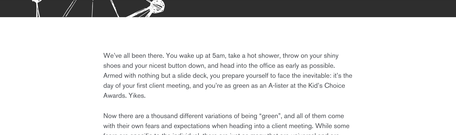
BUSINESS THOUGHTS • SEP 30, 2014

CLIENT MEETINGS: SEPARATING FEAR FROM REALITY



ALUM

We've all been there. You wake up at 5am, take a hot shower, throw on your shiny shoes and your nicest button down, and head into the office as early as possible. Armed with nothing but a slide deck, you prepare yourself to face the inevitable: it's the day of your first client meeting, and you're as green as an A-later at the Kid's Choice Awards. Yikes.

Now there are a thousand different variations of being "green", and all of them come with their own fears and expectations when heading into a client meeting. While some fears are specific to the individual, there are just as many that are universal and are things a lot of people experience when reaching across a conference room table in person that first time:

Fear #1: "I'm brand new – I don't know anything!"



Source: http://www.shockmansion.com/2011/11/06/the-vet-and-the-n00b-modern-warfare-3-live-action/

Whether you're new to a company, an account, or an entire industry, it's tough going into a client meeting as the newbie.

How To Deal

When you're the new kid on the block, pre-meeting preparation is absolutely crucial. Read up on their company, their campaigns, and become as knowledgeable as you can before heading into your meeting. While you may not need to discuss the latest account activity, being aware of what's happening can boost your confidence and help you bring value to a conversation you may not have been a part of otherwise.

Fear #2: "I'm going to say something stupid and lose our company a BILLION DOLLARS!"



Source: http://www.quickmeme.com/meme/3sxxj9/

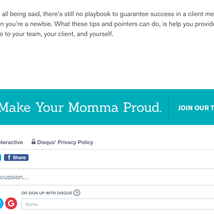
If you don't have an extensive history being client facing, meeting with a top-level executive for the first time can be daunting. The thought of losing your company money because you said the wrong thing is universal, because an action like that could have very serious consequences tied to it.

How To Deal

While it oftentimes feels as if it's you against the world when you head into a meeting with a client, more often than not you're going in with a support system right by your side. Preparing with your team members beforehand and making sure you're on the same page, prevents the possibility of a "glitter color" moment from ever happening.

Make sure you identify what your strengths are, show those strengths in the meeting, and let your team handle the areas you're less competent in. If your entire team is only showing their best traits – if you only provide the intro and the closing, you're still bringing value to the meeting – the client will only see a team that works cohesively and is of high quality from top to bottom.

Fear #3: "They're going to look me dead in the eye and ask the hardest question possible."



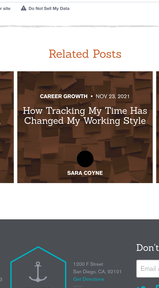
Source: http://hotmeme.net/page/1423/

"Hey you! Yeah, the newb! Why don't you tell me what our 7th leading assisted conversion keyword in non-branded campaigns was and what was it's CTR as of 2 minutes ago?" Obviously, the hyperbole is implied here, but the thought of being unable to answer a difficult question in a meeting is something that we've all felt before.

How To Deal

No matter how much you prepare, there is still always the chance that you'll be asked something you simply don't have the answer to in a meeting. And that's OK! Whether you're able to rely on a team member to step in for you or you promise to follow-up once you've been able to find the answer they're looking for, either approach is perfectly OK to take. What you don't want to end up doing is talking yourself into a corner and not providing a response that's accurate or valuable simply because you're acting in the moment.

Fear #4: "I won't speak enough in the meeting."



Source: http://constitutiontimes.com/technological-terrorism-the-sounds-of-silence/

Silence is golden. If only things were truly that simple. Heading into my first several client meetings, I always felt self-conscious about not speaking or contributing enough. And as a result of that, I was constantly concerned about letting my team down or having my future ideas be under-valued by our clients because of how quiet I may have come across in person.

How To Deal

Rather than worrying about what you aren't speaking to in client meetings, focus on what you are going to say. If you have two or two dozen slides and touch points, do everything possible to own that material and deliver it with poise to your client. As a new team member in a meeting, odds are you won't be expected to do the heavy lifting within a meeting. Just make sure to bring your A game when it's your time to shine and show your team and your client you bring value, even if it's only in a small dose.

This all being said, there's still no playbook to guarantee success in a client meeting when you're a newbie. What these tips and pointers can do, is help you provide more value to your team, your client, and yourself.

Make Your Momma Proud. JOIN OUR TEAM

5 Comments Seer Interactive Disqus' Privacy Policy Login
Favorite Tweet Share Sort by Best
Join the discussion...
LOG IN WITH OR SIGN UP WITH DISQUS
Name

Ryan Ayres • 7 years ago
This is a great topic and something I see all the time. I see this not only for my team but with some super smart people working for the customer. Its really sad that they don't have the confidence to speak up or are afraid to screw up. I'm the poster boy for saying something stupid or off the wall but it has opened more doors closed and people like candor and passion.
I'm not always working with a marketing/agency teams and a lot of my team members are really smart technical people. One tactic I have used with some of my new staff is that I will throw them a softball question I know they are confident in and can answer with authority. If this person has a tendency to not speak I'll warm them ahead of time so they don't freak.
Good Stuff Justin and a double thumbs up to any post that references Billy Madison!
Reply Share

scott meeser • 7 years ago
One of the best ways to start the discussion is to ask this question: "Mr./Ms. Big, 100 people ask for every hour of your time and you've elected to spend it with me. So I can stay laser focused on that which is most important to you, if our hour was over and you felt like it was time very well spent, what did we talk about, what did you learn?" Then sit back and start writing because for the next 45 minutes that's all you're going to do. Of course, you won't get to show off your gee whiz cool and neat slide deck, but you can live with that! ;-)
Reply Share

Justin Roberts • scott meeser • 7 years ago
Scott, something we at SEER try to tap into immediately during client meetings are those big picture goals and objectives. A few of the most productive meetings I've been a part of have gone no further than an introductory slide. Leading with that kind of discussion can be extremely beneficial, however, there are still instances where new ideas on your side of the table are brought to the table. And being prepared to deliver those ideas with poise can go a really long way. Thanks for reading the post and sharing your take!
Reply Share

Wil Reynolds Mod • 7 years ago
Justin one of the other things I wish people felt super comfortable with in meetings is to ask questions, so often senior folks assume that people around the table "know what I mean" when in actuality there are people who don't, but they are afraid to speak up. I truly hope to see more and more people who read this gain confidence to be an impact player in every meeting they are in! Great post.
Reply Share

Justin Roberts • Wil Reynolds • 7 years ago
Wil, that's an excellent point. It can be tough not wanting to be seen as uninformed in meetings, but it's also difficult to be aware of a client's entire history if you're newer to an account. Asking questions and engaging during a meeting is a step a lot of newer people don't always take, but it brings more value than simply keeping quiet for the sake of self-preservation.
Reply Share

Subscribe Add Disqus to your site Do Not Sell My Data DISQUS

Related Posts

INSIDE SEER • NOV 24, 2021
Attitude of Gratitude: 3 Seer Team Themes from 2021
ERIN SIMMONS

CAREER GROWTH • NOV 23, 2021
How Tracking My Time Has Changed My Working Style
SARA COYNE

CAREER GROWTH • NOV 17, 2021
How to Change Roles within a Company
EVAN COHEN

HQ
1253 S 2nd Street
2nd Floor
Philadelphia, PA, 19123
Get Directions
(215) 987-4461
PHILADELPHIA

1200 F Street
San Diego, CA, 92101
Get Directions
(619) 391-4290
SAN DIEGO

Don't Be Left Behind
Email Address SUBSCRIBE
Privacy Policy

Google Partner
Google Marketing Platform Sales Partner
Microsoft Advertising Elite Agency Partner 2019
Adobe Experience Cloud Solution Partner
Facebook Marketing Partner
BEST PLACES TO WORK 2018
BEST PLACES TO WORK 2021
TOP 100 2020
The Inquirer

©2021 Seer Interactive • Privacy Policy • Terms & Conditions