



Forget Resolutions: Find Triggers!

Just before the holidays set in, I had the pleasure of listening to my friend, Dave Cooke, Strategic Resource Group, give a workshop on effective sales. He presented a concept that Craig Elias describes in his book *Shift Selling*, which focuses on the ideal time to build relationships with potential clients.

According to Elias, each of us goes through a psychological sales cycle that includes three general stages:

- Happy, and not looking for help
- Unhappy and not looking for help
- Unhappy and looking for help

If we begin our relationship building with clients when they are in the third stage, which is generally when they start drafting and issuing RFPs or interviewing consultants, our odds of closing the deal are at about 20%. But if we begin building the relationship when they are in the second stage, our odds soar to 75-80% because we earn the early favorite advantage. Ironically enough, this is the stage when we are best able to serve as consultants – professionals looking for a problem to solve.

The key to timing this right is the ability to identify and recognize triggers that move our clients from one stage to the next. Specifically, what causes our potential clients to go from *happy* and not looking for help to *unhappy* and not looking for help? A change of regulation? A change of ownership? An election?

By taking the time to understand what triggers can move your target clients into the stage where they are ready to start entertaining a new professional relationship, we can position ourselves to be in the right spot at the right time.