



THE SEVEN CHARACTERISTICS OF THE STRATEGIC BUSINESS LEADER IN GOVERNMENT SERVICES

*Excerpt from the Washington Technology Column and the forthcoming book, Winning Conversations:
Mastering the Art of Business Development by Bill Scheessele*

Is your business development organization ready to move beyond the strategy of merely farming for organic growth? If so, you may be ready to build a precapture capacity strategy. Whether teaming or developing your own capability, companies begin looking for those unique individuals who can deliver ... deliver new business from qualify to win. The question is do you really have one?

The typical profile of this individual is a person who already has established a working, personal relationship with the senior management of the department, agency or program being pursued. They bring an extensive contact base and ready access to the appropriate individuals. Have you settled for this minimalist approach?

There are a lot of individuals with this basic profile who declare they are business development professionals. However, in reality, they are not. Many have excellent credentials which include: leadership experience; operational and tactical planning; and program and resource management experience.

Individuals with this profile seem like perfect candidates and many are hired. Perhaps you are one of them. Or, maybe one or two names come to mind. However, most have not made the commitment to use their experience to acquire new business. As a result, many dig a circular ditch ... digging themselves and their company into a deeper hole.

Are you digging deeper or wider? Maybe you need to dig differently ... strategically. To be a strategic business leader who is innovative, creative, and successful, you must be able to innately apply the following seven (7) critical concepts.

THE HUNTER

First, are you a hunter? Be honest. The business of hunting is not pretty, and it's not for the weak. You must exhibit the hunter profile, always pursuing the next best strategic opportunities for your company and crafting those opportunities before competitors recognize them. In many ways, hunting is scientific in nature with breaking open new opportunities, developing new relationships, and testing opportunities well before they come out in *FedBizOps* or *INPUT*.

UNDERSTANDING PURPOSE AND GOAL

Second, it's critical that you understand the goal and purpose of business development. So what is BD to you? In addition to your goal of developing a substantial pipeline you should understand that the purpose of your role is to help organizations understand their real issues, challenges or concerns, and identify their pain. This is a tough, trust-building and affirming step.

BEHAVIORAL PSYCHOLOGY

Third, you must have a developed knowledge of psychology ... understanding how and why people behave. What is it that motivates a prospect to trust an individual and share information? In reality, it's people knowledge.

GATHERING INFORMATION

The fourth concept is the capacity to develop behavioral characteristics of an intelligence-gatherer. This is a far cry from marketing. In gathering Intel, you must be as skilled at asking intelligently "dumb" questions as in giving high-level briefing presentations. You must know *what* information is important to gather early on, *who* to gather it from, and *how*.

JUST SAY NO, MORE OFTEN

The fifth important aspect of the strategic business leader is the ability and courage to disqualify opportunities early and efficiently. Can you say no? You must be able to let go, close the door, walk away and move on to a better opportunity.

BUILDING THE PIPELINE

The sixth must-have is the skill to quickly build both a short and long-term pipeline. To do this you must develop and hone the thinking, have the character and be educated or re-educated in the role of professional business development.

Real BD leaders are able to quickly engage people at the highest level within an organization and have a knack for discovering precapture opportunities, both short and long term on an ongoing basis.

ALPHA PRONE

The last quality a strategic business leader must have is the ego drive to continually pursue new opportunities as an alpha-wolf. Alpha prone wolves have a heightened sixth sense ... the ability to see leverage points and make connections that others fail to make.

The question is often asked, are strategic business leaders born with the BD gene? Or, can they be developed in this role? From thirty years in this business, the simple answer is that it's a little of both. Few bring it all. That's where professional development and mastery education come into the strategic BD equation.

Are you ready to take the next step?

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