



Sales Coach Series

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Targeting accounts effectively

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We have all been guilty of devoting more time to an account than the subsequent business warrants. There are many reasons for this and three common issues are highlighted this month.

- Understand the competition. There is usually little point in going head-to-head with a strong incumbent supplier. Consider why the customer would change. If the reasons aren't truly compelling you are wasting your time unless you can change the decision criteria. This means identifying your key strengths over the incumbent and demonstrating quantifiable benefits to the customer's business. To succeed, however, your contacts must have the authority and/or influence to make the change.
- Some multi-nationals operate their divisions as autonomous businesses so you will need to develop each account individually. An overall sales campaign may identify corporate politics and dynamics but each division will develop their own purchasing policies. Inter-division referrals are often positive but can also have the opposite effect - make sure you understand the inter-personal politics before jumping in!
- Consider the time and cost implications of customers who constantly move goalposts, indiscriminately blame suppliers and lack organisation and control. Once embroiled it's difficult to cease work with an account even when profits are impacted.