



Reaching School Decision Makers

Reaching key school decision makers isn't difficult if you follow these tips.

What's the secret to gaining access to school district decision makers? There's nothing mysterious or complicated about it; it's all about research, intent, and relationships.

In an article on the Selling to Schools Website (www.sellingtoschools.com), Larry Sugarman, president of SMARTSelling (www.smartselling.net), shares these hints straight from a school district decision maker: Chip Kimball, superintendent of Lake Washington School District in Washington State. At Sugarman's request, Kimball spoke at a national sales meeting of education sales reps and outlined how a professional sales representative could get time with him. Here are some of his suggestions:

1. **Do your homework.** Use school market research to educate yourself about what's going on in the district. Go online and study the district website. Read local newspapers. The matters of public schools are also matters of public record. When you talk to the district personnel, you'll set yourself apart as someone who took the time to get knowledgeable about what issues matter in that district.
2. **Get through the gatekeepers.** These are the folks who can provide you—or deny you—access to the decision maker. Impress them with the information you learned in your school market research and let them know you have some ideas about or a solution to a specific challenge the district is facing. Get through the

gatekeepers and you reach the decision makers.

3. **Focus on solutions.** If you leave a voice mail or send an introductory email, don't make it all about your products or services. Leverage the information you learned from your research and focus the message on letting the administrator know that you understand a specific challenge he or she is facing and that you have some ideas to help address that challenge. Make the message about them, not about you.
4. **Have the right intention.** If your goal simply is to make a sale, that message will come through. If your intent is to create a relationship with the district and help educators meet the challenges they are facing, your sincerity will come through, you will gain the administrator's trust—and people buy from those they trust. In addition, if you build relationships in one district, those administrators are likely to recommend you to their colleagues in other districts.

Selling to school district decision makers begins with relationships, trust, and a desire to help them meet the needs of their students. These suggestions may not guarantee a sale, but they should get you in the door and into the conversation.

This article is based on "Seven Strategies for Reaching School Decision Makers," by Larry Sugarman, published at www.sellingtoschools.com. Modified with permission. Email Larry@smartselling.net

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