

# Selling to big Companies

1

Robert Middleton Interviews Jill Konrath

**Robert:** Welcome, everybody. This is Robert Middleton and Action Plan Marketing, with Jill Konrath, of SellingtoBigCompanies.com.

Jill was a client of mine a few years ago. We created one of her websites, worked on her marketing. Then she sort of retooled her business and developed a whole new business and website, called SellingtoBigCompanies.

Jill's specialty has always been selling and helping salespeople and she realized that there was a need for helping people understand the process of selling to big companies. So she now works with big companies in helping them sell to big companies, but she also works with small businesses like ourselves, us independent professionals who would like to get into big companies, but find it difficult, frustrating and in some cases impossible and we give up on it.

We have a number of topics to discuss. My aim is really to get into the nitty-gritty of what it takes to sell to big companies. So Jill, thank you very much for being on the call.

**Jill:** It's really fun to be here, Robert.

**Robert:** I'm really going to pick your brain today and try to find out everything I can about how to make this work for people. One of the things I've noticed over the years as people that I've worked with tried to do this, is you can't get through and people aren't interested and they don't return your calls.

Why don't you just sort of give me a foundation of this. You're a small business owner. You want to reach a corporate buyer. You have a service that you think is valuable and that could be sold within a corporation.

# Selling to big Companies

2

Robert Middleton Interviews Jill Konrath

Why don't we start with the buyer himself. What kind of state are they in when you approach them? What are the difficulties that you're facing right off the bat?

**Jill:** Well, the very first difficulty is finding out who the right buyer is in a large corporation. Because if you're talking about big companies like 3M or General Mills – and these are the ones that are in my particular backyard, even just finding the name of the right person is a major endeavor these days. That's obstacle number one that salespeople, or the people who are selling have.

The second obstacle then is how do you get their attention? Because quite honestly, once you do find out who it is that you're supposed contact – and you'll probably go through multiple calls to find the actual connection. The person that you are calling on is so swamped that they literally have no time on their hands these days.

What I tell people, and many of them have friends that work in large corporations, that these people have been downsized, right-sized, reorg'ed, shifted around here and there. Most people I know in big companies are handling the positions that two people held several years ago.

Everybody is totally doing a lot of CYA by inviting everybody else to meetings. And so these people are in meetings 90% of the day. In fact, the average executive in a corporation has like one hour un-booked during the course of a day, of a whole week.

**Robert:** Okay, so it sounds kind of impossible.

**Jill:** It's dreadful. That's the hardest thing. It's really dreadful. I know you used the statistics that I cited with you earlier

# Selling to big Companies

3

Robert Middleton Interviews Jill Konrath

about the average executive having 59 hours worth of work sitting on his or her desk. And that's true.

I just heard another statistic the other day that the average corporate person has less than 2% of the time available to think.

**Robert:** To actually just think and plan and strategize, right?

**Jill:** To think, plan and strategize. What they're doing is they're going to these meetings and they're reading their emails. They usually have 150 emails every single day, plus 20 vendors are trying to get ahold of them and they're just swamped. And they're doing everything. They're just trying to keep up, is really what's happening.

**Robert:** So given that, you have to have a very smart strategy to approach people, but why don't we get into that number one thing. How do you identify a potential buyer for your services in a company in the first place?

By the way, you might be trying to sell to big companies. In many cases, this approach we're talking about will work for smaller and medium sized companies, too, right? It will probably be a little easier for those companies.

**Jill:** Absolutely. What I tell people when they call me and write me about if what I do is appropriate for them, I tell them lots about working for bigger companies. Because so many people that are in professional services have this thing in their mind that they have to start out with smaller companies to prove their value. And they look at big companies and they think, why would they ever need what I do? They've got all the staff in the world. So they don't even think about approaching big companies, because they think they're overstaffed. Of course they have extraordinarily talented people who work there, so why should they even be needed?

# Selling to big Companies

4

Robert Middleton Interviews Jill Konrath

**Robert:** And your take on it?

**Jill:** My take on it is they've been so downsized and reorg'ed and shuffled around over the past couple of years that they desperately need outside help. They are going outside for everything these days. Quite honestly, many of the companies that I've gone to have lost some of their really talented people, because their good people leave and they go out on their own and start fresh.

What they need are people with good ideas to come in and bring them something different, because all they see is what's going around them every single day. They don't get ideas from all these other companies and so they kind of get stuck in their own rut. There's huge value for bringing outsiders in.

A lot of people look at big companies and go, why would they need me? They need you because you have different ideas. They need you because they don't have the manpower. They need you because they have a one-off project that maybe will span three-months and then it will be done and they don't want to hire any staff for that position.

**Robert:** So the good news is, there's definitely work out there. The bad news is, it's hard to get through.

**Jill:** It's hard to get through.

**Robert:** Tell me a little bit about identifying the buyer. What are some strategies that you need to use? Where do you start with that?

**Jill:** The first thing you do is you take a big company – it's like an elephant and you break it down into bite-sized chunks. If you look at a company like a 3M – and I will use them a

# Selling to big Companies

5

Robert Middleton Interviews Jill Konrath

lot as an example, because they are one of my clients and I've dealt with them for years.

3M has multiple business units and if I looked at them, they have an industrial business unit. They have a healthcare business unit. They have a safety and security business unit. They have these major things. You can find out this information from their annual report. You can find it out from their website.

Each of these business units has multiple positions. For example, in the safety and security division they will have library systems. They'll have highway systems. They'll have filtration systems divisions. Those are all there.

So what you do with a big company is, rather than going as an independent professional and trying to tackle the whole big company, you try to get a foothold in a division or a department within a division.

**Robert:** Okay. Say you identify – you're saying through the website, through the annual report, through other intelligence, what are other ways to really find out?

**Jill:** Another way you can do it, I wanted to get into another company that's in my backyard too. It's called Deluxe Check, another big company. The only person I knew that worked there was a lady who worked in the IT department and I don't deal at all with IT. But I called her up. She was a former neighbor. I explained what I was looking for and she gave me the name of three people, which I then called and said that Peggy said to contact you and that you could help me out. Two of them returned my call and then I got some more names and followed up. After seven calls I got the name of the right person to contact.

**Robert:** You have to do a little bit of sleuthing and if you have a connection or somebody that knows somebody, for

# Selling to big Companies

6

Robert Middleton Interviews Jill Konrath

instance, you can ask. I want to do some work with Intel, but I don't know anybody in Intel. Do you know anybody in Intel or know anybody that knows somebody in Intel? That could be a place to start, right?

**Jill:** Right.

**Robert:** And of course, tell them your message and what you do, et cetera, so that you get a connection to a right person.

**Jill:** Another thing that you can do is call a sales representative from any company, any division of any company and say I'm trying to find out who in your group handles XYZ.

**Robert:** Calling the sales department?

**Jill:** Yes.

**Robert:** Why is that?

**Jill:** Because salespeople will help other people out who are trying to sell.

**Robert:** Whereas you might get turned away from the RD department or IT or HR, sales is going to be a little more helpful, because they understand what you're going through, right?

**Jill:** Yes. You can call and say I'd like to find out who is the salesperson that handles Irvine, California? Then get the name of that person. They'll gladly give you that name.

**Robert:** Sure, so you could just call the switchboard and ask for that, right?

**Jill:** You could. You'd want to speak to the specific division and what you really need to do as an independent professional is you really need to identify where within

# Selling to big Companies

7

Robert Middleton Interviews Jill Konrath

the big company you want to start, so you don't just say I want to speak to a salesperson from Irvine. You want to speak to the salesperson from consumer foods from Irvine.

**Robert:** Okay. You should have a good idea of how your particular service can help this company. You do some exploring and checking out and calling sales or a friend, et cetera, until finally you can get a name.

I'm not sure if this is the best part, but traditional sales techniques actually hurt your chances of setting up meetings. Let's talk about some of the things that people do wrong in trying to approach a company. We've identified them, we've got a service, we know there's at least a potential connection. What are all the things that we make mistakes with?

**Jill:** The very first mistake is kind of a mentality mistake. There are a couple of things related to your perception and how you think about it. You have to approach it from the standpoint that they're not going to call you back. You have to know that from the get-go. The chance of them calling you back is slim to none.

**Robert:** It's slim to none, so why should you even try?

**Jill:** Because you're starting to develop a position on their radar screen. If you believe that what you do makes a difference – and this is what I always tell people. You have to really know that what you do makes a difference. You have to truly understand your value proposition. You can keep doing this, because you know that you create positive outcomes for people.

The first time that you call, of course they've never heard of Joe Blow from XYZ Corporation or Jill Konrath in White Bear Lake, Minnesota. Nobody knows who I am. So

# Selling to big Companies

8

Robert Middleton Interviews Jill Konrath

the first time I call I just leave a message and I make sure I leave a good message and we can talk more about that. But I don't expect a call back. Most people will say, well, they didn't call you back. They never called them back. Well, the answer is no. They're not going to.

**Robert:** I'm sure everybody on the call can relate to that. You get a call on your answering machine. You've got ten other messages, 50 emails that day. You don't know who they are. I think well, if it's really important, I guess they'll call me back, but I don't really think I need that at the moment, so I feel a little bad, but not for long.

**Jill:** Not for long, because you know that you're busy and everybody else does it, too. These people are absolutely swamped. They've got 150 emails a day. They've got 20 vendors calling them a day trying to get their foot in the door.

**Robert:** Okay, we'll get into scripts and stuff that you can leave on the machine. But let me ask you, what are some of the other mistakes that are made?

**Jill:** Let's continue on with the script type of thing. The other thing is if you know that nobody's going to call you back, what you have to plan is the whole account entry campaign. You have to say I'm really going after this division of 3M or General Mills or GE, whatever it is, because I know I can make a difference and because they are in the backyard or because they would be a prestigious client and work well. Whatever it is, you make a decision to target a specific account and get in.

I know that in the write-up we talked about not going after a pray and spray approach, which is trying to get into every big account. It's really focusing on where your particular knowledge and expertise can make a real difference and then saying I'm going to really go after

# Selling to big Companies

9

Robert Middleton Interviews Jill Konrath

these five accounts or these five divisions of this big account.

**Robert:** So instead of making two or three calls to 50 companies or divisions, you make 50 calls to three divisions. You just turn the numbers around.

**Jill:** You flip it around. Because if you focus and you narrow your search down, like for example in my particular arena, I have a focus in sales, obviously, but I don't do retail sales. I've got Target in my backyard and I won't call on Target, because that doesn't deal with what I do. I've also got some large financial services institutions and really within most financial service institutions, they're not involved in the complex sales, so I just cut out whole companies and sometimes big bunches of divisions of certain companies, because they don't fit where I excel.

So you sort, and you find these are the ones that I really could make a difference at. I know what my skills or talents are. I know where I fit. That means that you don't have to go after everybody. You only go after the ones that you think you can really do good work with.

**Robert:** Okay. What other mistakes are people making?

**Jill:** Other mistakes that they make are, because they only plan for one call, they don't see it as a sequence or an account-entering campaign. If you're really going after a big account, you do need a campaign. You need to logically think it out over a seven to ten contacts type of approach.

**Robert:** Okay. Tell us sort of a birds eye view of what the campaign might look like in terms of the calls and the emails that you send or the hardcopy materials that you might send. Then we can even get more specifically into what to say and when to say it.

# Selling to big Companies

10

Robert Middleton Interviews Jill Konrath

**Jill:** Okay. Let me just give you an example of a real life situation that I ran into. I got the contact name of the president of a division of a large corporation that I wanted to work with. I had done a significant amount of research on this corporation and actually had been following them for quite a while, because they were a really good fit for what I do.

**Robert:** What industry were they in?

**Jill:** They were in business to business services. I'd been following them and they were all of the sudden, one day, spun out of this company that they didn't fit in and they were all the sudden on their own. I knew that all the sudden they would be watched by Wall Street, because now they were their own standalone company. They couldn't hide their new product launches inside a bigger corporation. They were going to be scrutinized heavily.

I started my campaign on the company, because I did have a strong value proposition. We do need to talk about that. I know that what I do helps people shrink time to revenue on new product introductions. That's my consulting business and that's what I've been doing for 15 to 18 years, working on helping companies shrink time to revenue.

**Robert:** So in other words, more money faster?

**Jill:** More money faster, well, they've invested all this money to bring this new product to market and now they're turning it over to a sales force and they're saying go get them guys. And most companies really screw up at that time.

By the way, we need to come back to that, because that's important too.

# Selling to big Companies

11

Robert Middleton Interviews Jill Konrath

Most companies really screw up at that time and they think that salespeople are going to get the product and they're going to go running out there and sales are going to blossom and bloom and be explosive. Then all of a sudden, three months later they look around and they're not getting the results they want.

**Robert:** They're going through exactly what we're talking about here. They're getting rejected, they're not realizing how to approach people, which is what you teach people, right?

**Jill:** Exactly. This is what I do. I work with them on how to give a strong value proposition and how to go to market with their new product. It's exactly what we're talking about here.

The first thing I did is I left a voicemail for the president of this division of this company. I basically said, "Hi, this is Jill Konrath. I work with companies to shrink time to revenue on new product introductions. I know you've got a lot of new products coming out in the upcoming months. We need to talk."

**Robert:** I like that – we need to talk.

**Jill:** And I left my contact information. He didn't call me back. Of course he's not going to call me back. But I knew he wouldn't.

**Robert:** But at least you know he got that message, so that's marketing impression number one.

**Jill:** Right. I'm on his radar screen. But he quickly forgets me, you know. So about a week and a half later I call him back and I have version two of the same message. Not exactly the same, but I might say to him, I called you last week. This is Jill Konrath. I work on new product introductions.

# Selling to big Companies

12

Robert Middleton Interviews Jill Konrath

What I really do is help – and I use some different words that are important.

And then of course he doesn't call me back.

**Robert:** And you don't pick up the phone without a plan of what you're going to say, right?

**Jill:** Right.

**Robert:** You might even have notes in front of you or pretty much exactly what you're going to say.

**Jill:** I would say you have to do this more than once. You'll laugh when I tell you this, but it took me a week to figure out my account entry plan. I knew this account needed me. I knew it would be perfect for me.

**Robert:** They didn't know that yet.

**Jill:** They didn't know it, so I knew that I had to get it right. So anyway, during the course of the week I wrote out my script. One of the things I say to people is write out your script.

The first time people write out a script it is horrendous. They write it out like their English teacher is going to read it. It sounds so stilted and it's long and they're throwing in all these fluffy words and trying to make their product or service sound so wonderful. The more wonderful you try to make it, the more disgusted a listener gets listening to it.

**Robert:** So one of the things I say is it's all about them, not about you. It's about the results that you produce for them, not all the things that you do. It's not about your process, it's about what they get.

# Selling to big Companies

13

Robert Middleton Interviews Jill Konrath

**Jill:** It's only about what they get – ONLY about what they get. It's so critical for people to strip all this stuff out that's self-serving. I call it puffery. You've got to get rid of all that self-serving puffery and get right to the core business issue that you get.

**Robert:** When we go to the questions – we might get to questions faster today – we'll work on a few of those.

**Jill:** Okay. The third time I sent him a letter, which kind of outlined a little bit more. I gave him a little example of what I did.

**Robert:** Did you send a letter by email or hard copy?

**Jill:** Hard copy. I didn't have permission to email. I won't email an executive without permission.

**Robert:** Unless you've talked to him first, right?

**Jill:** Yes, or gotten permission to use his email.

The fourth time I called again. The fifth time I faxed something to him. I'm not sure if I'm getting these a bit out of order, but then I called again and I punched through to the administrative assistant. I was getting a little frustrated now. Mind you, I'm on my sixth or so attempt. I said this is Jill and I've been trying to reach him. Five times I've tried so far. She said oh, he's going to be in his office on Friday.

**Robert:** So you get an administrative assistant who's willing to help you. Do you find they're a little more willing to help you if you've tried a few times already, as opposed to the first time around?

**Jill:** Yes, they are. Especially if you say I'm calling, because I do work on new product introductions. I shrink time to

revenue. I know it's important to him. Then she says, "Oh he's going to be in Friday." I called on Friday and left a message, because he wasn't in. I punched on through. If you punch the zero, you get directed through to the administrative assistant at that point.

She answers the phone and I say this is Jill. I talked with you the other day. You told me he'd be in on Friday and he wasn't. She said oh, let me give you his cell phone number. You've been trying to reach him so hard.

**Robert:** Ah, so finally they have pity on you.

**Jill:** Yes. This has gone on for several months, by the way. I'm not a pest. It's just a campaign. I want to get in to work with them. I'm not desperate either. If you're desperate it sounds, they hear it.

**Robert:** If you've got this oh my God, I've got to get three corporate accounts in the next month and I don't have any money now, you're not in a very good position to do this.

**Jill:** You can't do it.

**Robert:** Impossible.

**Jill:** Impossible. Corporations don't make decisions in a month.

**Robert:** Yet we have to remember that the potential upside of this is not a \$5,000 or \$10,000 project, it could be a \$40,000, \$50,000, \$100,000 project in many cases.

**Jill:** In this particular case, when I finally did get the cell phone, I called the guy and he said oh yeah, you've been leaving me a lot of messages. I said that's right and I wouldn't be calling you unless I had a good reason. Then he said, well tell me what it is you do. I thought I'd

# Selling to big Companies

15

Robert Middleton Interviews Jill Konrath

explained it on multiple calls, but again, I had to be prepared for this actual question.

**Robert:** You just have to remember that these executives are ridiculously busy, they're behind on everything, they can't keep everything – it's just insane. It's just the way it is and you can't change that.

**Jill:** You can't change it, so you have to go with the flow. And usually if I call people and I do leave that fourth message, I'm pretty funny at that particular moment in time. It's kind of like you think about calling a friend and you call a friend the fourth time and you'd say, "My God, Robert, are you ever there?" I mean, it's almost to that point. I will say that to clients, I'll say, "This is Jill Konrath. This is the fourth time I've tried to call you. Are you ever in your office?"

**Robert:** I sure would like to talk to you, but I realize you're crazy busy. Here's my number and if I don't hear from you I'll call you back in another couple of days. Something like that.

Something not to do – people actually do this. "I've called you three times and this is something very important and please call me back." Don't make them wrong in any way.

**Jill:** No, never.

**Robert:** You can't do that.

**Jill:** You know that they're crazy busy. You say it to them. I know you're swamped and you're probably running like a chicken with your head cut off. It's okay to be funny on these calls. It makes you become a human being as opposed to a robot who's trying to sell them something.

# Selling to big Companies

16

Robert Middleton Interviews Jill Konrath

**Robert:** Right. So let your humanity shine through is another way of saying it.

**Jill:** Absolutely. The other thing, we talked about these phone calls. What I tell people is to write it out first and then to call and leave themselves the exact message on their own voicemail.

**Robert:** Ah, to see what you sound like.

**Jill:** Yes, it's humiliating. It's very humiliating.

**Robert:** You realize oh my God, I sound so stiff, I sound so formal, I sound so – why would anyone want to talk to me kind of thing, right?

**Jill:** That's exactly what you discover. Then you go back to the drawing board. Realistically, the first time you write it out, like I said, your English teacher would be really proud of you. It doesn't hear well. You've got to cut all those superfluous words out and you've got maybe 20-30 seconds, so you've got to get your message down to that. It means every single extra word you've got in there has to go. It has to get down right to the business value of what you bring to the table.

**Robert:** Okay. Why don't we talk about that a little bit more, about the value proposition or business value and crafting that. A lot of people on this call have got the InfoGuru manual and understand the basic principles of a value proposition. That was last week's newsletter. Everyone's heard of the Audio Logo, or most people have. So it's very similar to that, what we're talking about. Why don't we get your spin on it, about what a value proposition is and how to make yourself distinct with this value proposition.

**Jill:** Okay, I believe that there are three terms that are being used. There's elevator speech or the Audio Logo. There's

# Selling to big Companies

17

Robert Middleton Interviews Jill Konrath

the unique selling proposition. And then there's the value proposition. They're all three different and people have to understand the different purposes of these things.

Let me do some positioning. I believe that the Audio Logo or the elevator speech is absolutely perfect in a networking situation, when people say what do you do? That's what it's developed for, to say very simply, I help people shrink time to market on new products and production. I help salespeople get their foot in the door at big companies.

**Robert:** Right. Or the opposite, which I always promote, is talk about the problem. I work with companies who are frustrated, because their time to revenue is much too long. So that's your Audio Logo.

**Jill:** Yes, I work with companies whose new products have flopped and they can't have them flop anymore. That's the Audio Logo.

The unique selling proposition, and a lot of people really promote that. That's fine in a consumer environment, in my opinion, but if they're doing business to business sales, it only is impactful if a customer is making a decision. Because the biggest issue that most people have who are selling into a corporate market is that they're selling into a market where the customer isn't making a decision.

The unique selling proposition is about what makes you different from somebody else that's in the market and that is absolutely irrelevant to the corporate buyer. If anybody's calling and leaving messages about why we're different from every other consulting firm or OD firm or whatever kind of firm it is, leaves why it's different, it's irrelevant, because they're not in a decision mode.

The Audio Logo, the elevator speech, is the start of a value proposition. Because the value proposition is really talking in business terminology all the time and it's using words like we increase or decrease revenue, time to market, inventory shrinkage, whatever it is, those are the things that you can use in the Audio Logo.

But in a value proposition, in order to catch the attention of a corporate marketer, you are much better off if you can even stick in any statistics at all. That's where value proposition starts becoming really fundamentally different.

**Robert:** We have a reputation of increasing time to market or time to revenue by an average of 33% over a period of six-months. Then that's perceived as real value. It's not so general, in other words. Very good.

**Jill:** That's the real difference in a value proposition. First of all, you have to talk the language of business.

**Robert:** And the language of business in bottom-line terms is? Results, right?

**Jill:** Business results and outcomes that they want. Quantifiable results, the goals that they're shooting for. Things that they're measured on.

**Robert:** We have a lot of people on this call that are consultants, coaches, trainers, things like that, and I think sometimes people struggle with that. They say oh, it's hard to measure, it's hard to pin down. You've got to really make that a project for yourself, to understand what the bottom line results are. Work for a few clients and then meet with them and talk to them and say, what are the bottom-line results that you've seen from working with me?

For example, I work with a coach every week. Christian is fantastic and he supports me in what I do and does all these things. I could talk in very intangible terms. But I could also look at some results that I produced, financial results, as a result of working with him. Then Christian could take those and he says I've worked with independent consultants that have found over a period of a year their bottom-line revenue increased an average of 35-50%.

**Jill:** Much more powerful.

**Robert:** It's like okay, now I want to hear more and then all the other stuff will come in behind it. You can't make this stuff up, but you can get a rough idea.

**Jill:** There's a couple of things you can do. You can get a rough idea what it is. The best thing you can do is go ask your existing customers the kind of results that you can do. If you don't have that kind of stuff right now, what you do is you set up your next customer, if at all possible, to start getting results and get some metrics.

**Robert:** Starting to measure.

**Jill:** Yes, start to measure. So this next project, if you do get a project with a big company, you say, "Let's do some metrics. Where are you today, where do you want to be, let's measure."

I have a friend who is an organizational development coach and she does consulting for companies and she specializes in rolling up her sleeves and helping them solve the team problems that they have when they're trying to implement projects. One of her clients loved metrics and measured things before she came in and after she came in. So here I've got this friend who's a coach on this soft stuff who's got business metrics in terms of the

# Selling to big Companies

20

Robert Middleton Interviews Jill Konrath

safety things and everything related to the products and stuff that they are manufacturing.

**Robert:** That's great. A lot of people just have no sense of that what so ever. You've got to get some business sense that way.

**Jill:** Let me give you another example. I was teaching a mentoring class at the National Speakers Association in the Minneapolis chapter last year. One of the women in my class, again, worked on conflict resolution and that kind of soft type of thing. I just printed out a brochure that she had today and it talks about her workshop and "...we're going to work to preserve two of your most valuable assets, trust and camaraderie. Join us for a powerful hands-on seminar full of insights, laughter and surprise. Learn how to cultivate concern rather than criticism, shared responsibility and being hard on a problem, not soft on the people." That's what she was talking about before.

**Robert:** That's all nice stuff, however, it's not much of a value proposition.

**Jill:** It's not much of a value proposition. I said to her, "Go talk to your clients. You've done some good work with people. Go talk to them." So she went and talked to one group that was a clinic and they were just having horrible problems in the clinic. They spent \$20,000 for her to do consulting work with different teams. They were ready to shut down the clinic, because it was such a volatile situation. Literally, she was told by the clinic director that the return after one year was \$2.5 million on her \$18,000 investment. That because she helped them solve the conflict issues. This is what the return was.

**Robert:** By the way, I always recommend people put case studies together. Because when someone wants to know

# Selling to big Companies

21

Robert Middleton Interviews Jill Konrath

something more, you can say, "Let me shoot over a couple of case studies." Two, three four of them on a page or linked to a webpage with them on it, whatever, those are often the most persuasive, because here's where they were, this is what we did and this is what happened.

**Jill:** This is the results they got.

**Robert:** This is the results. If you can have some metrics in those, all the better.

**Jill:** There are some people who have trouble with metrics and I have to tell you, I have trouble with metrics in what I do in my consulting business. This is something that's near and dear to my heart, this particular problem that you're talking about. Because I work on new product launches and I come in with companies after they've really screwed up their previous launches, the work I do for them, they don't say, you know, Jill, we're going to benchmark and we're going to have half the country introduce the product your way and the other half introduce it the way that we've really failed at for many years. They never do that.

**Robert:** No, of course not.

**Jill:** They just go and they do it my way. How can we compare it to anything? It's like I don't have any statistics. But there are some statistics. I can talk about time to revenue, but I can't do a benchmark, because they didn't compare the East Coast versus the West Coast.

**Robert:** But they could compare what happened before.

**Jill:** They can compare what happened before. Some other metrics that have come out is I've reduced their number of calls to marketing by over 60% on a new product launch. That may sound strange, but marketing after a new product comes out is inundated with all these calls.

# Selling to big Companies

22

Robert Middleton Interviews Jill Konrath

I tell people to use this kind of thing frequently if they don't have their own statistics. I tell them to use industry statistics. For example, people in the graphics business, they will create neat graphics to go on a brochure, they're used by people that may or may not even use them well. They have a hard time saying what is the exact impact of their graphics. However, there's research that shows that excellent graphics makes X% difference.

**Robert:** Right, for graphics if excellent can give a 27% increase in overall blah, blah, blah.

**Jill:** Somebody that contacted me the other day about promotional materials sent me some examples of frogs, because my business is Leapfrog Strategy and so people like to send me frogs. They sent me this thing and it was a lumpy envelope with some frogs in it, sample frogs, and as I open it up and I'm reading the letter, it says lumpy envelopes have a 57% higher open rate than flat envelopes. That's a good industry statistic.

**Robert:** And it's very attention getting, isn't it? It makes you think, how could I use that, I'd like to get 57% more.

Let's look in another area here for a second. Actually I want to go back to your example of reaching this guy and sort of complete with that. What happened ultimately when you did get him on the phone and then you said this is what I do and then he asked you. Where did you go from there?

I think you told me this the other day, it was in a newsletter, it was a time that you had planned the call and knew what you were going to leave it on the message and instead on the first call or second call you got somebody in person.

# Selling to big Companies

23

Robert Middleton Interviews Jill Konrath

**Jill:** That's a whole different story.

**Robert:** I know. But the thing is, at that point you didn't know what to say. Now you finally got this guy on the phone. I've had this as well, oh my God, I didn't realize I'd reach you on the phone Robert, uh, uh, uh. It's really funny. You have to be prepared for that.

**Jill:** You literally have to have "talk tracks" for both things. What you'll do and I tell people, write the script out that you're going to use, call yourself on the phone and leave it on your voicemail. The first time you're going to hate how you sound, because you're going to be so boring or nasal or slow.

Then go back and edit then slice and dice and focus it more on the customer and then call your friend and leave the message. Get feedback from your friend. Help your friend know, if you were this kind of decision maker, would this at all interest you? If that person says no – call a good friend who will be brutally honest with you, because that's what you want. But if that person says no, you need to go back to the drawing board before you do it again.

The whole thing is to have something that interests your buyer. It doesn't matter what you want to say on the phone. What matters is what's heard.

**Robert:** Yes, what they want to hear, what they're looking for. Okay, what did you say when he said tell me more, Jill?

**Jill:** I told him that on new product launches there was this horrible gap between sales and marketing and marketing thought they had everything teed up and they threw it over the wall to the sales people and it went kerplunk and crashed and the new product never delivered the results that they wanted.

# Selling to big Companies

24

Robert Middleton Interviews Jill Konrath

**Robert:** By the way, that's an image that she uses. You even have a cartoon for that. It sort of sticks in the mind. You throw the idea over the wall and sales gets it and doesn't know where to go with it.



**Jill:** Right. I faxed him that cartoon as part of my account entry campaign, by the way.

**Robert:** And when you told him that he probably resonated with that, right?

**Jill:** I've used that same cartoon for about 14 years now. Every time I show it to people they go, "you must have worked for our company." I mean, it's that visual. It rings true to my buyer.

**Robert:** If you can't find a cartoon, you might want to find a cartoonist who could illustrate your idea.

**Jill:** I had that cartoon commissioned. I hired a cartoonist.

# Selling to big Companies

25

Robert Middleton Interviews Jill Konrath

**Robert:** Okay, very good. So then what happened?

**Jill:** Then I kind of explained a few things. He asked me a few more questions, which I was prepared for. And by the way, you always need to be prepared for the couple of questions that they're going to ask. They always will say we already use somebody. Or they always say we don't need any or whatever. And you have to be prepared. You can't just go oh, okay.

**Robert:** After all that work for God's sake, right?

**Jill:** After all the work of getting through, they are going to say tell me more. So you have to be prepared for tell me more. They're always going to say we already work with another training company.

**Robert:** How do you answer that question?

**Jill:** I say, "Of course you do, you're a big company."

**Robert:** You don't resist it, you go with the flow.

**Jill:** I go with the flow. "Of course you do, you're a big company. And the reason I want to talk to you is because there's a gap in what they're offering you that's real critical." And then I'll talk about that. They'll say I'm really busy right now. I say, "You bet you are and it's not going to get easier." It's always go with the flow.

**Robert:** We always think that at some time we'll have several spare hours to talk to vendors or do other stuff. It never happens.

**Jill:** Right. It never happens, so you just say of course you are. And you know that that problem related to this is not going to go away. You turn it. There's the agreement and then the and. I'm really busy right now, why don't you

# Selling to big Companies

26

Robert Middleton Interviews Jill Konrath

call me in six-months? Yes, Robert, I know you're really busy right now and that problem you're having on new product introductions is not going to go away. We need to get together and talk about it. It's a major issue.

**Robert:** By the way, if people say call me in six-months, what does that mean, Jill?

**Jill:** Get off my back, disappear.

**Robert:** Yes. And when you do call them back in six-months expecting that they're joyfully waiting at the appointed time for you to call, what will you find?

**Jill:** That they have no idea who you are.

**Robert:** Yes, and you'll have to go through the whole same process again. Then people give up completely. So you really have a shot right then, with some urgency. Hopefully you've built up some credibility, some visibility, some relationship just in the messages you've left, the letter that you sent, the fax that you sent, et cetera, to the point that it's like okay, maybe this person is someone worth listening to.

**Jill:** Right, that's exactly what I try to do.

**Robert:** Without being overly pushy and heavy-duty either. You don't have to do that.

**Jill:** You were telling me when we were talking yesterday, when we were preparing, about a lot of people that are looking at calling on big corporations, they just hate selling and they feel like they'd die rather than have to sell.

**Robert:** It's beneath them.

# Selling to big Companies

27

Robert Middleton Interviews Jill Konrath

**Jill:** It's beneath them. I said to them, Robert, "That isn't selling if they're looking at it that way. That's bad selling. Good selling is not a form of prostitution."

**Robert:** In my manual I call it selfless selling versus selfish selling. Selfless is like I'm really trying to help you and I have something of real value and I'd love to talk with you and see if we can explore something. Selfish is very manipulative and you're not really listening and you know you have the solution for everybody ahead of time.

**Jill:** When people think of selling they think of putting on their used car salesman hat and it comes out and they think they've got to do all that self-promoting puffery and they hate it. No wonder for God's sake. It's not how anybody wants to be.

Good selling isn't like that at all. It's like being an expert and knowing that what you do provides value and having the confidence that if they work with you, they'll get the results. And then if you feel that confidence inside, you don't mind calling again, because you know you make a difference.

**Robert:** Absolutely. So, the ultimate result of this call was what?

**Jill:** Oh, going back to that, what the president said is, I'm going out to Seattle – this is kind of a company that was spread around the nation. I'm going to the Seattle office on Monday. I'll be talking to the key person there who's in charge of the marketing department. I will prep her for you and you call on Tuesday. So I called on Tuesday. She happened to be coming to Minnesota, because they had some meeting here. I met her and a couple of weeks later I had a \$40,000 contract, bingo, like that. It wasn't very hard.

# Selling to big Companies

28

Robert Middleton Interviews Jill Konrath

**Robert:** Wow. In one sense it's that it takes a lot of knocking on the door in different ways, but once you've connected and you have that value proposition and you know what you're about and you have the materials to back it up.

Did he ever look at your website or any of your articles or any of your other material?

**Jill:** He did check out my website, absolutely. It shows that you're real and that you're of quality.

Let me just share with you one other thing that kind of ties along with that. I do do new product launches. I also get into big companies that do a lot of different work for the larger corporations. 3M I've been in for years and it's really easy because they start referring you to the other areas. But, while I can do all these different things – and I can do sales training on a variety of topics and I can do a ton of sales tool development for my clients and I do executive meetings with the sales executives and planning. I do a lot of stuff.

Most independent professionals, when they're calling on a larger corporation want to try to share with them the whole scope of what they do. They're kind of like if I tell them I can do all these things then they'll say oh, we need that 17<sup>th</sup> one you mentioned. But that doesn't work. So what I tell everybody who's an independent professional that I work with – and I do work with them. Most of my friends are independent professionals, so I do a lot of talking on this one on one just to my friends.

Pick the area that hurts the most that you saw that's a critical need right now. What is some quick thing that you can get in with? You might be able to do a whole culture change type of thing or you can redo their whole website or whatever it is.

But take a look at what it is that you do for clients and what is one thing that is important to them, costly, disaster prevention or whatever it is? What's one thing you can do to get your foot in somehow? Solve one thing, because once you get in on any project you start developing a stronger relationship with the decision makers and you start finding out the inside scoop on things.

**Robert:** Then who knows what you can sell from there.

**Jill:** That's when the real opportunities start. One time a "foot in the door strategy" is something I've never ever done. I called this one division about new product launches, because that's always my foot in the door strategy. It has been in the past, the new product launches.

Although now I have to tell you, "getting your foot in the door" is the big thing I'm using right now. That's the critical business issue facing sales organizations today. Salespeople from large corporations are facing the exact same problem as everybody who's on the phone today.

You can go after everything, but if you just focus on the one thing and get in, then all the sudden the opportunities become widely apparent to you.

**Robert:** This makes a lot of sense.

**Jill:** Focus, focus, focus on those things. I always read the newspapers and I think as independent consultants there's a lot of good information in the newspapers. I'm always looking for certain triggering events, because I think that there are certain things that create needs for what we do.

**Robert:** Yes, for instance we hear a huge amount about – I just heard on the news the other day the whole thing about the

minimum wage and how our governor didn't pass a higher minimum wage, because it would hurt jobs. Do we have a service somehow that would address that or interface with that or something, because it's something that everyone is talking about and thinking about?

**Jill:** I'm not sure how to exactly tie in with what you're saying. I do know how I use the news.

**Robert:** You're talking about a specific problem about a specific company, not just general news.

**Jill:** Yes. I have certain triggers that I'm looking for when I work with companies. For one thing, if companies go through a merger or acquisition there's a ton of work created for outside people at that moment in time. I think everybody that's listening should start thinking mergers and acquisitions and read when that's happening and think how does that apply to the kind of work that I do? It's going to change the relationships with their customers. It's going to change their IT systems. It's going to change their marketing. It's going to change their financials. Any merger or acquisition has huge ripple effects in terms of opportunities that are created for independent professionals.

**Robert:** Great. Jill, before we go into the questions from participants, I want to ask you another question. One thing that you've done as well is you've created an InfoGuru strategy of having a lot of information, information on your website, eZine articles, et cetera. Now how does that all fit into your marketing now? I know that you're getting business and people are discovering you on the web and actually calling you now.

**Jill:** Yes. What's interesting is I am really good at getting appointments and calling out and getting work, because I'm in sales, so I understand how to do it. But what's been

fascinating for me is what's happening because I've really developed a website strategy and an InfoGuru strategy.

In the last six-months, 100% of my business is coming from my online strategy. I'm talking big companies calling me out of the blue.

**Robert:** How are they finding you? Are they finding you on search engines or are people passing your name along and people are visiting the site, that kind of thing?

**Jill:** Robert, I don't exist on search engines. As much as I'd like to say I have a great search engine strategy, I don't have the time to think about it.

**Robert:** I find this particularly interesting, because this is what I tell everybody, do other things in terms of building relationships and referrals, et cetera, et cetera, eZines. Even if people don't find you on the web, your name gets spread around and the right people come to your site.

This is so important. We did the [TeleSeminar on eLists](#) a few weeks ago. Go ahead.

**Jill:** I try to optimize my website for certain words to get high-end sales, because that's the key words that I want. I've gone 400 or 500 people deep in Google and I don't show up.

**Robert:** Yes, it's very competitive. So how are people finding you?

**Jill:** Articles. Every time I write my newsletter I take the article and I re-purpose it in multiple formats.

**Robert:** Tell us a few ways.

**Jill:** First of all, over time I've developed relationships with other eZine vendors from portal-type sites. There are

certain sites that are conglomerate sites where people go to find sales articles from lots of different people and you can find these in a self-help site. In the marketing field there's like MarketingProfs.com and others, IdeaMarketers.com. People go there to get articles or they send out their own eZines.

**Robert:** Write this down, MarketingProfs.com.

**Jill:** IdeaMarketers.com, people go there to get articles for their eZines. In the sales area there's SalesTrainingCamp.com and then there's EyesOnSales.com and JustSales.com, SalesVault.com. I just did a search, where would salespeople go online? That was my thinking.

If I was a salesperson, what would I look for online? I sat down with one of my customers and started typing in where I'd find good stuff. When I found good stuff is when I started to email them articles and said I've got some good articles on sales and here's one. I'd include it in my letter and then the next thing I'd know, my article would pop up on their newsletter.

**Robert:** How many articles have you got out there?

**Jill:** I notice on EyesOnSales.com the other day, they have 25 of my articles posted.

**Robert:** Wow! Are these articles that were originally eZine articles.

**Jill:** They were all eZine articles. I have never written an extra article.

**Robert:** Interesting. Your strategy is virtually identical to mine. My only difference is I don't even approach them, they find me now and say can I use your article.

# Selling to big Companies

33

Robert Middleton Interviews Jill Konrath

**Jill:** Now they find me, too.

**Robert:** But you're being a little more proactive. You're finding places to post the articles. Then they go out in this eZine, they hear about you, they visit your website, it gets passed around and then you get the call from XYZ big company. Of course, that sale is usually infinitely easier, because they called you and they've already checked you out.

**Jill:** Yes, they know everything about me. They even know my cat's name!

**Robert:** They know your cat's name, because it's on the website. Yes, well people know that I'm a jazz fanatic, because that's on my website. These are good things.

What Jill has really talked about are two things, the short-term strategy, getting your foot in the door. And the long-term strategy is building the InfoGuru strategy of a good website, articles and an eZine.

A lot of people that I've worked with only want to do the long-term strategy, because obviously it's nicer if people call you.

**Jill:** Yes, but that takes about a year or two to get going.

**Robert:** It takes a lot longer to go. It can be over a year before it happens.

**Jill:** You're going to starve to death.

**Robert:** If you've got the money and you've got other business already, go for it with that. But if you want to get some business faster, you've got to use the knocking on doors strategy that we talked about.

Are you ready to take some questions?

# Selling to big Companies

34

Robert Middleton Interviews Jill Konrath

**Jill:** Yes I am.

**Robert:** Okay. Who has the first question?

**Susan:** This is Susan from Brooklyn.

**Robert:** Hi, Susan.

**Susan:** Hi. Jill, you were talking a little bit fast when you were referring to the cartoon and the story behind the cartoon and I didn't really get what that was all about.

**Robert:** Can they find that cartoon on your site somewhere?

**Jill:** Not on my SignTheBigCompanies site. That's on my corporate site.

**Robert:** Which is?

**Jill:** [Leapfrog-strategies.com](http://Leapfrog-strategies.com) and you click on the Jumpstart button on the menu. I developed the cartoon to better explain to my decision makers what difference I made in their organization. Actually, it really explains the problem. I had a solution cartoon and I ended up throwing it away, because I like putting the problem cartoon in front of them.

**Robert:** I've said a million times, problems are more attention-getting and they're funnier, too. "Have you gone through all of this horrible stuff?" Think of it that way and you can maybe develop a cartoon around it.

**Jill:** It really wasn't expensive to develop a cartoon. I paid probably \$300 to develop two. I think that right now you can go onto eLance.com and get somebody from a foreign country developing one for peanuts.

# Selling to big Companies

35

Robert Middleton Interviews Jill Konrath

**Catherine:** Catherine here. I have a question. How do you get the first big client? I've met with a couple and they always want to know what other big clients I've worked with.

**Jill:** Can I ask you a few other questions?

**Catherine:** Sure.

**Jill:** Have you ever worked in a big company yourself?

**Catherine:** No.

**Jill:** No, okay. A lot of people have and they forget to leverage their own expertise.

What I would suggest from the standpoint of working with big clients, you move upstream. If you've only worked with smaller sized clients, go to the medium sized clients. The smaller clients actually, if you work only with them, it has absolutely no credibility with the larger corporations.

You do need to take a step and work with a mid-sized company first. I'll tell you this, a lot of my clients, like I'm working with a large group life insurance company, but the division I'm working with only has six salespeople and it's only a \$25 million division.

Inside the big companies are divisions and departments that aren't huge. So if you develop \$15 million and \$20 million clients, that will have credibility to \$15 million and \$20 million divisions or departments. You have to kind of build it from that perspective. It's hard to make the full jump from really small clients to a large corporate client.

**Catherine:** Thank you.

**Brendan:** I have a question. This is Brendan, from Paris. You talked about the value proposition. Could you give two or three sort of areas. Yours is a lovely one, reducing the time of marketing to sales. But can you give a few other pointers as to things that really appeal to companies for the value proposition?

**Jill:** I found one on a website one day that really interested me. It was from a lady who does training on how to be better organized. She was charging X amount for her training program and what she had was a return on investment type of calculator based on that.

She said based on the fact that your average employee is spending X amount of time doing this, she came up with the fact that her workshop would actually save a company \$2 million. If they put 25 employees through it and the average salary was \$75,000, that they would save \$96,442,000. She just took her training program and did some benchmarking type of thing. If I save the average person 30-minutes a day at this particular salary, this is the kind of savings that I can give. She used that to get into other companies.

I was talking to a lady who does industry research for salespeople and one of the things that she did is she calculated out the amount of time that salespeople spent investigating accounts online and then took the fully loaded salary and calculated the difference between what she did and her time, versus their time. She was able to leverage that to get her foot in the door. It's a very compelling thing.

**Robert:** Does anyone on the call help companies reduce attrition and increase retention? That's such an easy one to do numerics on, because you can say every time we hire somebody it costs this amount of money. Every time we lose somebody, blah, blah, blah. People often just let those

numbers slip through the cracks and they have no idea what the cost is of losing people. You can say if we reduce your attrition by X percent, which is low for what we usually do, and given that you have X number of people, blah, blah, blah, you're looking at a savings over the next year of \$2.7 million. Even if we cut that in half it would be \$1.35 million.

**Jill:** Right. You can even lowball on some of these statistics and come out with some really incredible results. But the key is that you just have to look at the measurements, your own measurements or what other people are doing, the industry stuff.

**Robert:** You have to believe it and really be firm in it as well.

**Jill:** You have to be firm in it and you have to know it from the bottom of your heart and soul that what you do really does make a quantifiable difference. You need to start thinking it. What kind of consulting or work do you do, the guy from Paris out there?

**Brendan:** I want to specialize in organization with managers or executives in the IT sector. That's my background and I know the language and I know all the problems they have and I know there's a terrible mess out there.

**Robert:** Now that's a matter of turning that into something quantifiable.

**Brendan:** Exactly, that's why I'm asking.

**Jill:** What kind of problems do they have?

**Brendan:** The usual ones – wasting of time, too many meetings, no decisions or too many people making their decisions, people contradicting, outside suppliers not supplying the goods, bad contracts – a lot.

# Selling to big Companies

38

Robert Middleton Interviews Jill Konrath

**Jill:** You have a good story in those. Everything you're talking about is a wonderful story. You can use some of those things as-is in your account entry campaign. Sometimes you want to throw in some metrics. You don't have to have metrics on every single thing.

When I call people right now, because it's such a hot issue for people to get their foot in the door at big companies, it's huge. I don't even have to give metrics on it because it makes people so hot right now.

**Robert:** You ought to get some, Jill.

**Jill:** Let me tell you what I can say. What is the value of one new customer to you? I have them look at what is the value of one new customer. That's all I have to do is get one new customer as a result of working with me.

**Robert:** They pay for your services many times over, especially if it's a big corporate client.

Okay, next question.

**Revel:** This is Revel Miller, from Santa Barbara, Jill. You had mentioned a number of places where you can post your articles. I think you said MarketingProfs.com and IdeaMarketers.com?

**Jill:** Right, but let me give everybody the best clue of all. This is the one that I discovered makes all the difference in the world. Actually there's two clues. What you have to do is find somebody who is ahead of you in your own field. For me I took a look at who was posting articles online that was well-recognized already. I entered that person's name in Google. I found out where his articles were posted online. As a result of doing that I found more sites online that took articles than one can ever, ever imagine.

# Selling to big Companies

39

Robert Middleton Interviews Jill Konrath

**Robert:** You just have to know somebody that's in your industry that's a bit ahead of you.

**Jill:** Right. All you have to know is like who's a good management consultant or who's really a Guru in the web development field.

**Robert:** You're going to find their articles out there if they're smart at all.

**Jill:** The other thing I've done is I've gone to LinkPopularity.com and I've typed in some people's websites who get high rankings to see who's linked to them, because they've usually got article out there. So I'm kind of a nosy person, but I can tell you, this has made all the difference in the world, by finding out, like where is Dave Kale posting his articles online?

**Robert:** If they post his articles, there's a good chance they'll post yours if yours are good articles.

**Jill:** It doesn't matter, I say MarketingProfs and IdeaMarketers, but I'd say find whoever is in your field and is doing a good job and got a good name already and type their name in. That's all you need to do.

**Robert:** All those people out there doing marketing consulting are going to put my name in – and I'm finished.

**Jill:** I did that, Robert. I put your name in!

**Robert:** I haven't even seen all the places my articles are. I have over 500 links to my site and many of them are articles. It definitely creates some traffic and interest and subscribers, et cetera.

Okay, next question.

# Selling to big Companies

40

Robert Middleton Interviews Jill Konrath

**Jane:** Well, since no one's asking, I'm going to ask a crazy one if I may. This is Jane in Chicago. Jill, you have a reading disability and I wonder if you made that up or if there is actually such a thing, because I think I probably have it.

**Robert:** Is that on your website somewhere?

**Jill:** It's on my website. I made it up.

**Jane:** You made it up, okay.

**Jill:** Do you have that same problem?

**Robert:** What was the context of that?

**Jill:** The context is that on my website I say that I have a reading disability. It's called addictive reading disorder, ARD. (laughter)

**Robert:** In other words, you read a lot.

**Jill:** I read a lot. I'm a compulsive reader.

**Robert:** And don't understand anything?

**Jill:** No, I understand everything. I just throw it all away. I've got so many things going on in my brain I can't stand it.

**Robert:** Also known as InfoGuru Syndrome.

**Jill:** Yes.

**Participant:** Jill, I have another question. Once you get this person on the phone and they show some interest and you say can we have a meeting, yes, okay now what happens? You're going in to meet this person face-to-face. How much time do you expect? What are they expecting from

you? What do they want from you and how do you deliver it?

**Jill:** What they want from you is ideas. What you've got to realize is that people don't want to talk about your service, they want to talk about their problems and ideas. If you haven't been to my website, you should go there and sign up for my newsletter, because I have a salescall planning guide, which tells you how to plan a question based meeting with a client. [www.sellingtobigcompanies.com](http://www.sellingtobigcompanies.com)

The other thing too, that I often do in telephone conversations or when I leave voicemails, is I often will say – and this is really, really important, it's not just that you drop your value proposition on them. What you have to say when you're leaving messages is, "I've been researching your company." Every message that you leave should say, "I've been researching your company" or "I've been studying your company, I've been talking to some of your competitors, I've been talking to some of your customers" or whatever it is that indicates that you know something about them.

Then you say, "and I have some ideas about how you can do this." Or, "I've been researching your company. I see that this is happening. We've been working with other companies similar to yours to reduce this or to improve this," and you tie it in.

When you meet with them, what they want to do is they want to hear some information from you. What we haven't said is what do most people say when they call them on the phone. I can tell you first of all, here's what 95% of the conversation or the voicemails that they get are, or the actual phone calls that they pick up, it's, "Hi Robert, this is Jill Konrath, I'm a consultant with Leapfrog Strategies and we specialize in new product introductions and basically what we really do is we help

# Selling to big Companies

42

Robert Middleton Interviews Jill Konrath

companies when they're launching new products and we develop tools and things for their salespeople and we do some of the training for their salespeople on the other end. And I'm calling because I'd really like to set up an appointment with you to find out more about your needs in the new product launch area and share with you what we can do." And then they give some how to contact information.

I can tell you right there, you need to have people listen to it and say when would you beep me off? Because with that message I'd have been beeped by the second sentence.

"Hi Robert, this is Jill Konrath, I'm a consultant with Leapfrog Strategies." – beep. You need to ask people to be brutal on your beeps.

A couple of other things that I said in there that are just terrible, that meandering about what I do is terrible. Then when I said I'd like to come in and explore your needs, nobody wants to take time to explore needs. You never say that anymore. And you never say and share with you what we can do, because nobody wants to be talked at the whole time.

You focus it like, "Jill Konrath, Leapfrog Strategies. I've been researching your company. I know that time to market is real important to you and I have some ideas about how you can shrink this amount or whatever it is. Let's talk."

So you kind of make it real business-like, peer to peer business-like. What that does is it changes the whole dynamic of your actual sales call. Because then when you actually do have the meeting with the client. It's like Hi Robert, nice to meet you, glad we're here today. As I mentioned on the phone I have some ideas. I do a lot of work with clients when they're launching new products. I

# Selling to big Companies

43

Robert Middleton Interviews Jill Konrath

suspect you're coming out with some new products or you wouldn't have met with me. Let me just get a little background on you before I tell you what I'm doing.

What you're doing is you set it up and say. "I'm here to talk about some ideas or to share with you how we're helping these people, but before I do it, let me ask you a few questions." Then you move into asking questions and finding out what's going on in their organization. Again, when you're asking the questions, you should have your questions prepared ahead of time. You should absolutely never think that you can go into a call and punt.

The first thing that people will say to you when you're in there is okay, now tell me about what you do. You've got to have your little thing prepared in terms of, "...basically I work with companies in the gap between sales and marketing. It's a terrible gap. New products fall through it all the time and the salespeople go crashing out there. That's basically what I do. I help shrink the time to market. But really, before I go into that, let me understand your business."

You give them an overview, you kind of share your idea and then you transition into the questions. They're okay with questions once you've keyed it up and explained that you have some ideas and you work with other companies.

They might say, "Tell me some other examples," and so you share an example or two.

**Robert:** The thing you really want to avoid is going into presentation mode right off the bat. "Well let me pull out my PowerPoint presentation and tell you my 500 things about how I work." You don't want to do that. People do this all the time.

# Selling to big Companies

44

Robert Middleton Interviews Jill Konrath

**Jill:** Never! The biggest mistake I see people make that are independent professionals, is they think oh my God, I finally got this appointment, so now they think they've got to share everything again when they're out on that call.

The thing is, if they do share everything, they will never have a chance to meet with that other person again. They have to really focus on what is their key issue that they solve, that's their foot in the door strategy, something that's really painful that needs resolution right now or that can help them achieve something that's really important to them right now and focus on that. Focus the whole sales call on just a small piece of what they can do as opposed to their whole breadth of their services.

**Participant:** Are they expecting you to leave them something, a brochure or something?

**Jill:** No, not really. I've never had a brochure.

**Robert:** You could leave some case studies. You could leave an article.

**Jill:** Yes, the thing I think is most important these days are case studies or articles.

**Robert:** People want to know results. People want to know how you think.

**Jill:** Brochures are a waste of money. I just did a seminar yesterday for a bunch of vendors who sell into the securities industry and some of the statistics I saw on brochures was that 90% of brochures are thrown away, they're not even used. Once they get into the customer's hands, I can assure you that almost 100% of them are tossed.

# Selling to big Companies

45

Robert Middleton Interviews Jill Konrath

**Robert:** Whereas an article, nicely laid out, looks attractive, five or six or seven pages, that can be duplicated and be passed out to people. It can really position you, brand you, talk about your solution. Everything has to be congruent. Your message initially, your initial letter, your phone follow-up, your initial call, the materials, all have to resonate with this same value proposition. If it doesn't, then people are getting confused and they don't know what it is you're really offering and all these things you have. They don't want to think. They want to be guided in the direction where they need the help.

**Jill:** I can tell you, they don't have time to think. It's not that they don't want to, it's they don't have time. So unless you're blatant about the difference that you make, they'll never make the connection themselves.

**Robert:** And they'll say, "Call us in six-months," for the next ten years and nothing will happen.

**Jill:** Nothing will happen, ever, ever, ever.

**Robert:** We have time for just a couple of more questions, so go ahead.

Brendan: A very quick one from Brendan. What about visiting cards? Do you have anything special on your business card?

**Jill:** Do I have anything special?

**Brendan:** Yes, or is it just name and phone and address?

**Jill:** On my corporate one, I have that I'm the Top Frog. I do that for laughs, honestly I do. It makes people smile and laugh.

# Selling to big Companies

46

Robert Middleton Interviews Jill Konrath

**Robert:** You might want to have a tag line that ties into your value proposition.

**Jill:** I do, I have a tag line.

**Robert:** That's the key thing, so it's understandable and it all is somewhat congruent.

**Brendan:** So this is the best way of doing it.

**Jill:** What is?

**Brendan:** Just writing a tag line.

**Jill:** Right. Mine says Quantum leaps, extraordinary sales results and it's got my frog jumping on it.

**Participant:** I have a question. It's actually going back to the eZines articles thing. It's something I've never done. Where are good places to go and get some ideas to things like length, topic, things like that, on articles in eZines?

**Robert:** Good ideas on how to put together an eZine, et cetera. Do you have the InfoGuru marketing manual?

**Participant:** I don't know. I might have. I don't remember.

**Robert:** Once you get the InfoGuru marketing manual you never forget it! There's a lot in there about writing articles and putting together eZines, so you might want to [check that out online](#) if you don't have it yet.

There are a lot of books on writing and writing marketing writing that might be useful. My favorite one is called Cash Copy, by Jeffery Lant. A wonderful book on writing for business.

# Selling to big Companies

47

Robert Middleton Interviews Jill Konrath

**Anne:** I have a question for Jill. First of all, this has been fabulous. Thank you. Jill, what has been your greatest success, your best accomplishment or surprise along the way here? This is Anne from Minneapolis. Thank you.

**Jill:** The biggest surprise for me has been the power of the InfoGuru strategy over time. I know that people can't exist on it for at least a year or two, but if you devote enough time to it on an ongoing basis, then the work starts coming to you and everything you have to do about outreach to go after big companies is a lot easier. That's been the biggest learning for me in the last two years.

Honestly, I did not launch SellingToBigCompanies to get big company clients. I did it because I had so many friends who were struggling with consulting businesses. I did it for that market segment. It totally blew me away when the large corporations started coming in because of this strategy.

**Robert:** With that, we've got to wrap it up. Thank you very much, Jill. I just want to mention one last thing. When you enrolled in this program you saw that there was the offer of Jill's Jumpstart program, which is four CDs a workbook and four or five eBooks. How many, Jill? Several eBooks. For anyone that's been on the call, we'll credit you \$25 towards that program. I'll be sending people the link to the page where you can get that if you want to take advantage. It goes into all of these topics in even more detail. It was taped from a live workshop and there's a lot of even more specific things that can help you if this is the direction that you really want to put your attention.

Do you want to add a little bit about the program, Jill?

**Jill:** The program is one that I did last year or early in the year and it was done for people who are in professional

# Selling to big Companies

48

Robert Middleton Interviews Jill Konrath

services. Although I did have only one person who sold products in the whole group. But it was how to develop and find your own value proposition, how to create your own target market, how to – how to, how to, how to get your foot in the door of big companies is really the whole thing.

The four CDs are the workshop and you can actually hear the people asking questions and talking about some of the same things that you're talking about. And then there are the eBooks on your value proposition, your elevator speech, your target market and I think there's another one in there, too.

The link is: [actionplan.com/tc/bigcos092104.html](http://actionplan.com/tc/bigcos092104.html)

**Robert:** The regular price of that program is \$147, so we're going to take \$25 off of it, because you've been in this program. You'll get the link with that on the page that has the real audio. People that have ordered the CD, you'll get that. People that ordered the transcript, that will be emailed to you by Friday.

So with that, thank you very, very much for participating. I hope you got some great value. We'll talk to you again on the next teleclass.