



Are you on the fast track to sales success?

Michael Schumacher's return to Formula 1 recently has done nothing to counter the fact that he is still arguably the most successful driver of all time. countless articles have been written trying to analyse the secrets of his success. Most conclude that it is due to superb driving skills, allied to a determination to succeed that leaves no stone unturned in the quest for race winning performance.

Excellent skills are not enough to guarantee success.

Throughout his career, those who have worked with him say he loves racing and he lives racing. The fact that he loves to race seems obvious, but what do they mean when they say he lives racing? Schumacher, more than any other driver, seems to understand that no matter how much skill he employs in the car, it is the things that happen before and after each race that ensure his on-going success.

He works hard to ensure he is as well prepared as possible, training harder than any other driver to ensure he is fitter than they are. He spends hours with his engineers studying technical data to see where he could go faster, and time with the team principals discussing race strategy.

More importantly he recognises that winning races is a team event and that each member of the team must play their part to ensure success. Instilling in every member of the organisation the notion that what they do matters, just as much as his driving ability, if he is to win races consistently. Building relationships with everyone in the team from the most senior managers to the lowliest mechanic is part of his strategy for maximising his potential to win.

Are you Living Business Development?

So what has any of this to do with selling and business development in the legal world? Quite simply, if we want to maximise our chances of sales success we need to pay attention to everything that can impact on the sale. We may have excellent client skills and enjoy sales calls with our clients but if we aren't paying attention to all the things outside of client BD meetings that ensure our continued success, we will never maximise the volume of business we can sell.

Developing new and existing clients is a team effort and even a star rainmaker will fail to win all the business they should if other members of the team aren't playing their part. Winning business consistently in a highly competitive environment requires every element of client contact and service to be handled well. Everyone in the firm needs to understand that what they do, or fail to do, can make the difference between success and failure.

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This doesn't just apply to the fee earners with client contact; the people working behind the scenes, to deliver the service, can have just as much impact on success. Michael Schumacher understands that the people in the factory, who never see the cars race, play a huge part in his success. Someone failing to spot a mistake could lead to a breakdown on the track, while someone going the extra mile, working through the night to produce a solution to a problem, could ensure a race-winning car.

So no matter how skilled you are, or how much time you spend thinking about the strategy you need to adopt to win the business, if you fail to take the time and trouble to build relationships with people within your own firm, who can help you to deliver excellent service to your clients, you may find you lose the business because they fail to play their part.

So why not take some time right now, to consider all the factors that can influence the outcome of the sale you are currently progressing, and list the actions you need to take to address them. It could put you on the fast track to sales success and ensure you begin the 2010 financial year in pole position.

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