

Introduction (00:03):

Welcome to the Same Side Selling podcast, dedicated to modern sales and marketing, innovation and leadership. Here's your host, Ian Altman.

Ian Altman (00:15):

Welcome to the Same Side Selling podcast. I'm your host Ian Altman. This week I want to speak with you about the challenge many people face when your potential client wants you to follow their process for making a purchasing decision. It sounds something like this. Man, we think you have good stuff, so let me tell you how we work this. We're going through what we call in RFP. Some people think it stands for request for proposal. Others believe it stands for really flawed procurement or really flawed process. Regardless, here's how it goes. The first thing we do is have you meet with our procurement people. They'll lay out for you what they are a hundred percent certain are our needs. Of course, they've never implemented your solution, so we're confident that everything checks out, not a big deal. Then we'll send you a bunch of documents that we create in WordPerfect from 1974 that we want you to fill out telling us all of your best secrets.

Ian Altman (01:06):

We might even share those with your direct competitors in the interest of full disclosure. If you ask a good question that nobody else would have considered, we'll be sure to share that question with them so that the fools who wouldn't have even known to ask the question can be considered for this project on a level playing field with those who did know to ask that question. By the end of the process, you probably won't earn any of our business. We tend to go with the lowest bidder who probably has no clue of how to deliver the results that we need, but when that doesn't work out, just know that we'll reach back out to you. But it will be different then, see since we will have already wasted a chunk of time and money on the wrong solution, we'll let you know that we want you to be involved, but we don't have much money now.

Ian Altman (01:46):

If you let us, we'll repeat that process several times. Look, you know that this approach doesn't work in the best interest of the customer. Here's the secret. The client's organization knows that it doesn't work either and if you agree to follow this process, you are part of the commoditization problem. I know you're thinking, wait, this is how government agencies and large companies insist that it works, and that's true except in those instances where they don't follow that process. And those rare cases, why do they break the rules? I'll tell you why. They break the rules in those instances because a, the problem they're solving is important enough that they need to solve it now and B, they're convinced that they will get the right results with your solution and cannot risk failure. Early on, years ago, in my prior technology services company, I got approached by a federal government agency to solve a business problem.

Ian Altman (02:42):

We proposed a fixed fee of \$25,000 to do the work. They asked how many hours it would take and we said, well, it really doesn't matter how many hours it's fixed fee. They kept asking and foolishly, cause we didn't know any better at the time, we ultimately told them it would take about 200 hours or \$125 per hour. They quickly responded that our rates were too high and they awarded the contract to a company that was billing the government \$43 an hour. About 18 months later the agency contacted us about the same problem. They were going to have the selected vendor contact us about subcontracting the task to our company. The government had already spent over \$280,000 with the other vendor and still did not have a solution. It took our team a mere three weeks to deliver the results they needed. So how do you help the client agree to follow your process instead of their process that might lead to procurement purgatory for them?

Ian Altman (03:38):

Well, the trap I see many professionals fall into is telling the client what you need them to do for you. It often sounds like this. We got to meet with the business person in charge of making the decision. This is the process that we follow in order to bid on these types of projects. It might seem logical, but your potential client doesn't care about the process that you want them to follow for you. So remember, why do clients circumvent their own processes? They do it when they feel that they have a vendor who is better suited to deliver the results that they need more so than another vendor. They also don't want procurement to mess it up. So let's help them envision a process that I call the Client Success Roadmap. The Client Success Roadmap is a process you can share with the client that maximizes their chance of a successful outcome.

Ian Altman (04:27):

It sounds like this. We've helped many organizations go from your current situation to a complete solution with amazing results. Now, some of the ways we initially used to approach those projects weren't as successful as now with all this experience we have, and so now we have a proven process that we follow. Would you mind if I shared that process with you? You'll almost certainly get a yes answer. The key then is to map out the process from now until they can measure results. In other words, your finish line is not the sale. Your shared finish line is results that you can measure. Be sure to discuss what could get in the way of them seeing results even if you delivered everything they asked for. They might describe a problem with training or compliance with other people in the organization. You want to add your remedies for each of those to steps in the process.

Ian Altman (05:22):

Ultimately you'll have a plan that starts with presales and takes them through the purchase, implementation and ultimately measuring results at the end. So the next time someone wants you to follow their hair brain process that is destined for failure, use the Client Success Roadmap to help them see that you have a process that will ensure results. There's a detailed lesson in the Same Side Selling Academy that walks through the client success roadmap. If

you are not already a subscriber, you can get a free preview by visiting samessidesellingacademy.com/podcast and use the code SameSide1 and one is the number 1 in that case. Remember, this show gets its direction from you, the listener. If there's a topic you'd like me to cover, a guest I should have on the show, just drop me a note to ian@ianaltman.com. Have an amazing week, add value and grow revenue in a way everybody can embrace, especially your customer. Bye now.