



## Don't Bring a Knife to a Gun Fight

By Jodi Bagwell

I'd spent months developing a relationship with a major prospect prior to a multi-million RFP being issued. Ten potential vendors would be whittled down to two and my relationship with the buyers had all but guaranteed my company would make it into the final round. I'd found a coach on the inside and had even been asked to help develop the parameters of the RFP. After the two rounds of elimination I made it to the finals and my coach gave me information that ensured that my package would be a much better offer than my last competitor. I was positioned to win.

Dressed in my best suit, I confidently waited in the lobby before the final round of presentations. Ten minutes before I was to go on, my contact came out and asked if my team needed help setting up. She informed me that six committee members, including their president, would be present for our formal presentation. My heart sank as I realized the gravity of my mistake. All I had with me was a two page supplement to our RFP response, a contract, some stock collateral; and, to my dismay, no team.

My competitor brought in a five person team that included two C- level executives. They made an impressive choreographed, multi-media presentation. I, on the other hand, stumbled through a six page PowerPoint that was cut and pasted, five minutes before presenting. While my competitor prepared to win, my overconfidence caused me to take my relationship with my coach for granted.

There is a saying in the south, "Don't bring a knife to a gun fight." After months of hard work setting the stage for a win I was, humiliatingly, gunned down in the street and learned the hard way that "Perfection is the Winning Edge."

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### Three PowerPrinciples for the Professional Gun Slinger

- 1. Keep Your Big Guns Loaded:** Team Selling is the most effective way to win the big ones. Engage your entire team early in the process and take advantage of the expertise and experience of the people who surround you.
- 2. Know Your Competitors:** Underestimating your competitor is a sure fire way to take shot right to the heart. Use your knowledge to neutralize your competitor's strengths and exploit their weaknesses.
- 3. Be Perfect:** You must be perfect in everything! Your planning, questions, collateral, proposal, and presentation are on stage and being evaluated. Every detail and every interaction must be perfect.

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"Follow your desire as long as you live; do not lessen the time of following your desire, for the wasting of time is an abomination to the spirit" **Ptahhotpe, 2350 B.C.**

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