at reception? Are they enthusiastic or do they sound and look like they wished they were somewhere else? Are people moping around or are they cheerful and energetic? This will tell you a great deal about the company you are trying to do business with. And again, that is all pretty hard to learn when you swap emails or make a phone call.

Face-to-face is the place. For me, there are no real exceptions. Sure, I have done discoveries by phone. Sure, I have done follow-up by email. But when it comes down to it, if there is no face-to-face interaction at all, there is no deal. I can honestly say that I have never closed a piece of business where I have not met at least one person from the organization face-to-face. It may be the person I met face-to-face worked for a different organization before and is now recommending me to their new organization, but I have never closed business where I did not have at least one face-to-face engagement with one person in the organization. Face-to-face is critical in making and building the relationship. No face-to-face... no deal.