

# How to Get Your Competition Fired

## Book Review

How to Get Your Competition Fired (Without Saying Anything Bad About Them), by *Randy Schwantz*

I've seen an awful lot of sales training and sales methodology, some of it good and some of it worthless. As a result, I had never purchased a book on sales – until this one.

The premise is that most selling systems fail to address one huge, stark reality: there are three people in the selling situation, not just two. There is the buyer and the seller, of course, but there is usually also a current provider.

If you want the business, that provider must be unseated.

Without a strategy for that, the incumbent typically gets the last shot and will retain the business. All your other efforts will fail to win the deal until the buyer is willing and able to bounce that provider.

If you're in selling situations like this, I have to say this book delivers the best approach I've seen to replace an incumbent. It's called the Wedge.

Notice the parentheses in the title: "Without Saying Anything Bad About Them." That's important, because disrespecting the competition is essentially disrespecting the buyer's previous decision – rarely a smart play.

The author delivers a brilliant statement about developing your own differentiation in advance: Your job is to "proactively control the experiences



Greg Zirkle, Fox Marketing Group

*"Making the sale does not happen when you build rapport or make a great presentation, but when the current provider is unseated."*

of the client, making their future more predictable." That sentence alone has been worth the price of the book to me.

Most of your competitors are reactive, but that's basic and easily copied. "Good service" is not a sustainable differentiation. But proactive service – added value – that reduces uncertainty? If you can build that into your pitch, you're off to a running start already.

First you have to help your prospect realize they are being underserved, that they still have problems or pain. If there is no realization of a problem, there won't be a sale for you because no solution will be needed.

The sales call starts with "picture perfect" questions, which describe the ideal level of service. As the prospect answers, they'll begin to see the gap between what's real (current provider) and what's ideal. And it will be in their own words.

As the author says, it's easier to get someone to deny things are perfect than to admit there's a problem.

When you finally get your prospect to identify something that's missing from their current vendor, typical sales techniques would have you pounce and show how you're better in that area. But not the Wedge. Once you have one or more of these openings, your next step is very important:

Dismiss it.

You'll tell the prospect, "Well, maybe it's not that important because [insert excuse here]." This instantly measures the importance of the pain by downplaying it.

It's very, very bold, but it's a test to see if the prospect will insist on the importance of the issue. If they agree it's not that important, you still don't have an opening and the prospect still doesn't "need" a solution.

But if it is important to them, the prospect pushes back – in your favor!

This is how the Wedge works without you saying anything negative about your rival. You're not pushing the prospect in a predetermined direction. Rather, the prospect stated the missing level of service, and the prospect stated its importance.

*"Dare to downplay the importance of your competitor's flawed service, and the prospect will push back in your favor!"*

You've heard it's good to make the prospect think that change is their idea, and this is how it's done.

The next couple steps help the prospect describe to you the solution they want, what they picture as an improvement or ideal. This lets you know exactly what to do, and strengthens the prospect's ownership of the idea.

But there's still the issue of the current vendor getting a shot at saving the business and derailing your sale. The Wedge close helps prevent this by having the prospect face "the hard part," letting the current provider go when they try to match your proposal.

You're basically rehearsing your prospect on firing the competitor, mentally and emotionally preparing

*"My job is to proactively control the experiences of my client, making their future more predictable."*

them for what will inevitably come. If they've verbalized it for you, they've essentially practiced. So when the current vendor attempts to save themselves by charm or guilt, price-matching or loyalty pleas, your prospect is solidly behind the need for change.

After all, it was their idea.