

Focusing your prospecting and pitching on what matters most to clients

April 19, 2016

<https://www.beatonglobal.com/single-post/2016/04/19/Focusing-your-prospecting-and-pitching-on-what-matters-most-to-clients>

Paul Hugh-Jones

To win work, you have to convert clients from consideration to purchase, in other words you have to focus your prospecting and pitching on what matters most to clients. This requires effective business development, with prospecting and pitching that is more persuasive than your competitors who are also being considered. This means focusing on what matters to clients and demonstrating your potential value.

Our **beaton** benchmarks analysis of what drives client consideration and purchase shows that the attributes that clients value fall into two areas:

1. Expertise in your area of need, based on understanding your business and industry, leading to commercial advice and documentation (see the red box in the table below).
2. Highly responsive and reliable service (see the green box in the table below).

Drivers of consideration and final decision

Attributes	Drivers of consideration		Drivers of purchase decision	
	% 'yes'	rank	% 'yes'	rank
Expertise in your area of need	72	1	52	1
Understanding your business / industry	63	2	34	2
Commerciality of advice	62	3	33	3
Responsiveness	61	4	27	4
Reliability	53	5	15	8
Ease of doing business with	47	6	17	6
Excellent communication	44	7	8	12
Leading expertise	44	8	18	5

Expertise

The first area relates to industry specialisation, experience and reputation combined with technical expertise which clients know will result in the best commercial outcome. What they don't want is untailored 'product' from a top firm or technical expert. This is the reason why firms are now going to market by industry through their marketing and business development.

When prospecting, practitioners need to bring valuable ideas to clients, which are relevant to their area of need, demonstrate that they deeply understand the client's business, and have industry experience of similar situations which they can bring to bear.

The best pitches are preceded by regular prospecting, with valuable ideas and discussions around the client's strategic issues and specific areas of need, so that the pitch response is highly tailored based on having the full, rich context of what matters to the client, and what doesn't. The pitch response then focuses on matching and demonstrating the pitch team's specific experience that mirrors the client's needs.

Responsiveness and Reliability

The second area relates to service, which indicates that clients are judging what each firm would be like to work with. Clients want to know that the firm they choose will provide excellent service, be highly responsive and reliable and they assess firms through the prospecting and pitching process. If the service experience is poor when the firm is trying to win the client's work this does not bode well for future performance.

The ultimate expression of responsiveness is proactivity and this is highly prized by clients.

Proactivity can be interpreted as effort, which influences clients to switch firms especially when combined with taking valuable ideas to clients that are relevant to their needs.

Focus your prospecting and pitching on what matters most to clients

Here are some questions to check whether your prospecting and pitching are focussed on what matters to clients:

- Are your practitioners proactively taking ideas to clients to demonstrate their expertise in their area of need and relevant industry experience?
- Or does your prospecting involve generic capability statements and CVs?
- Does your pitch process start with a strategy session to identify the client's strategic issues and areas of need, then focus the effort on demonstrating the team's specific experience in those areas?
- Is the pitch document sent at 5pm on the due date, or received well in advance?
- Did the firm take advantage of the opportunity to ask questions in the pitch process?
- How quickly do you respond to client enquiries?
- How reliable are you on getting back to clients when you said you would?

Author

Paul Hugh-Jones is a [partner](#) of **beaton** and a director of [APPSMA](#) (Asia Pacific Professional Services Marketing Association). You can also connect with Paul on [LinkedIn](#) and contact him at paul.hugh-jones@beatonglobal.com.