



## **Hunting vs. Farming in Business Development**

*Is your firm positioned for both Strategic and Organic sales growth?*

Hunting and farming for revenue growth require two different mind-sets, but the same process.

Starting out, many young professionals build capability in project management. By performing these functions well, individuals work closely with customers, deliver value and begin the process of developing client relationships. The roles at this level are clearly defined; individuals are motivated to do a good job and are compensated accordingly.

Quickly, these individuals realize that in addition to completing the job on time, under budget and thus solidifying relationships with clients, they're encouraged to find add-on work or poke around for additional opportunities for themselves. Without knowing it, individuals have backed into a new role and the transition to farmer has begun.

Individuals morph into *unconsciously competent* farmers in Business Development and begin to grow their project area. The more they grow, the more their company wants. These budding farmers backed into Business Development roles, are now saddled with revenue growth objectives, and expected to do farming work. Many new farmers have no idea how they got drafted or backed into this role, other than doing a good job.

New farmers find no role-definition for farming. Often, there are no coaches/mentors to help with thinking and process, nor individual role models to teach the ropes. Saddled with many challenges, farmers have no formal Business Development education or training necessary to continue to deliver organic revenue growth on increasing expectations. And, incentives to doing this role vary from a pat on the back to stock ownership.

Some farmers are lucky. Their organization recognizes commitment and effort and the young professionals are advanced scholarships for education and training in the thinking, discipline and process of Business Development/revenue generation. This type of education isn't sales training, presentation training or proposal development training. BD is all about understanding people along with their issues and their problems, and knowing how to craft solutions to grow into business.

It's a different league with different stakes once a firm's leadership decides to *proactively* compete for contracts. Being proactive goes way beyond *reactively* responding to the latest RFP ... it's hunting.

Working in the strategic revenue growth arena, hunting requires the same BD process as farming. However, hunters execute the process proactively with a different level of thinking.

Frequently, the wrong individual is selected for the hunter role. Unfortunately, hunters are sometimes chosen solely because of credentials, contacts, and industry connections ... retired from a client firm, former government employee or having a killer contact database. This profile is frequently all that's needed to be selected to lead an entire company's efforts in strategic growth. Credentials, contacts and industry

connections are fine. However, these criteria won't necessarily get you beyond a foot in the door, the first call or even past the lobby. Knowing what to say and what to do after you say hello is what drives strategic revenue growth.

As "alpha wolves", hunters are always pursuing the next best strategic opportunities for their firm. Their job is to craft opportunities before competition recognizes them. This means gathering intelligence. In the pursuit of *Intel*, hunters are purpose driven ... engaging with prospects to uncover issues or problems, challenging them to confront these problems, and to working to secure solutions ... whether or not a solution is provided by their own company. Ultimately, hunters grow relationships based on trust, respect and confidence in them as the main representatives of their firms ... advocates for all parties in the relationship. The trusted relationships they've engendered, allows their company and the services/products they provide to be perceived in a preferred light and thus favorably positioned *before* an RFP or RFQ is crafted. Hunting also requires disqualifying opportunities early and wisely, using best business thinking, and understanding that pursuing bad business is worse than having no business at all.

Successful hunters have been educated and trained in the thinking, process, discipline and leadership which drive strategic revenue growth within an organization. This is the BD process which precedes any sort of presentation and proposal process.

Companies focused on strategic growth need both hunters and farmers. The fundamentals of the BD process are common to both roles ... the types of individuals selected and trained for each position are uniquely different. Firms typically have the requisite talent internally, which can fill both hunting and farming roles. Success is contingent upon providing quality education and training in Business Development, and offering individuals the opportunity to self-select for the level and type of business expertise they wish to add to their professional resume.

Farming and organic growth will maintain the status quo. Hunting and strategic growth is what drives organizations to the next level.

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