

Not so long ago, in a galaxy far, far away... you lost a potential customer in the sarlacc pit

Following multiple encounters with Jedi founders, Caroline Franczia takes us back to Tatooine to see what lessons can be learned from these entrepreneurs (as well as C-3PO, Anakin and Yoda) and their battle with the dark side.

Temps de lecture : minute

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As a founder, you may have dreamed, like Anakin Skywalker, that one day, you would become the most powerful Jedi ever because you have all the vision and charisma needed to transport your potential clients to the promising land and live in infinite glory together. 'Great kid. Don't get cocky.' Han Solo

This land is offering so many new possibilities that it appears unreachable. Yet after such a meeting of wonders the magnetic CEO cannot comprehend why nothing happens after that. No deep dive, no demo, in fact, no response to emails from the people you have met. Let's call it... the Sarlacc Pit.

'In his belly, you will find a new definition of pain and suffering, as you are slowly digested over a thousand years.' - C-3PO

If, when you leave the meeting, you feel like you've won the Clone Wars,

then, in reality, something definitely went wrong. 'Be mindful of your thoughts, Anakin. They will betray you.' Obi-Wan Kenobi

Let me explain what just happened: your prospect is indeed impressed but has no clue how it relates to their daily operational way of working and will not engage further time and resources. 'You've never heard of the Millennium Falcon? It's the ship that made the Kessel run in less than 12 parsecs.' Han Solo. So it is exactly like talking about the Millennium Falcon, yes it is described as one of the fastest vessels in the Star Wars canon, but no, not everyone is capable of buying it, renting it, let alone piloting it.

'Traveling through hyperspace ain't like dusting crops, farm boy. Without precise calculations we could fly right through a star or bounce too close to a supernova, and that'd end your trip real quick, wouldn't it?' - Han Solo



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It is not that your solution is not good enough. In fact, it is the opposite, your solution appears almost too excellent because you are pushing it.

'That is why you fail.' - Yoda

Instead, you should have pulled information. You failed to become a potential partner by missing out on a significant conversation, one when you talked by asking questions, listened with empathy and understood, in the answers why and how, your prospect needs you.

The first thing you should do with a potential buyer is to get to know him. And when I say that, I do not mean to ask mundane and meaningless

questions that will bring no value to your interlocutor but will only make him feel like he's under an examination. 'The ability to speak does not make you intelligent.' Qui-Gon Jinn. The ability to ask open-ended questions and listen might make you so.

If you have done a bit of research (I recommend reading the annual report, browsing the websites, some press releases/announcements, and at a minimum the LinkedIn profile of the people you are going to meet); you should have some conversation starters to make them talk about themselves.

'Sometimes we must let go of our pride and do what is requested of us.' - Anakin Skywalker

There is a reason why trilogies work if you can set things up by combining open-ended questions with empathy and analytics when you do get to talking about your solution it will be fully aligned with their company's current situation. They will be more receptive about the benefits of your technology to solve their problems and they will see a path to engage in deeper conversations with more resources. 'Trust goes both ways.' Jyn Erso.

This is why, when you meet a potential new buyer, no matter how good, how disruptive and incredible your solution is, refrain from talking about it first simply because there are a thousand ways of positioning yourself - you know very well your solution offers more than one use case- and you want to choose the right one.

'The acceptance of others is not a guarantee. Like everyone else, a Jedi is accepted or not based on

his behavior. The Jedi who believes that he is more important than others only demonstrates that his opinion is to be ignored.' - Dooku

So here are a few steps to follow:

First, secure your position as a trusted advisor by showing your knowledge of their company, this can be done by engaging on the business strategies you've read in their annual report, or commenting on a recent press release, or even, using a recent tweet as a conversation starter.

Second, show genuine interest, take them down a trench of open-ended questions (tell me, describe to me, explain to me...) that will actually make your potential customer realize what the issues are and their potential business impacts. This is what will actually differentiate you from being a simple supplier and ultimately, transform you from a Padawan to a customer approved Jedi.

'Stay on target' - Gold Five

Last, and last only, start talking about yourself, your story, why you created your solution and your company in ways that resonate with your prospect's current situation. Create the will to work with you by engaging them into an alliance. Before the end of the meeting, secure their engagement by asking for a purposeful next step that will get them towards solving their issue.

'I used to wonder about that myself. Thought it

was a bunch of mumbo-jumbo. A magical power holding together good and evil, the dark side and the light. Crazy thing is... it's true. The Force. The Jedi... All of it... It's all true.' - Han Solo

Don't take my word for it, put the plan in motion. Practice and practice some more. It will not be easy at first. The urge to talk about this solution you've been developing, cooking and loving will burn you at times. 'You must unlearn what you have learned'. Yoda.

Whatever happens 'Do. Or do not. There is no try' Yoda. Once you have started, check your metrics: is your pipeline growing? Do you convert more first meetings into opportunities? Do you increase the average size of your opportunities? Do you convert more of your first meetings into closed deals?

To measure your success, you may want to watch out for the following short term impact KPIs:

- Average new deal size
- Average new deal length
- Conversion post-discovery (into next step of the sales cycle)

On the long run, this new method should also have an impact on:

- Retention and churn rates
- Customer lifetime value
- New and expansion MRR

And once you have learned, once you have proven, once you have secured long term clients...

‘The Force will be with you always.’ - Obi-Wan

Caroline Franczia is the founder of Uppercut First. Experienced in working for large companies such as Oracle, Computer Associates, and BMC, Caroline also lived in Silicon Valley for four years before moving to startups (Sprinklr, Datadog, Confluent) where she witnessed on the ground the benefits of a well-thought sales strategy. These are the foundations of UF: a structure that accompanies the European startups in their sales strategy by giving them an undeniable advantage in their go-to-market.



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