



THE SECRETS TO **BIG FISH SELLING**

BY JILL J. JOHNSON

A Big Fish is anyone who is of a higher stature than you normally play with, and if you land them, it will move you into a whole new level of clientele. They may be spending bigger money, and as a result, they will expect that you have the professionalism to satisfy their needs. Yet Big Fish have so many people who want to work with them that they are often even more demanding than most people anticipate when they are trying to reach this level of client.

Managing the Big Fish Sale Process

So how do you manage a Big Fish Sale? Keep in mind that this is often going to be a much more complex sale than where you have an initial meeting with the client, and then they quickly say “yes.” Big Fish Sales are rarely rapid unless there is an exceptionally dire situation, and they know you are the one they need to help them solve it.

In Big Fish Selling, there are typically many decision influencers working behind the scenes who are trying to bring in their own vendors. Always remember that your prospect is also dealing with an internal power structure. Be on the lookout for those people on the inside of your prospect’s organization who may help you better understand what it will take to close the deal. They may be able to give you the fundamental insight that will help you reel the Big Fish in to close the deal.

Most importantly, in any complex sales situation with a Big Fish prospect, your primary goal is to keep moving the ball forward toward an agreement on a deal that works for you both. The secondary goal for your meeting is to try to close a *part* of your proposal — something that will give you a smaller toe in the door to help them understand the value you bring and to convince them that you can handle the bigger deal. The ultimate goal is to close the whole deal. If they coalesce, it will be wonderful, and then you need to celebrate your win.



Never lose sight of that primary goal in a complex sale with a Big Fish. You need to stay in the game. But by having multilevel goals, you will have several ways you can "win"— and then not show disappointment or convey anything other than complete professionalism if you don't get all that you wanted.

Focus on Their Needs

Remember, at its core, a Big Fish Sale is just like any other sale. This is always about the client. Keep your focus on that. It is all about their needs, their desires and their problems. Focus on how working with you will solve their critical issues within a budget amount that works for you both.

Pay attention to interviews the Big Fish has done with the media. Today, you can access print and television media interviews easily. But don't forget to access other information such as interviews with industry publications or podcasts they gave been a guest. You do need to actually read or listen to them. Bluffing to pretend you understood their point of view will lose credibility with them. Yet if you actually dive deep into the content they have appeared in, you will gain enormous insight into their pain points, concerns and view of the future. All of this insight is essential to your understanding the nuances of how to best position your products or services to meet their unique needs.

Often, Big Fish want to test you first with a something that is a smaller part of your overall proposal. That is why having the secondary goal is so critical in selling to this type of client, and it can be the key that gets you to your first "yes" with a client. Frankly, getting the smaller first sale is often the tipping point that gets you the bigger deal and longer-term money. If you can, break your proposal down into several component parts or additional optional services. Give them choices in how to work with you.

Manage the Process ... and Yourself

When you are selling as part of a team, it is vital for both of you be in the same game. Use your time wisely to prepare while you are in the car driving to the meeting or preparing to go on Zoom. Determine who needs to reinforce what message and when it will be key to tag team to reinforce your potential value to the client. Think about how you will respond to objections and who will handle it.

It is often extremely intimidating to try selling to a Big Fish. Look for ways to give yourself a mental boost to will help you stay grounded in the moment when you are up close and personal. This is especially helpful if they get a terse with their tone, questions or response to your pitch.



Big Fish are extremely pressed for time and they do not have the time to care about your feelings. Take care of yourself. Reach out to a trusted friend and ask for a pep talk before you pitch. Write a note to yourself that only you can see with three or four phrases. These should be positive in nature and serve as reminders to you. A few examples of good reminder notes are:

- 1) They already like you (or you would not be in the room)**
- 2) They want to work with you some day even if today is not your day, and**
- 3) Breathe!**

Final Thoughts

When the day comes and the Big Fish finally says "yes," be sure to do your scream and happy dance in the nearest bathroom — just do not do it in front of them! You do not want them to know that you cannot believe you finally got them to a "yes!" You want them to only think of you as belonging in the room — not that it might be the first time you ever were there! 🌟



Jill J. Johnson, MBA, is the president and founder of Johnson Consulting Services, a highly accomplished speaker, an award-winning management consultant, and author of the bestselling book "Compounding Your Confidence." Jill helps her clients make critical business decisions and develop market-based strategic plans for turnarounds or growth. Her consulting work has impacted more than \$4 billion worth of decisions. She has a proven track record of dealing with complex business issues and getting results. For more information on Jill J. Johnson, please visit www.jcs-usa.com.