

How the Hunger Games can help you come up with a prospecting masterplan

This week, Caroline Franczia, founder of Uppercut-First, addresses the most challenging part of developing a business: reaching out to prospects and gaining their attention to convert them. Much like the Hunger Games, successfully mastering this game requires fire and resilience, two qualities Caroline has identified in Katniss Everdeen.

When it comes to prospecting, cold calling is no longer effective, especially in 2020 when half your buyers are stuck at home on Zoom all day. The last dude you want to be is the guy who is calling at the worst time of the day to sell something.

Katniss Everdeen: "I volunteer! I volunteer! I volunteer as tribute!"

Effie Trinket: "I believe we have a volunteer."

Step 1: Do your segmentation (quarterly)

Effie Trinket: "Happy Hunger Games! And may the odds be ever in your favour."

Step 2: Learn everything there is to know about your target market

If you've done your segmentation right, you should not have more than 30 companies to target for the ongoing quarter. Your early adopters will top a maximum of 100 customers. Below is what you need to win them over before moving forward to the second wave of customers – a.k.a. those who will require references and proof of credibility to engage with you.

When an annual report is available, be sure to read and understand it to attach yourself to the corporate objectives and business strategies of the company you are meeting. Follow the press and keep up to date with their latest initiatives. You can use this info to break the ice even if you are not directly concerned or impacted by the news.

Step 3: Identify each persona

Knowing about an account is good. Knowing who you should meet and talk to there is even better. Understand the pains you address and the personas that suffer them.

Make a list and follow the relevant staff members at the prospect on LinkedIn and Twitter; add them to the sales navigator. Know what they are up to professionally, who they are connected to, and what they're like.

Peeta Mellark: "I remember everything about you. You're the one that wasn't paying attention."

Katniss Everdeen: "I am now."

Step 4: Be human

The basic idea that people buy from people is still true – even in the digital age, even in the COVID years. If not, robots would have replaced sales teams.

The human touch is crucial to develop a meaningful relationship. Without trust, there is no moving forward. Build trust early on and make sure it lasts beyond just one opportunity; make sure your reputation as a trustworthy person follows you wherever you go in your career.

Engage with people you are selling to in much the same way you would at a social event. Find common topics, give them attention, maybe even compliment them.

When you finally interact with them through a call or over Zoom, ask them open-ended questions in the most natural way. Connect.

Cinna: "Why don't you just be yourself?... No one can help but admire your spirit."

Now that we've established the foundations to build up a healthy prospecting plan, what's next? Prospecting is never a linear process. It's a spider's web, which you must build based on the right technique and skills if you wish to successfully achieve your prospecting plan. You will require allies.

Haymitch Abernathy: "You really wanna know how to stay alive? You get people to like you. Oh! Not what you were expecting. Well, when you're in the middle of the games, and you're starving or

freezing, some water, a knife or even some matches can mean the difference between life and death. And those things only come from sponsors, and to get sponsors, you have to make people like you.”

Marketing

B2B acquisition, events, and content should align with your go-to-market strategy.

When you know who you are targeting, you also know what type of content you are looking for. Your marketing department can then focus on and create helpful content. The type you require desperately to build up credibility: case studies, testimonials, and webinar titles that will catch the attention of the right people.

Do not wait for your marketing department to drive traffic to your website and create MQL or inbound leads. Your acquisition cost will reach the roof if you do not apply the same segmentation to your marketing strategy.

The more you own your vision, the more marketing will enable it. Whoever is in charge of sales writes that vision and participates in it.

Partners

There are two types of partner:

Technology partners are companies you associate with that have an API integration and thus provide a complete end-to-end offering. Technology partners will accelerate your growth by giving you access to their customer portfolio - upselling for themselves, and market penetration for you. Technology partners provide you with credibility and represent a potential exit strategy for the startup.

These partners have access to high-level executives because they will have already engaged and negotiated with them when dealing with you at the prospect level. Knowing your accounts and the persona you're targeting will accelerate a shared go-to-market strategy and will aid the absorption of the value you bring to the table.

Deployment or service partners enable your solution when your service

team cannot – or when you wish to earn more ARR than service revenue.

These partners will most likely have eyes and ears in each and every part of the companies you're targeting. They will know the team's operations well – their functional pains, and their politics. Giving them guidance on why you should target some of these accounts can lead to a warm introduction and possible opportunities.

Katniss Everdeen: "Great. Now I have to go back and tell Haymitch I want an 80-year-old and Nuts and Volts for my allies. He'll love that."

So that's how you come up with a prospecting plan and execute it. Not half, not three-quarters, but *all* of these actions are necessary: networking with partners and leveraging marketing resources relentlessly; combined with regular touchpoints on social selling and VITO letters; followed by close connections with personal assistants. Everything I've mentioned is an absolute must for successful pipeline creation.

Let's face it, have you ever converted the recipient of a blanket email into a customer?

It happens – but only about one percent of the time.

Isn't it time to work on your return on time investment?

Haymitch Abernathy: "This is the time to show them everything. Make sure they remember you."

Once you've found your way in, the rest is up to you.

Katniss Everdeen: “Thank you for your consideration.”

Caroline Franczia is a regular columnist for Maddyne and 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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