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What End Users Want From RFID Vendors

Last month, I wrote about Jill Konrath's book, *Selling to Big Companies*, in the context of helping technology firms that offer RFID hardware, software or services do a better job of communicating their value proposition to end users (see [Helping RFID Vendors Connect With RFID Buyers](#)). Last week, we

announced that we hired Konrath to conduct her workshop for RFID technology companies at our next RFID Journal LIVE! event, being held on Apr. 14-16, 2010, in Orlando, Fla. (see RFID Journal to Feature 'Selling RFID to Big Companies' Workshop).

A lot of people are probably skeptical that Konrath can help them crack big accounts, but I'm convinced she can. I purchased her book for each of our salespeople, and I kept my copy because I plan to read it at least once every six months. She doesn't have a magic bullet for selling technology to big businesses, but she does understand the current selling environment, and the way most salespeople work, and she offers practical advice.



One area Konrath addresses is the gap between sales and marketing. She makes the point that marketing people often strive to get as many leads as possible. This, she says, can be counterproductive, however, because salespeople then have to waste time chasing down individuals who will not invest in their technology for years to come, instead of focusing on those most likely to buy in the near term (which is critical for many RFID companies in the current environment). I posted a paper she authored, entitled "What Sales Really Needs From Marketing," on our Web site because I thought it was so good.

One of her suggestions—and this isn't new—is to stop selling and become a consultant to your customers. I've taken this advice to heart, and have been working with my sales team to focus less on selling ads or exhibit space, and more on

helping RFID technology providers reach those most likely to buy their offerings. That's also why we hired Konrath to speak at our event, published our special report "Understanding the RFID Buyer," and worked with Spectrum Marketing & Communications to host a webinar this month entitled "Content Marketing as a Lead-Generation Tool for RFID Vendors," which will take place on Jan. 26, 2010.

I believe that vendors will be more receptive to hearing from *RFID Journal* when our purpose is to help them reach the right end users. Similarly, I'm sure end users would rather speak to vendors who aren't touting how great their product is, and who instead offer to help them determine the most cost-effective ways in which to deploy a system that meets their needs.

Konrath advocates a "foot in the door" selling strategy, as opposed to an all-out assault on the C-suites. She wisely points out that going straight to the top is often not the best strategy. C-level people frequently don't understand the compelling need for a new technology, and convincing them to deploy an enterprise-wide solution can be next to impossible—particularly in the current economic environment, and especially with a technology that is perceived as still maturing.

A better strategy, she indicates, is to target someone within an organization who has a specific business problem RFID can solve. To that end, her workshop will explain how to get that person's attention with a compelling value proposition and entry campaign. She advocates building credibility with a customer by having a small success at a lower level, then using that to gain access to those at the C-level. You'll have a strong story to tell if you follow this plan, and the credibility of having delivered value. (End users who have seen RFID deployed successfully are usually eager to expand their systems to track other assets or solve additional business problems.)

Based on what I hear from end users, this seems to be the

correct approach. Those deploying targeted projects also need to build credibility within their organizations, and they require vendors that can help them do so. I was speaking to a retailer last week at the National Retail Federation's Big Show 2010 event. "There's a lot of talk about transforming retail and deploying end-to-end systems," he told me. "The reality is, if I go to the CIO and say we need to deploy an enterprise-wide RFID system so we can collect and analyze data to deliver the right mix of product and have it in stock all the time, I will be booted out of his office before you can say 'item-level visibility.'" End users want to deploy small systems that deliver benefits and can scale over time into a "smarter retail" solution.

I don't expect Konrath's approach to lead to miracles overnight, but it can build credibility with customers. And when we focus on helping customers' succeed, we succeed.

Mark Roberti is the founder and editor of RFID Journal. If you would like to comment on this article, click on the link below. To read more of Mark's opinions, visit the RFID Journal Blog or click here.



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