

The Secret Weapon When Trying to Land a Large Institutional Legal Services Client: Enlist, Train and Deploy a Champion

By [LawVision](#) on January 29, 2015

“Identify the decision maker” is a common mantra for people pursuing work from institutional prospects. However, few organizations and buying processes are simple and linear enough to allow for such an easy approach. Becoming the new law firm for a large organization requires understanding the complexities of the target organization and its institutional roles and relationships.

When pursuing large organizations, focus your efforts on recruiting a “champion.” A champion is your inside sales person, your coach, your mole, your sponsor. Inside of every complex organization there are people who take on specific roles in the buying process – the ultimate decision maker, the financial decision maker, the technical decision maker, gatekeepers, cheerleaders, naysayers and so forth. None of these roles is more important than the champion. Champions are sold on you already; they want your services, they like you and they want their organization to work with you. But champions need training.

Leverage champion enthusiasm by enlisting them in your efforts and training them on how to help you. Teach them what you need. Each engagement you pursue has its own unique set of needs. Perhaps you need more information about internal processes or personalities or internal politics. Deploy your champion to get that information for you. Perhaps you need an introduction or a meeting organized. Your champion can help with that as well. It may be that all you need is to have your champion in the room when decisions are being made. Champions can cut through red tape, sing your praises, argue on behalf of your firm and make the case for hiring you.

Whatever it is, figure out how to enlist your champion to get you where you need to go to get the business. Don’t make the mistake of navigating the intricacies of a complex organization without a solid champion trained to help you with your needs. Find your champions, train them well and you’ll be one step closer to your next new client.

Below are key steps in working with Champions:

1. **Find** – identify people who are positive about having you work with their organization
2. **Understand their motivation** – find out why hiring you is a “win” for them
3. **Build credibility** – show how helping you is advantageous to them personally and deliver on that
4. **Involve in process** – enlist them to be a larger part of the process, use them to get information, make suggestions and be evangelists for you within the organization
5. **Communicate** – keep them in the loop on key decisions and milestones
6. **Reward their risk** – commend them in front of superiors, help them with their careers, make them happy they helped