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It's at Proposal Time That The Rubber Meets the Road. To Get The Best Ride Possible, You've Got to Present a Guerrilla Proposal. Here's How.

There are poor proposals, which rarely get the business for you. There are good proposals, which might get the business for you. And then, there are guerrilla proposals, which usually get the business for you. If you present anything but a guerrilla proposal, it means that all the marketing you've done up till that time has probably been wasted. Sheer agony.

The companies that get the business realize that all the time and energy they've put into wooing a prospective customer has been mere groundwork for the dazzling display of business acumen that will be made apparent when they get down to the business of making an actual proposal. Guerrillas follow these ten steps to make sure that their courtship activities lead to a long-term business marriage -- destined to flourish and prosper.

1. Guerrillas are always positive that they have qualified their prospects so that the marriage doesn't die during the honeymoon. Getting your prospect's attention is only a tiny part of assuring a lasting relationship. When your prospect shakes hands with you and says "Let's do it!" -- you've got to be certain that both of you will gain. You must be right for them and they must be right for you. Chemistry counts in both people-to-people marriages and in business-to-business pairings.

2. Guerrillas start immediately to warm up the relationship by building rapport with their prospects. They never want to walk into a prospect's office or conference room as a complete stranger. That's why they see their job as forging a bond before making the proposal. They know well that it's much easier to do business with friends than strangers.

3. Guerrillas identify a real need that their prospects have and know in their hearts that they can fill that need better than anyone else. They keep foremost in their minds the truism that people give their business to firms that can help them solve their problems and exploit their opportunities.

4. Guerrillas make absolutely certain that the prospect to whom they are making their proposal can use their products or services right now, and not at some future date down the road. They present their proposals only to people who are the ultimate decision-makers and can give them the go-ahead immediately without having to check with higher authorities.

5. Guerrillas rehearse their presentation till they've got it down pat. They decide ahead of time exactly what they want to show and tell, then plan intelligently, back their chosen words with graphics, and always ask for the order at the conclusion of the proposal. Non-guerrillas may make a decent proposal, but usually fail to ask outright for what they want.

6. Guerrillas prepare a document to leave with their prospects right after the proposal has been presented. The document summarizes the high points of the proposal, is completely self-contained, and includes important facts and figures that might have bogged down the

actual presentation.

7. Guerrillas design their proposals in a way that addresses their prospect's goals clearly and unmistakably. They are able to do this with a single sentence that proves they are directed and oriented to those goals. They find ways to repeat that sentence several times during the presentation of their proposal -- up front, in the middle, at the end, and in the written document they give to their prospect when the presentation is completed.

8. Guerrillas present their proposals in a logical manner so that one point flows naturally to the next, making the proposal very simple to follow. They know that the organization of their proposal is nearly as important as the content. Their proposals prove beyond doubt that they are qualified to get the business, and then that they are particularly qualified and deserving of the business right now.

9. Guerrillas speak and write in the first person, aligning everything they say with the prospect's business. They make it a point to talk about the prospect's business and not about their own. In fact, they only speak of their own business in terms of how it can help the prospect's business. This requires homework and guerrillas always do their homework before presenting any proposal.

10. Guerrillas are quick to use the services of a talented art director to help them reinforce their points visually, knowing that points made to the eye are 68% more effective than the same points made to the ear. They always try to visualize what they are saying, and they realize that if the visuals are shoddy or look home-made, they are sabotaging themselves.

When you are making a proposal, you must make the prospect like you, like your company, and love what your company can do for them. You must then actually ask for the business at the conclusion of the presentation. Never underestimate the brute power of straightforwardness.

Because guerrillas are ultra-keen about follow-up, they follow-up their proposals with a thank-you note within 24 hours of the presentation. That follow-up also includes a phone call to be sure no questions are left unanswered, to see if there is anything else the prospect would like to know, and to establish a start date for doing business together. The follow-up should be directed to the person who has the authority to say "yes."

The more data you have about your prospect, the better your proposal will be and the more likely it is to land the business for you. The better you prove that you understand the prospect's competitive situation, the more likely that prospect will want your help. And the better the chemistry is between your people and the prospect's people, the more likely it is that you'll get exactly what you want.

Never fail to keep in mind the power of a personal bond. And never forget that when you're making a proposal, your three greatest allies are your knowledge of the prospect, your enthusiasm during the presentation, and the personal bonding you have already established.