SIMON SAYS, LET'S TALK BUSINESS Kip Rapp of Concora and Saurel Quettan

Podcast Participants:

Simon: Sandler Training
Kip Rapp: CEO Concora
Saurel Quettan: Leadership Consultant

Simon:

Hello and welcome to Simon Says, Let's Talk Business on Business RadioX. I'm your host Al Simon with Sandler Training. And as usual, on this show, we talk with high performing business professionals to sharpen their skills, learn new ideas and concepts, share best practices and get to know smart people.

Simon:

We have some smart people with us today. So listen carefully, take notes and look for their contact information at the end of each segment so that you can engage with them. And as always, we will conclude with a sales tip from yours truly. So today, just pumped and excited. We got two great companies represented here today.

Simon:

We got Kip Rapp, the CEO of Concora. Welcome Kip. So tell us about Concora. What is it you all do?

Kip:

Thanks Al. Thanks for having me.

Kip:

We're a software company. It's SaaS based. We work with... They're called building product manufacturers. There's manufacturers that... Selling to commercial projects. So, Kohler, Delta... Anyone, if you're building a hotel or a bank there's manufacturers that sell all the building materials and their goal is to help architects, engineers, and contractors. And we provide them a software platform that allows them to do business online with their potential buyers.

Simon:

Okay. So, you sell your service... SaaS is software as a service. So you sell your service to the AEC, the architect, the engineer, the contractor... No, you don't. You sell it to the manufacturer...

Kip:

To the manufacturer, yeah.

Simon:

Whose client is AEC, architects, engineers, and I'll get it in the minute.

Kip:

Contractors... Fine.

Simon:

Yeah, we hear that buzzword AEC, and we hear the buzzword SaaS, and I just like to make sure that our listeners are clear on that. And I messed up the chain of command here. So you sell to the manufacturers, who are trying to do a better job of working with architects, engineers, and contractors. Did I get that right?

Kip:

That's right.

Simon:

Okay. All right. Very cool. So tell us about building manufacturers, building material manufacturers. I mean, you're talking about what? Wood, obviously, right?

Kip:

Yeah. It's a way to think about it. It's like you're building a house. If you're building a hotel and anything inside the house or hotel is building materials. Could be chairs and lights and walls and floors and installation, all the things that are hidden, all the things that are seen. So it could be plumbing, electrical, and it's even things on the envelope of the building. So it could be the walls and even outside the building. So if there's even the concrete or the piping sometimes, or the lighting fixtures outside too.

Kip:

It's something I didn't realize and understood when I started, but it's a quite a fascinating industry and it's certainly an industry that's going through digital transformation.

Simon:

Is it?

Kip:

Yeah. And certainly, as you mentioned with COVID before, it's the need that you see with these architects, when they're... Let's say they're designing a hotel and you're an architect and in the old days you would do it on blueprints and then you would use 2D CAD, which was great, but it's a digital environment.

Kip:

But today it's a very digital design process where you're designing in 3D and you, instead of having a physical example and a blueprint, you need the manufacturer to provide you really good product content and they go to your website. And what a lot of manufacturers have a challenge today is providing a very good experience that's geared towards that architect, engineer, and contractor.

So it's a web experience, it's great content, it's great tools. And in that example, that architect, if they're putting in a Kohler faucet or Shaw carpets, they would like to have a 3D version and they don't want to build it themselves. And if it takes too much time or money, that's not a great experience for that architect and they'll likely choose another manufacturer.

Kip:

And so that's why the digital transformation, the website, the digital strategy are all very important. And traditionally, a lot of the manufacturers... They're very good on the residential side, they sell to Home Depot, they have photos on their website, but if they're trying to gear towards a buyer journey for the architect, it takes too many clicks. The content is not there. It's not accurate. You can imagine if that faucet is not accurate, they put that on the job site and then there's a change order. And so that's something that we have a passion for both for big companies and small companies.

Simon:

Okay. So you really make it easier for architects, engineers, contractors, to do business with the manufacturers, by helping the manufacturers give their prospects a better experience.

Kip:

Yeah, that's right. A great experience that's on the website. Every architect, engineer, when they're looking to use manufacturer's product, they're looking to go to the manufacturer's website and they're looking for a place that they can trust and use. Something's consistent because time is money. And if you're able to help that engineer, that contractor, that architect with providing sustainability information, providing them with good tools to create proposals or providing them with good content, then they're going to keep using your product.

Simon:

Makes sense. Makes sense. Okay. You mentioned some challenges that the manufacturers might have meeting the AEC. Tell us more about how you've helped with that situation.

Kip:

Their website, traditionally, as we mentioned before, a lot of manufacturers have good websites but they're not exactly supporting that digital buyer journey that's needed by today's architects, engineers, and contractors.

Kip:

And so good examples, like a lot of people, they might use WordPress for their website. And then when an architect goes to that website that's built in WordPress from that manufacturer, and they're looking at, "I need your sustainability tools. I want to create a proposal. I want to find the best product for my building project." Those tools lack or don't even understand what's really needed by that architect. So it's not very purposeful for that journey. And so that's how we help.

Kip:

And a lot of manufacturers... They understand the need because they get calls from the architects, "Hey, I really want to use your product. However, you're missing this content here. I need this drawing here." They leave a voicemail and it's not the best experience. And so that's how we help is by giving them an infrastructure. Most of the manufacturers often show infrastructure, like their website, their content management systems, the way they update products, it's not really designed for the commercial business. And so they'll either take a long time to do it. They'll have to hire expensive consultants. And that's where we have a very good differentiation because we can provide a very out of the box experience that's made for the commercial business.

Simon:

So you say out of the box, I mean, it's just easier, right? Easier for the manufacturers prospect to buy from them.

Kip:

That's right.

Simon:

Bottom line? Really? Okay. It's easier and it's obviously more accurate, helps them not have changed orders and such. Yeah. So you must have a really good way of training the manufacturers how to use your product, because you don't have to customize it for each individual manufacturer?

Kip:

Yeah. So for example, if they have an existing website and they have a... Let's say they have a hundred products, and so a lot of the times we can just make use of what they have today on their website and take those links and put it into a better user experience.

Kip:

And since we also have a way for they can manage the content themselves and publish it, like a normal content management system. And what's really nice is that when they provide a better experience for that architect and they're going to allow them to do business online, we provide that interaction data back to the manufacturer. So if Al the architect from New Jersey is building a hospital and goes to this manufacturer site, we can give that back to the sales team so they can have very meaningful conversations with Al, and help support him with questions and build that relationship so they could further ensure that their products are being sold.

Simon:

How'd you know I had questions about how the sales team gets involved?

Simon:

That's critical. And if I'm a salesperson and my prospect is that contractor or architect in New Jersey, I'm going to want to know, what are they dealing with us? And what do they need and how can I make sure that they got what they need? So good stuff, good stuff. Okay.

Simon:

You've got this software as a service. You sell it to manufacturers. It helps them because the architects, engineers and contractors have a better experience. So they want to buy from the manufacturer and make it easy to buy from the manufacturer, easy to work with the manufacturer. What's not to like here?

Kip:

Yeah. It's, I'd say, a category that's new. A lot of the manufacturers that we talk to are used to doing it how they been doing it before, and it's challenging. It's still work with the marketing agency, they'll work within their own systems that aren't well focused for this journey, this buyer journey for the architects. And so our goal is to evangelize and let them know that there's a new way to be able to solve this challenge in this new digital economy.

Kip:

And as we talk to them about what's needed by their design community, these architects, and how they want to do business online versus 10 years ago. And a lot of this is too, because the whole construction, building a building, it's very digital today.

It's very virtual today. And it's because it increases quality, reduces time, increases profit. And so you have these new trends in the construction industry, which means then the people that are using your products are wanting to do business with you differently. So it's like before the internet came out, now you have the internet. It's like, "How do you use this stuff?"

Simon:

That's right. Everybody had to figure that out.

Kip:

And so that's our goals. As we talk to these leaders in these manufacturing companies, the VPs of sales and marketing and tell them what's needed today and why that's needed and how that can help you get business outcomes that you care about, which is growing more product sales by meeting that digital buyer need and then letting them know that this is really hard to do yourself.

Kip:

And this is something that within 30 to 60 days, we have a very good experience. We enable that design journey, right on the manufacturer's website, it's private labeled, it's in their brands, it's transparent to that visitor, that architect. And within a week, you can see the increased traffic. You see the real people that are visiting. A lot of the manufacturers just aren't aware of who's visiting their website.

Simon:

That's true. Yes. And that's not just in manufacturers, but in many other businesses too...

Kip:

It's like, "Who's visiting?"

Simon:

Yeah. He's got to know that. Yeah. Yeah. So how did you get involved in this? What's your story here?

Kip:

Well, I was in Seattle four years ago and I was searching for opportunities. And this one was just fascinating. I always loved working at entrepreneurial companies because of the effort and the results that you get and being able to utilize all your experience and technique. And it's something that I have a passion for, my background's in product management.

Simon:

Is it? Okay.

Kip:

Yeah. So it's been quite a journey and it's all, as Enrique said, it's all about the people. Great people make great companies and having a passion for others. And it's a very good last four years of experience.

Simon:

Excellent. Yeah. Saurel, you have a question or comment?

Saurel Quettan:

Yeah. I do have a question combined with a comment. I'm fascinated by this. And I'm wondering, how are you using what you already know about the needs, experiences of the architects, the engineers, and the contractors to craft a journey for them, maybe using artificial intelligence. Like you already know what they want and the products are there, is your product doing that crafting as you go aiding them in a way so that you increase sales by already meeting their needs?

Kip:

Yeah, it's a great question.

Kip:

Being from a product manager background, you focus on solving problems by looking at what your customers need and what their customers need. And the big challenge was understanding what architects want today versus what they wanted 20 years ago.

Kip:

And yeah, AI would be awesome. It's down to three fundamentals, is that if you're an architect, you need to be able to specify a chair, a faucet, an air conditioning unit. And in today's digital economy, they go to your website. Number one, because we know that, because we talked to architects and do surveys, we do phone surveys and email surveys with engineers and contractors. And that's what they're telling us. It's like, "Please make my life easier. It's really hard today. I only get so much money for this project. And time is money." And the manufacturers, "If they could do X, Y, Z for me..."

Kip:

And after you talked to a lot of these folks, you have those commonalities, which then boils down into a good web experience, good content and good tools. And so that's what we try to keep it simple, and with high quality and we grow on that. And so we're excited because there's a lot more problems that we can solve both on the architect and the engineer side, but also on the manufacturer side. But it's really listening to them and then evangelizing that to the larger market so that the whole industry can improve.

Simon:

I love what you just said. So you're focusing on a good web experience, good content, good tools that makes it easier. Okay.

Simon:

So once again, we've been talking with Kip Rapp, the CEO of Concora, as a SaaS organization, that's software as a service, selling to manufacturers to make it easier for them to work with their clients, which is architects, engineers, and contractors. Great stuff. How long have you been, you said four years ago, how long has Concora been around?

Kip:

They'd been around more than 10 years, more as a services company. And that part of my mission was to help with the technology.

Simon:

The technology opportunity was there. They brought you in and you're doing great stuff. That's awesome.

Kip:

Fun ride.

Simon:

I'll bet. Just moving from Seattle to Atlanta, it might be a fun ride.

Kip:

Not as fun.

Simon:

So Kip, if people wanted to get ahold of you and your organization, what's the best way to do it?

Kip:

Certainly at the website. It's a great place to go. It's concora.com, C-O-N-C-O-R-A. And I'm reachable... My email is kip.rapp, R-A-P-P, @concora.com.

Simon:

Excellent. That makes it simple also. Yeah, really good stuff. So thanks for joining us. This is really good.

Kip:

It's been fun. I appreciate the time. And it's definitely appreciated that you're able to help us get our message out there and help others.

Simon:

Well, you're obviously helping others, making it easier for people to do business, really good stuff. So manufacturers should buy from you, so they make it easier for their prospects and clients.

Simon:

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Simon:

Saurel Quettan. So we got people who are doing a great job of making a good web experience and making it easier for their prospects to buy from them. And then now you're going to help those CEOs be what? More effective, more productive?

Saurel Quettan:

The CEOs of those companies, like the founders... Everyone wants to be successful as an individual and as a company. And so exeQfit and I would say I exist to ensure that individuals, teams, and organizations maximize their contribution and their fulfillment, because in the final analysis, Al, people want to make a contribution.

Saurel Quettan:

And there are cogs in the systems, both human and organizational that minimize, or even thwart on many occasions, their contributions and their fulfillment. So we exist to assist CEOs and owners and founders and organizations to not only create that environment, but sustain it. And we anchor ourselves in this thing, we call personal leadership.

Simon:

Okay. Personal leadership.

Saurel Quettan:

Yeah, also when you look at any organization, any relationship, whether it's an organization of 10 million people or two, you've got human beings at play, right? And for the organization to produce what it's aimed to produce and deliver what it's promising, it's relying on the personal leadership and ownership of each and every, and our process focuses not on teaching you to become a leader, but really to remove the barriers to the expression and the exercise of that leadership effectively.

Saurel Quettan:

So I firmly believe that if you're a human being, you are a leader. Yet there are barriers to the expression and effective exercising of that leadership. And mostly given that you're a human being, those barriers are hidden from you. So we create the space where individuals and teams can effectively assess what I call the personal leadership effectiveness and it's...

Simon:

Oh, they're leaders?

Saurel Quettan:

No, of themselves.

Simon:

Of themselves, okay.

Saurel Quettan:

The thing is... That's where I think things go south. When I'm assessing your leadership, as opposed to assessing my own.

Saurel Quettan:

See, the beauty of living a fulfilled life and being a top contributor in an organization is to be, whether you are at the top of the organization or the bottom of the organization, to be continually in the space where you're assessing your own leadership effectiveness and bringing to the party, your expertise, your experience, and your network as a gift to that collective. And you know what? Human beings aren't wired to do it that way.

Simon:

They're not. So we're talking with Saurel Quettan, the founder and CEO of exeQfit, talking about effective leadership. And you mentioned the word, Saurel, when you first started talking, the word was thwarted. And I'm always intrigued when anyone uses that. That's not a word you hear a lot. Thwart.

Saurel Quettan:

You don't hear that a lot. And to me, that word has this significance. There's something that you are innately intending to do, some way you're intending to be. And yet, however hard you work at it...

Simon:

Just can't get there.

Saurel Quettan:

You just can't get there something's thwarting you, right?

Simon:

That's the barriers.

Saurel Quettan:

And you don't know what that is.

Saurel Quettan:

So personal leadership effectiveness starts this way. Now, if I were to ask anyone, including you, Al, including you, Kip, how are you defining success? You'd very likely have answers to that that are very familiar to everyone. And they would involve what I call the five Ps.

Saurel Quettan:

That would be prosperity, prestige, position, pleasure, and power. I don't care how you slice it. If you're the leader of the company, you're looking for these five Ps. And when somebody says, "How do you define success?" You'll answer in terms of these five Ps.

Saurel Quettan:

Yet power, prestige, possession, pleasure, you name it, focuses on the individual. It focuses on me. So to the extent that I'm in an organization pursuing these five Ps, for me that in and of itself is a thwarting agent. So how do I go beyond that? Well, I first go beyond that by realizing that I'm doing that.

Simon:

Yes. But how do you teach that? How do you get people, "Wow!" Over that?

Saurel Quettan:

Here's the deal. We don't teach leadership. You actually don't need to teach that.

Saurel Quettan:

It's a funny thing that when something's hidden from your view, and all of a sudden you can see it like plain in day, like the hand in front of your face, there are actions that are right there. There are words that are right there to say and use.

Saurel Quettan:

So we don't teach leadership. So it's not about having a profile for the ideal employee, a profile for the ideal CEO. It's about assisting each and every in discovering the barriers. And when the barriers are right there in front of you, actions are right there.

Saurel Quettan:

You know, if you don't mind, I'd love to tell you a little story.

Simon:

Well, I don't know. We may be out of time. I'm just kidding. Just kidding. Let's hear the story. Come on.

Saurel Quettan:

You know, like Kip, I think birds of a feather, I love living and working to make a difference.

Saurel Quettan:

So for the better part of 15 year, right now... I'm from Haiti. I have been going to Haiti using this very approach to instill that methodology and have leaders from the grassroots. I mean, you're talking about people who live in rural Haiti, some know how to read some don't, but they have nothing.

Saurel Quettan:

So this group of people cultivate sugar cane. There's no road from the sugar cane plantation and the distillery. They press the sugar cane, create syrup, the majority of their barrels, they enrot in the field. So we're having this conversation to discover what's thwarting their business. And they got to say, collectively, "We can't sell our syrup to the distillery because the government has not built a road for us."

Saurel Quettan:

In a conversation, one of them popped and goes, "Well, wait a minute, maybe I'm more interested in blaming the government than doing something about what I'm complaining about."

Simon:

Right there is an "aha" moment, right there. Most people do blame instead of taking responsibility.

Saurel Quettan:

Absolutely. But you know what? I do it. But more often than not, I don't discover it for myself, and if I do discover it, I'm not going to tell anyone else that I'm doing that.

Saurel Quettan:

In an environment where you want to create a team that's effective, that works well, you also need to create an environment where the discovery isn't personal and individual. The discovery becomes a collective thing that gives people in the organization the opportunity to create a language that is common to being and exercising leadership, and a language that gives them the opportunity to hold each other accountable, without that being a threat.

Saurel Quettan:

So guess what? When that group of people in Haiti realized that there were more interested in blaming the government than taking action, guess what they did? In less than two weeks, barefoot, with machetes and hoes, they cut themselves their own road. And to this day, they're maintaining that road.

Simon:

Are they really?

Saurel Quettan:

And to this day, their business has more than quadrupled. Now, did I teach them leadership? No. Everyone has the capacity to be a leader and exercise leadership.

Simon:

So what you did, let me make sure I got this right. What you did was you enabled that person to say, "Hey, wait a minute." Right? "Hey, wait a minute."

Simon:

So that's where the breakthrough can come through. So how do you do that? How do you get people to say, "Hey, wait a minute"?

Saurel Quettan:

When you realize the impact and really feel it for yourself, the impact of sticking to the status quo, you want to do something about that naturally. And all it takes is a little nudge.

Saurel Quettan:

So the way we do it is simple. We have a conversation. We create a really safe environment where the entire team, in the context of an assessment that we conduct on 10 key characteristics of what it is to be successful in life as a leader. And as we're consulting and coaching executives and team members, it's not sort of esoteric. It's really very pragmatic. We're saying, "Okay, now that you've done the assessment, let's take a look as a team and as an individual, where do you see gaps, right? And what can we create together as a plan of action to address these gaps?"

Saurel Quettan:

Now, in addition to these gaps in leadership, we love to work on the court. And what that means is, either you're an individual or a company, you're actually implementing an initiative. Now we'll sit together. And for the first time, in many times, in many instances, Al, you've got...

Saurel Quettan:

Imagine this, you've got a group of people interested in power, prestige, position, pleasure, and for themselves. That's one, that's before the assessment. And then after the assessment, you've got a group of people who are interested in exploring, "What would it look like if I'm now looking at power, prestige, position, pleasure, from the perspective of the team?"

Saurel Quettan:

Now, if you've got the first group planning your project or the second group planning your project, which do you think might deliver a more comprehensive and effective plan?

Simon:

It's always better when you're not focused on yourself.

Saurel Quettan:

Exactly. The second. So they create that plan with our coaching and assistance. Because as you creating a plan, it's essential to see how the innate sort of automatic way to be and behave creeps in. And since you won't see it for yourself, to have someone in the mix who goes, "Hey."

Saurel Quettan:

It's creeping up again. You go, "Oh wow." And then you can even at times, force yourself to think differently and create a different plan.

Simon:

And I'm guessing the name of your company, which is a very unique name, has something to do with what you're talking about. ExeQfit, right? So E-X-E-Q-F-I-T.

Saurel Quettan:

Yeah.

Simon:

Tell us about how that name came about.

Saurel Quettan:

I named the company that, so it could remind me of why I did it in the first place. To me, it's this, you can see something new, you can see what's thwarting you, but until you take an action consistent with your new view, you're in the same old place.

Saurel Quettan:

So "exeQ" stands for execution and executives, not executives in the way we think about it, it's executive you, I don't care if you're the guy loading the truck, you an executive in that post.

Simon:

Because you're executing out something.

Saurel Quettan:

Exactly. And "fit" is for my recognition that everyone is fit to be a leader. Yet you might need to do a few pushups.

Simon:

Well, that's the key part, right? Because like you said yourself, they can have that "aha" moment, that, "Hey, wait a minute." But actually taking action on it is a different thing. Because people like the status quo. Somehow it's comfortable.

Saurel Quettan:

Very comfortable. It's innate in human being. So now we've talked a lot about being a human being and being stuck in what's comfortable and automatic for a human being. I want people to know that there's nothing wrong with that. It just comes with the package.

Simon:

Because we're human beings.

Saurel Quettan:

Exactly. And there's nothing wrong with wanting power. There's nothing wrong with wanting pleasure. That also comes with the package.

Saurel Quettan:

And the people who work with us, come having made a distinction between achievement and success. And they realize that achievement is temporary, success could be eternal. In the context of, my success, when created in the context of the collective, the team, lasts forever.

Simon:

That's how people grow. That's how they grow. They get out of the comfort zone. Think in terms of the team. Awesome. Again, we're talking with Saurel Quettan, the founder and CEO of exeQfit. And I could talk about this stuff forever.

Saurel Quettan:

Yeah. We could. And what I want people to remember is this, it sounds simple. It is, but it's not easy to stick to it.

Saurel Quettan:

If you asked me the question, "Does everyone need a coach?" I would say, "No, I wouldn't say that."

Saurel Quettan:

But I'd say "The people who are committed, the people who are intentional about producing the results they want, and the people who are intending on making a difference beyond their own five Ps, get a coach."

Saurel Quettan:

Because they know that having a coach, having someone or an organization in that capacity in the mix, provides sort of... It's like an eye above the fray.

Simon:

Skills and knowledge aren't enough, right?

Saurel Quettan:

Exactly.

Simon:

There are barriers, as you mentioned, that are thwarting growth, thwarting progress, thwarting making a better life for people. You're working with companies, obviously, the people in companies, any particular kind of company is your target?

Saurel Quettan:

I don't target a particular kind of company. Rather we target a company that's at a specific stage in its growth.

Simon:

Which is which stage?

Saurel Quettan:

Startups are a little hard for us to work with. So we work with established businesses, small to medium-sized businesses that are generating two million and up. The environment is ripe for human beings to be human beings. Getting flooded and wondering, "Why are we getting flooded?"

Simon:

All right. So our listeners who are part of, or who know of established companies tuning it up, how would they best get a hold of you?

Saurel Quettan:

We've created a very easy way to get ahold of us.

Simon:

Which is?

Saurel Quettan:

People love their mobile phones. Pull out your mobile phone right now, and type in the number 21000 as a number that you're texting too. And all you have to text to that number is my first name. S as in Sam, A-U-R-E-L, you will get a digital card that will give you all of the ways to connect to it.

Simon:

All right. So text Saurel, S-A-U-R-E-L, to 21000. That sounds easy.

Simon:

Saurel, thank you for being with us. Kip, thank you so much for being with us today. It's been a great show. So again, this is Al Simon with Sandler Training by Simon Inc. And the show is Simon Says, Let's Talk Business and it's been a terrific show.

Simon:

And as always, we'll wrap it up with a sales tip. Typically, what we do is we have listeners that send in their questions on sales and sales management to me. My email address is al.simon@sandler.com.

And so if you've got a question about sales or sales management, send me an email with your question, and you just might find yourself getting an answer down the air on Simon Says, Let's Talk Business. The listener's question that I'm going to talk about today says, "What do you do when you can't meet with the final decision maker?"

Simon:

Huh? What do you do when you can't meet with the final decision maker? And that is a very, very common issue. First of all, and most important, get high early. So what do I mean by that? I don't mean smoke marijuana at nine o'clock in the morning, but then nevermind.

Simon:

Get high early means in any organization that you are targeting as your prospect, as soon as you can get to the highest possible position of the person who can make it happen and who can release the funds, cut the PO or whatever it looks like, sign the contract, the better. Now, sometimes we have an inbound lead and that inbound lead slots us to someone who's lower in the organization. That's great, but it creates the problem, if that person that you now slotted with, can't make it happen, can't cut that PO, can't sign that check, can't give you the credit card number, can't sign the contract, then we've got a problem.

Simon:

We have to be able to get up higher. So exhaust all efforts to get higher. And there's lots of good ways to do that. One of the best ways is to say to the person with whom you're talking with whom you're "slotted" to say, "What would be the next step? May I suggest this and this and this, and why don't we get, who else, whoever's involved, in on that meeting?"

Simon:

That phrase, "why don't we" is really important in this thing, because you can use whatever words you want for the rest of it. But I want our clients to use the words, "why don't we" with their prospect who's not high enough, because that makes the problem solvable by both parties. And then it becomes a group effort to make it happen.

Simon:

So exhaust all efforts to get as high as you can. But if there's a situation where you just can't get to the ultimate decision maker, for whatever reason, they don't make themselves available, or the person that you're slotted against is thwarting your efforts, Saurel, to get there, which happens. Then you've got to do what we call the virtual decision process, which is fairly involved. So you want to take notes here. The virtual decision process says this...

Simon:

So let's say that I'm calling on Enrique and Enrique's boss is Kip, but Enrique won't let me get to Kip, or for whatever reason, even though Kip's a great guy, he won't talk to salespeople, so I can't get to Kip.

Simon:

So here's what I'm going to do. I'm going to work with Enrique and I'm going to ask Enrique if he would like my help in what he's going to take to Kip. And in that conversation, I'm going to do what we call the rehearsal. Have Enrique actually rehearse with me out loud, how he's going to present this to Kip and I'll ask him questions like, "What a question do you suppose Kip might ask here?" And, "What would Kip be most worried about there?"

Simon:

And so we have this conversation, it's pretty involved, it's going to take a while with me and Enrique go through this. And then at the end, I'm going to ask Enrique two favors. The first one is this, "Enrique, after I present my solution to you for you to present it to Kip... So after I present it to you, would you do me a favor and tell me, if it was up to you completely, and I know it's not, you've got to get Kip's approval and all that, but let's suppose that it was just all up to you. Would you tell me whether or not you would say 'yes' to my solution or not? And or not is just fine."

Simon:

Let's say Enrique says, "Sure, I'll do that, Al." And then I'll say this, and then I would ask a second favor, "Based on what you know about Kip, would you tell me whether or not you think he would also say 'yes' or not?" And that's going to tell me a lot when Enrique answers those two questions.

Simon:

So again, to summarize, if you can't get to the ultimate decision maker, use the virtual decision process where you do the rehearsal and the two favors, but please, please, please get out of your comfort zone and get high early.

Simon:

And that's a sales tip for today from Al Simon at Sandler Training by Simon Inc. If you have a question for me to answer on the air, go to al.simon@sandler.com. And once again, this has been, Simon Says, Let's Talk Business.

Simon:

Kip, Saurel, thank you so much, guys. Appreciate it very much.

Simon:

Great show. Everybody, good selling.