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5 Innovative Ideas for Scoring a Meeting with the C-Suite

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Getting a meeting with a junior or mid-level prospect is challenging enough. Getting a meeting with a member of the C-suite? That can feel nearly impossible.

To earn time on an executive's calendar, a salesperson usually needs to do something out-of-the-box.

Professionals at the top of the ladder are incredibly busy -- and therefore highly

Reps can circumvent the traditional buying process with these five ideas, which will help them get an executive's attention, make a good impression, and ultimately, win a meeting or phone call.

1) Send a Book to the Prospect

A rep can usually connect with even the busiest executive by sending them a well-chosen book. Not only will the executive be impressed by the creative gesture, she'll also likely feel obligated to get in touch (at the very least, to say thank you).

As an added bonus, the executive will remember the rep every time she sees the book in her office.

Salespeople can use a few methods to pick out the right read. First, they should search "Goodreads + [executive's name]." If prospects have Goodreads accounts, they'll have indicated which books and genres they enjoy, which is incredibly valuable information for reps. It's relatively simple to find a similar book -- especially if salespeople use the "People have also enjoyed" section of Goodreads.

Social media can also give reps insight into which books prospects would like. For instance, if an executive regularly posts articles about productivity hacks, he'd probably like a productivity-focused book.

Books about the prospect's industry or vertical are also typically safe bets.

2) Mail Them Your Ideas -- With a Post-It Note

Reps should always strive to add value to buyers' lives by sending them ideas for improving their business. It's easy to do this via email, but research suggests mailing executives a physical copy of your notes can be vastly effective, provided you do one thing: Put a Post-It on top.

Randy Garner, a behavioral science professor at Sam Houston State University, ran an experiment testing various methods of getting 150 professors to complete a return of the completed survey, another 50 got the same survey with a handwritten message on the front page instead of a Post-It, and the last 50 got a survey with a cover letter, but no handwritten message.

The professors who received the survey with the sticky note had the highest response rates by far: 76%, compared to 48% for the handwritten message and 36% for the typed one.

Garner hypothesized Post-Its are so effective because they're personalized and visual. They also make the recipient feel special.

To capitalize on this effect, salespeople can type a brief or helpful tip sheet and put a sticky note on the front saying something along the lines of, *"Could you give me a call after you read this to share your thoughts?"*

3) Suggest a Speaking Opportunity

Many executives use public speaking to build their personal brand. But it's not always easy to find relevant speaking engagements. Reps can win the C-suite's ear (and gratitude) by suggesting an upcoming conference or event that would be a good fit for their expertise.

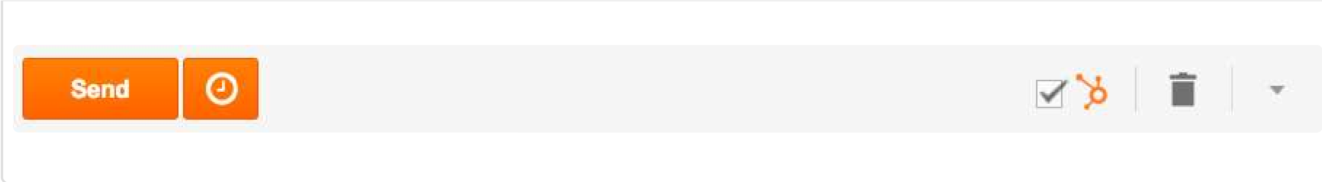
Here's an example:

Hello Dan,

I watched a recording of your Connect talk on the Internet of Things and thought you made some great points. Your suggestion on government involvement was especially compelling and well-presented.

Have you considered speaking at the IoT-themed TED event in May? I saw they're currently accepting speaker applications and thought of you. One of my good friends is helping with that event -- let me know if you're interested in an intro.

Best



To find appropriate events, salespeople should look into these opportunities:

- Business networking groups (ideally located near the executive)
- Colleges and universities
- Industry conferences and webinars
- Local service and Rotary clubs
- Relevant Twitter chats

It's also a good idea to set Google alerts for "[executive's industry] + event", "[executive's industry] + conference", and "[executive's industry] + speakers".

4) Go to Their Event

Attending prospects' existing speaking engagements can also lead to relationships. Salespeople can stay up-to-date on executives' speaking gigs by following them on social media, reading the "Announcements," "Updates," or "News" section of their company websites, and setting Google alerts such as "[executive name] + speaking", "[executive name] + panel", and "[executive name] + presentation".

Because reps might be attending along with hundreds or even thousands of other people, it's crucial to have a strategy for connecting.

A week or two before the event, salespeople should email the executive or reach out on social media to say something along the lines of, *"I'm excited to see you at [event]. Will you be covering [relevant topic]?"*

They can also propose a 20-minute meeting with the goal of providing value in

Salespeople should also try to make contact at the event itself if possible. Since executives are usually mobbed by attendees, a quick *"thanks for speaking"* is probably the best reps can hope for. But if they manage to get more face-to-face time, salespeople can leverage it by asking an insightful question about the executive's presentation, congratulating them on a recent business or career development, and/or suggesting a relevant resource (like an ebook or white paper related to their prospect's talk).

After the event, reps should send a thank-you message including a relevant nugget of value. For example, a salesperson could write a blog post about the executive's speech and link to it in his email. Alternatively, he could suggest an idea for his prospect's next presentation.

5) Create a Custom Cartoon

Stu Heinecke, author of "How to Get a Meeting With Anyone," says he has seen ROI in the millions of percent on personalizing cartoons for his target accounts.

To borrow Heinecke's technique, salespeople can commission a graphic designer or artist. Upwork, PeoplePerHour, and Guru are good sources for finding budget-friendly freelancers for these types of projects.

Wondering what to include in the cartoon?

"The trick is to steer the choice of cartoon based on the truth it reveals, and how that relates to the issue you want to address with the recipient," Heinecke says.

For example, imagine a rep's research showed the executive's company just acquired a startup, and she'd like to offer her company's IT integration services. She might send a cartoon of two employees discussing the complexities of unifying two technical systems.

If salespeople are mailing a physical cartoon, Heinecke suggests putting a message on the back of the cartoon "proposing a meeting and explaining why it's

Sending a digital one? Attach the cartoon to your email and write your note in the email body.

Because these strategies are time and labor-intensive, salespeople should reserve them for especially valuable or hard-to-penetrate accounts. For example, if their average deal size is around $3,000, spending twice as long to close a $6,000 deal would make sense -- but doing so for a $3,500 deal probably isn't the best use of their energy or time.

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