

Let the Big Dog Eat: What golf can teach us about selling.

I'm sitting in the conference room of a mid-sized event company talking to the owner. He's lamenting that he can't seem to get his company "to the next level" and wants my help. When I press him, he seems to think he knows what's holding him back.

"We need more sales," he says. "I need to hire a kick-ass salesperson."

I tell him what kick-ass sales people go for these days, if you can get them, and then ask him how much time he personally spends developing new business.

"I really don't have the time," he answers, and proceeds to rattle off all the things that prevent him from doing so.

"These are all operational tasks," I reply. "If push comes to shove, they can be delegated. But nobody can sell your company the way you can. It's time to let the big dog eat."

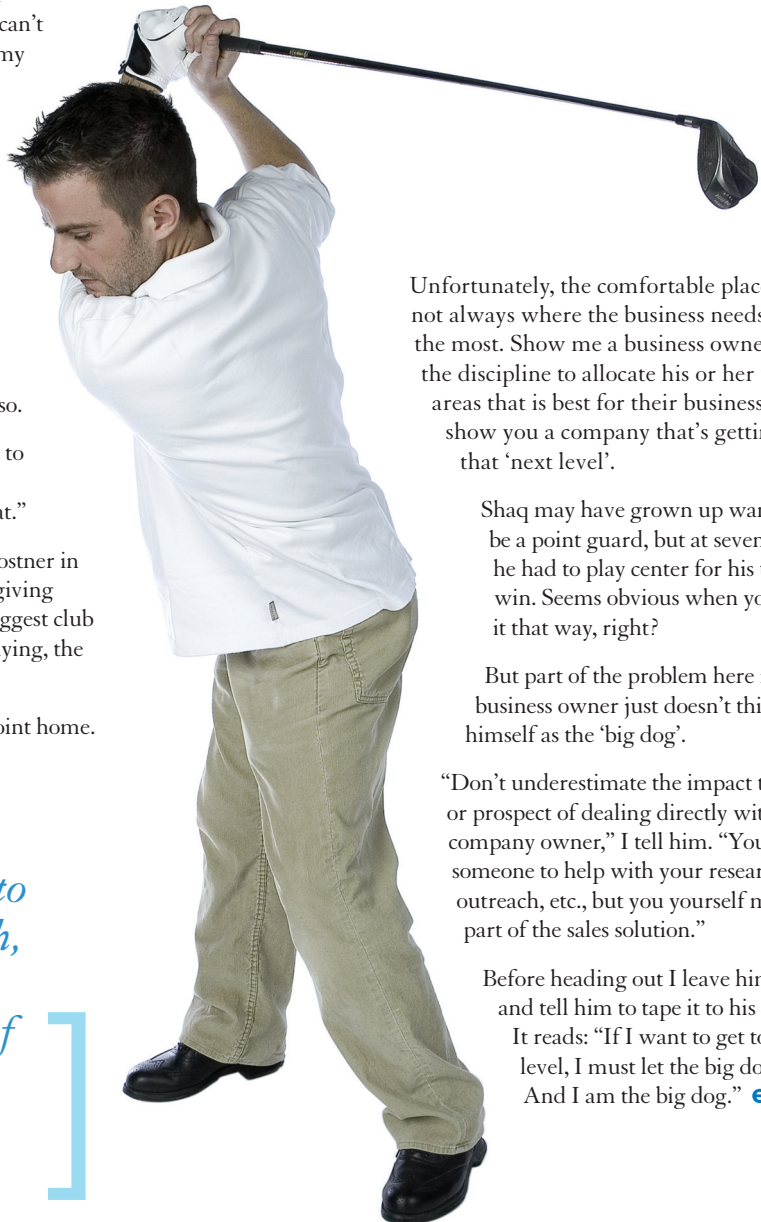
I love using that line, which I picked up from Kevin Costner in *Tim Cup*. Costner plays a wise but washed-up golf pro giving advice to Rene Russo. The 'big dog' is the driver, the biggest club in the bag, which she's afraid to use. Sometimes, he's saying, the big dog needs to be let out.

"You're the big dog in this analogy," I say, driving the point home. "The company needs you to be out there selling more."

"You can hire someone to help with your research, outreach, etc., but you yourself must be part of the sales solution."

He starts with the "yeah, but..." face, but then nods his head sheepishly when he realizes I won't take his b.s.

Part of the problem with entrepreneurs is that there's usually nobody around to challenge them, to push them to do what's best for their company, especially if that might force them out of their comfort zone. So they gravitate to the areas they like, areas they feel safe in. And they create a nice little cozy cocoon for themselves within their business.



Unfortunately, the comfortable place is not always where the business needs them the most. Show me a business owner with the discipline to allocate his or her time in areas that is best for their business, and I'll show you a company that's getting to that 'next level'.

Shaq may have grown up wanting to be a point guard, but at seven feet tall, he had to play center for his teams to win. Seems obvious when you look at it that way, right?

But part of the problem here is this business owner just doesn't think of himself as the 'big dog'.

"Don't underestimate the impact to a client or prospect of dealing directly with a company owner," I tell him. "You can hire someone to help with your research, outreach, etc., but you yourself must be part of the sales solution."

Before heading out I leave him a note, and tell him to tape it to his computer.

It reads: "If I want to get to the next level, I must let the big dog eat. And I am the big dog." **es**

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