



Mark Farmer

Sales Life

from **SolutionsforSales**

Our regular feature 'Sales Life' invites senior salespeople to give their views on key sales issues.

This quarter we talk to Mark Farmer of Eden Ventures, the UK award winning early stage Venture Capital Investor.

What is your job title and what do you do?

I am a founding partner in Eden Ventures, the UK award winning early stage Venture Capital Investor. A number of Eden Venture's portfolio companies are Solutions for Sales clients.

How long have you been in your present role?

11 years, prior to which I enjoyed a successful career as a sales manager. Latterly with Metrica, one of the UK's first and most successful OSS Software companies.

What is the top sales challenge you and your team are currently facing?

Finding high quality salespeople to place with Portfolio companies. Sadly, the hi-tech industry has stopped investing in apprenticeships for salespeople, as Xerox, HP and IBM used to do. The skills pool is not there and this is to everybody's disadvantage. When it takes 6-9 months to see if the bet comes in, investing in sales resources means that companies must do all they can to ensure success.

What is the best piece of sales advice you've ever been given?

A salesperson should be like an elephant; two big ears, a long and sensitive nose and a small mouth, all of which should be used in that order.

Describe a memorable deal

Closing Metrica's \$million deal with Vodacom South Africa in 8 days. Having time to spare on a visit to South Africa I arranged some additional meetings; Vodacom was one. My presentation connected the dots between a problem Vodacom had and understood, but could find no solution for. With the problem owner, decision maker and budget

holder all in the meeting we were able to answer their questions and commit to an aggressive deployment on the basis that they provided a PO before the requested time-critical installation date. The moral of the story is never stop prospecting. Present both the business case and the technology, find a compelling event, and ensure you get the order paperwork before starting the work.

What's the most important thing to learn about your industry?

Having a positive 'give it a go' attitude is better than all the experience in the world. Using both together is unbeatable.

Who in your industry do you most admire?

Guy Dubois, who took over as CEO at Cramer from a charismatic predecessor. He united the whole company to retain Cramer's Number 1 market position and ensure a hugely successful trade sale to Amdocs, worth \$425million.

What is the best time of day for a meeting?

Plan your first meeting of the week for Thursday afternoon and your second for Tuesday morning. This ensures you have something to look forward to at the beginning and the end of the week, whilst leaving time for prospecting, internal discussions and most importantly – family.

Where do you get your best ideas?

In close proximity and continuous discussion with people.

Which do you think is most important when winning new business; technical expertise or sales skills?

Sales skills. Prospects buy from people who can show them where the money is.