

Chase the Championship is the sales manual that goes a step further. The book reveals the mindset and methodology necessary to wage and win an all out war against your firm's best salesmen, and become your company's number one dealmaker!

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Chase the Championship

Kicking Ass, Taking Names, and Becoming a Dealmaker -
The Philosophy and Principles of a Sales Champion

Lawrence Rosenberg

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33. DECISION-MAKER OR DECISION-FAKER?

*Nothing is more difficult, and therefore more precious, than to be able to decide – **Napoleon Bonaparte.***

Stay far away from the boss's underlings when you are in search of a decision. The heads of Marketing, IT, Human Resources, or whoever else is part of the "decision-making chain" for the product or service that you are selling should never be the people that you go after for a commitment. If they are merely part of a chain, then they are, quite literally, chained – chained to budgets, chained to processes, and chained to protocols that prohibit them from making a decision without either consultation or permission. If pressed, their ego may force them to pretend to be in the role of decision-maker at your request for an audience, but ultimately the punk-out factor is high with these imposters. These decision-fakers are more worried about holding on to their jobs than they are about implementing an exciting new product or service (your product or service), even at the expense of their firm's benefit. They have more incentive to play it safe than to think outside the box. These fakers are deathly afraid of going with their gut instinct and doing what they feel may be right because, god forbid, they may get it wrong. Most department heads are anti-entrepreneurial and dispirited. They are bureaucrats who are more interested in company politics than in achievement. They are usually nothing more than placeholders: interchangeable and expendable.

The fact that most decision-fakers wander around the company's halls like palace eunuchs is not their fault alone. The CEO or

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Board of Directors usually keep them on such a tight leash that they are neutered from the moment that they are hired. It is a rare company that gives free reign to their managers so that they are permitted, let alone encouraged, to think outside the box. Rarer still is the department head who will take action when he is given that type of freedom.

What you will inevitably find, again and again, is that the vast majority of decision-fakers are weak-willed and unable to muster the necessary gumption to say yes. No matter how enthusiastic, passionate, and exciting your presentation, no matter how good your opportunity sounds, like any proficient bureaucrat they will never step out on a limb; at least, not without permission, and certainly not without attempting to gain a consensus from other fakers within their department. (Remember, sheep are typically kept in herds.)

Dealing with this useless lot of ineffectual, middlemen, is a going nowhere fast, dead-end proposition. Obfuscation and offhand rejection is de rigueur when dickering with these neutered, pencil pushers. Rejection is one thing, but stupidity and utter futility is something else entirely. Perennial rejection is a hazard of our profession, made bearable only because, assuming you are speaking with a decision-maker, those who say no can always say yes. But bash your head against the wall as much as you like, no amount of persistence can weather the storm when the pretenders who you are pitching to are found to be incapable of committing.

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Now don't get me wrong – if you search long and hard, you can always find a few department heads who are not only empowered to make decisions, but who are ballsy enough to stand alone and execute them. So, if all you do is pitch to decision-fakers, then yes, it is possible that, once in a blue moon, you will uncover a gutsy department head who is bold enough to take a chance on your opportunity; it is possible to get a deal here and there from these scant encounters. However, if that is the direction that you intend to dedicate your career to following, then that is all your sales career will ever amount to: a “once in a while” deal with a “here and there” income – not very inspiring.

So, why would anyone ever bother dealing with those who are impotent and emasculated? Most salespeople end up pitching to decision-fakers because, as pathetic as it sounds, they are easy to get on the phone. It is another infamous circle-jerk: the salesperson pretends he is working and the faker pretends to listen. Never underestimate the ability of the un-ambitious to find ways to waste their time. In their haste to display activity or to prove that they are working, I have witnessed salespeople, usually rookies, pitching to secretaries and even security guards – hell, these cogs in the wheel don't even pretend to be decision-fakers!

The other reason (excuse) given by weak sales reps for pitching to the people who work for the boss rather than the boss himself is that these muppets, purportedly, have the boss's ear. The irresolute salesman surmises that, since the Chief is allegedly “impossible” to get on the phone, a relevant department head or,

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worse, one of the Chief's personal assistants or secretaries will at least be able to put the opportunity in front of him.

When one of the richest men in the world, Warren Buffet, and his firm Berkshire Hathaway wish to discuss the buyout of a company, whom is it that they discuss the terms with? Do they negotiate with the prospect company's CEO, or with his secretary? Who meets at Camp David to discuss peace treaties among countries: Presidents and Prime ministers, or their personal assistants? Would your boss hire a secretary to do a closers job? The man would not even waste his time thinking about it. And why not? Because secretaries and personal assistants are very good at shuffling paper, and terrible at presenting a concept-driven pitch and closing a deal! If they were any good at pitching and closing, they would be sitting right next to you – they would be your competition! In addition, since they know better than anyone the strengths and weaknesses of most secretaries, they certainly would not be pitching to them!

Therefore, if your boss would not hire a secretary to perform at a sales executive's level, then why the hell would you? Is that not exactly what you are doing when you pitch to a decision-faker, a secretary or some executive's personal assistant? Recruiting them to pitch the opportunity on your behalf? Other than being weak, lazy, or just plain inexperienced, why would you ever do something so foolish? Do you believe even for one minute that this neophyte could actually pitch your opportunity with more fire, belief, and passion than you? Would they be willing to push, prod, perhaps even go so far as to risk their relationship with the Chief in order to motivate him to take action and close the deal?

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Just for you? Are you out of your damn mind?! They couldn't and they wouldn't. Every time you put your presentation in the hands of the boss's minions, you assume that they are more capable of sealing the deal, that they are more motivated to make the sale, than you are. This is the path of least resistance and greatest folly.

The decision-maker, the Chief, is the one you want. He holds the keys to your success in his hands and is ready, willing, and able to say yes. In fact, more often than not, the man wants to say yes – all it takes is the effort to communicate with him in the language he understands. In order to tune into the Chief's frequency, you have to get him involved emotionally. You must present the big picture to a big picture thinker – bring vision to a visionary.

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