

Selling to the CXO

by Elaine Schmitt



In selling to the CXO of any company, it is important to remember where your focus must be in order to “get in the door” and to make the most of it once you are there.

Executive access is more and more difficult. CXOs calendars are packed. Wedging in a 30-minute call to deliver a key message is difficult—no matter how compelling your product, service, or project might be. Our clients frequently ask us about best practices for scheduling appointments with key executives and then, once they have secured an appointment, how to get the most value from the call, both for their company and the client.

Our first observation is: **It's about them.** Visualize yourself in their job. Imagine what their calendar looks like and craft your message from the perspective of the investment of their time and energy and the value they will receive from the call.

Our second observation is: **Put your relationship into perspective.** CPS often utilizes a four-quadrant assessment model to determine the relative position for a particular situation. Our assessment model is especially helpful in determining your position in a business relationship. Once you understand your position, you are better able to determine strategies for up-leveling your position and the position of your company with the executive.

CXO Relationship with Your Company

Knows your company but not you.	Knows your company and you.
Doesn't know your company or you.	Doesn't know your company but knows you.

CXO Relationship with You

In the CPS Relationship Model below, the horizontal axis measures the Executive's Relationship with You and the vertical axis measures the Executive's Relationship with Your Company.

In assessing your position on the vertical axis, "CXO Relationship with Your Company," consider the following:

- Has the executive worked with your company in a previous assignment?
- Are they an existing customer and is this targeted executive aware of your company's presence?
- Can the executive articulate the value your company brings?
- How satisfied are they with your products/services? Will they be a reference for your company?
- How wide and deep is your company's penetration with this account?
- Is this company involved in any projects with your company?

<p>Knows your company but not you.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Determine who they worked with in your company and arrange for introduction Determine their key initiatives Contact for appointment Share Call Plan objectives 	<p>Knows your company and you.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gap Assessment exercise to explore initiative action Tight relationship Value Statement Contact for appointment with clear stated objective Call Plan – recount value delivered to date
<p>Doesn't know your company or you.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do Organization Mapping to find someone who will be a positive influencer for the appointment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> consultants they use respected peers clubs, school affiliations, etc. Construct your message to be carried from the influencer to the executive 	<p>Doesn't know your company but knows you.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contact them for an appointment Share Call Plan with them Ask questions to determine their most important initiatives Define your company's value based on their initiatives

CXO Relationship with You

In assessing your position on the horizontal axis, "CXO Relationship with You," consider the following:

- Have you met this executive?
- Do you have a mutual acquaintance who could provide a 'warm' introduction?
- How long have you known them and what is the frequency of contact? Most recent contact?
- Have you ever helped them in previous assignments?
- Does he/she recognize you for bringing value?
- Can you contact them directly or are you required to make appointments through their administrative assistant?
- Will they provide you a personal reference?

Think about a high-level executive you want or need to call on. Honestly assess the executive's relationship with your company and the executive's relationship with you and plot them on the Relationship Model.

Now that you have a picture of where you are with this client executive, how can you better your position for both yourself and your company? Some CPS best practices on how to get appointments with key executives and what to do once you are 'in the door' are listed in the expanded model above.

What are the **Rules of Engagement** you should follow?

- Make it about them and their business.
- Act as if you are in their job and learn enough to put yourself in their shoes.
- Be honest and passionate about helping them.
- If you help them the majority of the time, they will help you—if not this time, some other time.
- Never burn a bridge.
- Find someone who can provide at least a warm introduction. The CPS Organizational Mapping is a great tool. Look at all possible influencers.
- Use the CPS Gap Assessment exercise to determine the current state, future state, and key initiatives of the customer.
- Align your company's products and services to the customer's key initiatives and critical success factors.
- Develop a concise and meaningful Value Statement that can be easily articulated by the customer executive.
- Be prepared. Show them they are important and that you value their time. The CPS Call Plan is a great way to prepare. Tell them in advance of your objectives for the call.

CXO calls are like gold. Treat them that way! The value you receive can lead to the accomplishment of your extraordinary goals.

ABOUT CPS. Critical Path Strategies helps clients improve the effectiveness of their sales organization. Our portfolio of services addresses the strategic, organizational, and relationship issues that impact selling performance. Our powerful processes enable clients to transform their sales culture, enhance their competitive position, and accomplish strategic business initiatives. Our clients—emerging companies and members of the Fortune 500 alike—typically measure 100 to 500 times their CPS investment in revenue growth.