

Sales consultants and executives seeking to forge new business relationships are more often than not prone to developing what Vanessa refers to as a 'dominant logic trap' – a closed way of thinking on how to put a product or service forward to a client that can actually have a negative impact on the rate at which meetings are converted into new business. According to the new normal, such an approach is hardly pliable and needs to be reconsidered.

Vanessa suggests that, when in a meeting situation, one must first of all be mindful of how an interaction can shift trust, and, secondly, be clear about the value one is offering and how this relates to the client's personal needs and goals. Without exaggeration, the rules of the new normal call for a counterintuitive approach to business marketing. "There needs to be more focus on relationship building and developing trust as the most powerful way of building sustainable business growth, client loyalty as opposed to focusing on the immediate sale," points out Vanessa.

### A Paradigm Shift

The Consultant Powerhouse team has been accredited through IOWEU International to provide The "Smarter Selling" training programme which incorporates 'Next Generation' sales and client engagement skills, which are better aligned with the shift towards more sophisticated client expectations and customer intimacy. "IOWEU teaches consultants how to engage prospective clients in terms of their priorities. At its core, the IOWEU system focuses on the value a service provider can create for a client as partner as opposed to what can be gained from a client. The system is taught locally through a two-day programme aimed at helping sales managers and consultants, key account managers and internal consultants to get a conversation going that builds trust. "We need to focus more on the personal and business goals of a buyer and cannot rely only on negotiation skills at the expense of a customer's real needs," says Vanessa. After I have referred to potential clients as 'prospects', Vanessa eventually corrects my terminology, genially pointing out that "the language has changed from prospect to partner."

The correction serves to remind me that the mind-set she encourages business development and customer relations personnel to adopt is indeed an entire paradigm shift requiring a different view of the people one approaches. At an even deeper level, Vanessa underlines the importance of intention, explaining how this affects the overall approach taken toward clients and, ultimately, the outcome of interactions. "Do you really want to help a client or do you just want them to buy your product?" Listening to her views on various business scenarios and what they require, I realise that Vanessa has a human focus, which comes across clearly in how she describes personal and business needs as a central theme of business. Her background reflects this focus – an honours degree in psychology and a postgraduate qualification in human

resources management are among her qualifications. Experientially, her years as a corporate executive and successful entrepreneur have afforded her the business insight required to transform consultants and leaders into confident new-economy business partners and add value to their clients' success. She notes how, nowadays, leadership is challenged by a complex business environment and is constantly under pressure. "Leaders often forget their leadership skills in times of crises. Many are knowledge-rich but application-poor. Generally, I am seeing a shortage of leaders rising to the occasion to confront the challenges of present-day business. A lot of people have taken on a victim mind-set as opposed to seeing opportunity; we need to challenge the victim mind-set."

The Consultant Powerhouse team delivers this training to some of South Africa's leading corporates, focuses strongly on helping translate business strategy into results through people, and offers learning solutions that include leadership impact, sales effectiveness, key-account management, internal relationship management, personal presence and customer service. □

\*For more information visit: [www.theconsultantpowerhouse.co.za](http://www.theconsultantpowerhouse.co.za)

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