

Landing the Business: Sales Strategies for Higher Education Teams



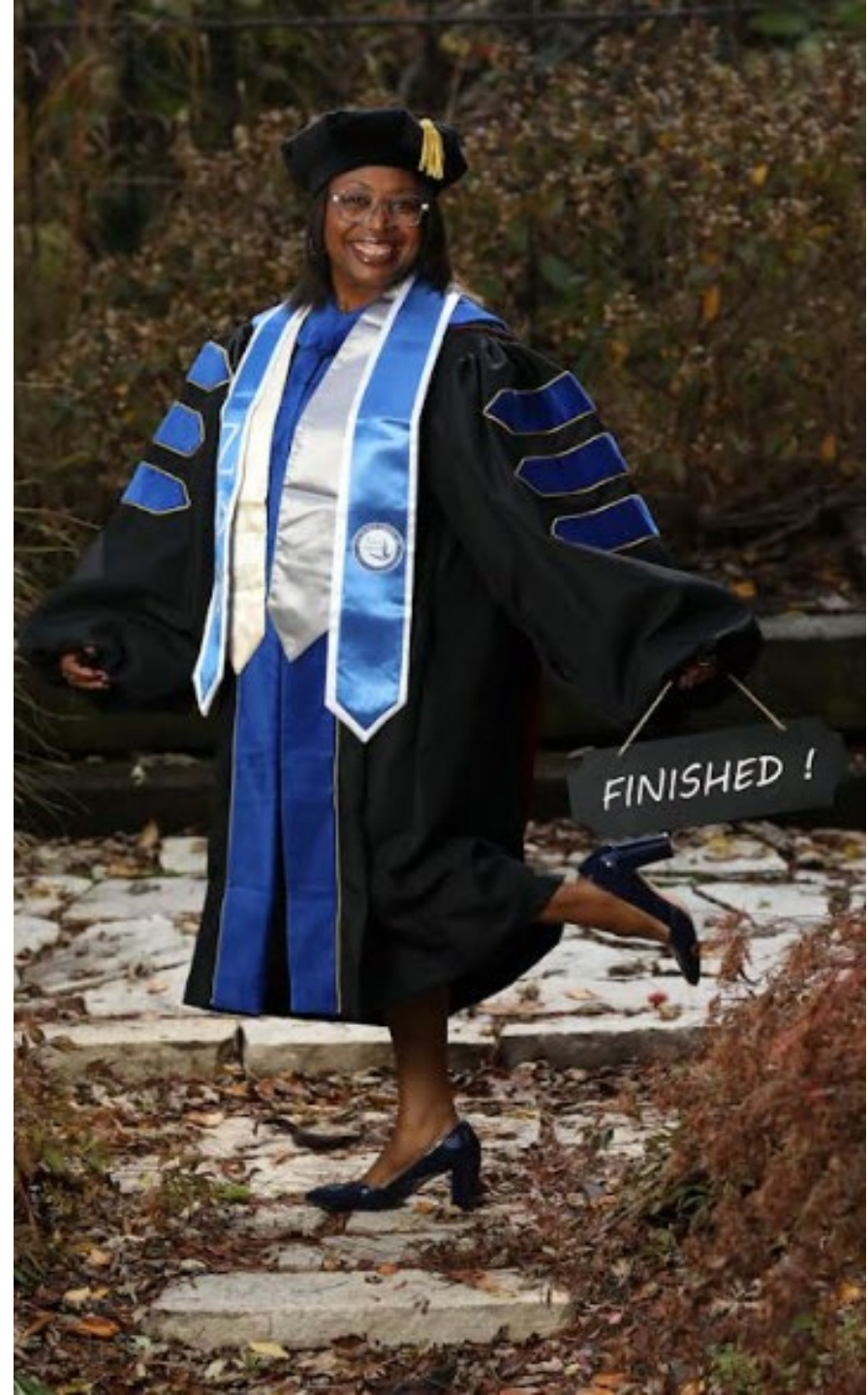
Presented by:

Alisha Clark, Ph.D.

Dean, Workforce Development and Community Education
Prairie State College, Chicago Heights, Illinois

Welcome

- I am Dr. Alisha Clark
 - 10+ years of corporate sales and marketing; 13 years in real estate
 - Inside Higher Education: 15+ years in revenue-generating programs in continuing education support
 - Current role Dean, Workforce Development for 3+ years with role entry with (\$2M) revenue status; now \$800k to \$1.1M in the last 3 years
 - Capella doctoral grad, 2024
 - Family is Everything!



Session Objectives

- Build comfort with business development
- Share simple strategies to land and close opportunities
- Provide tools you can use right away



— Sales in Higher Ed: What It Really Means

Sales = Service + Relationships
(Service delivery must be stellar!)

- Importance (recognizable impact):
 - Grant opportunities
 - Workforce partnerships
 - Community engagement
- Mindset Shift:

"You're not selling—you're solving"



Mindset Shift:

"You're not selling—you're solving"

Case A: The Employer Skills Gap

A local manufacturer reaches out, frustrated by high turnover and unskilled entry-level workers. A college team meets with the HR director, listens closely, and co-designs a short-term CNC training bootcamp. The program launches within six weeks using grant funding and fills every seat with new hires.

- ◆ **Mindset shift:** This wasn't about selling a catalog course—it was about solving a workforce problem.

Mindset Shift:

"You're not selling—you're solving"

Case B: The Community-based Grant

A college staff member learns about a state grant focused on reentry workforce programs. They contact a local nonprofit serving justice-involved individuals, propose a training partnership, and help write the proposal. Together, they secure funding and launch a life skills + CDL training program that changes lives.

- ◆ **Mindset shift:** They weren't just writing grants—they were building a solution and relationship.

Mindset Shift:

"You're not selling—you're solving"

Case C: The Upskill Conversation

At a Chamber event, a college team member chats with a hospital leader who casually mentions needing soft skills for mid-level managers. A few follow-up meetings later, a custom 6-week leadership training is built, and now the hospital asks for one every quarter.

- ◆ **Mindset shift:** This started with small talk, but ended with a long-term training partnership.

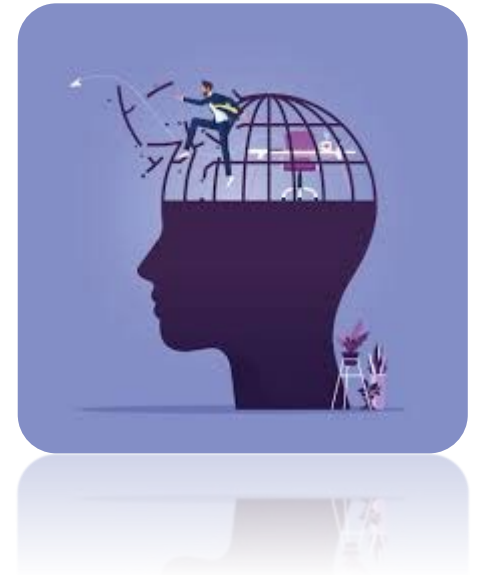
Mindset Shift:

"You're not selling—you're solving"

Case A: The Employer Skills Gap

Case B: The Community-based Grant

Case C: The Upskill Conversation



Which of these feels like what you already do?

Your Argument(s) – especially in pitching services for upskills, reskilling, rapid skilling, pre-apprenticeship, apprenticeship programming training

You Are Already Spending the Money (Unsuccessful Recruiting Efforts)

The Simple Sales Process



5 Core Steps:

1. Discover
2. Diagnose
3. Design
4. Deliver Value
5. Decide

- Emphasis:
 - Ask great questions
 - Listen well
 - Follow up

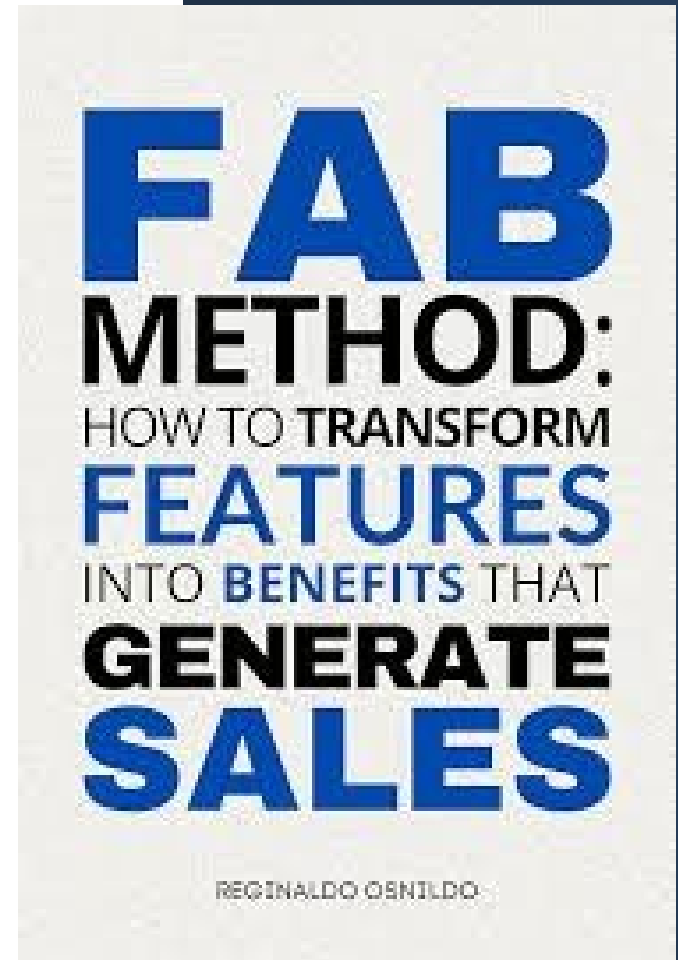


DO NOT leave your prospects unattended by unresponsive colleagues!!

Talking About Your Programs with Confidence

FAB Method: **F**eatures, **A**dvantages, **B**enefits

- Use language that connects with employers/funders
- Storytelling: Use real success stories
- Showcase outcomes and credibility



Talking About Your Programs with Confidence

Networking:

- Refined elevator speech
- Business card jacket
- 2-2-2 Rule

At the first face-to-face engagement opportunity:

- Present a standard folder with a cover letter, program fliers, college and department information
- Formal PowerPoint/other visual presentation
 - Hard copy presentation backup for the presenter and prospects
 - Try to ensure the decision-maker is in the room

At securing the contract:

- Deliver signed contract (electronic or in person)
- Deliver new customer welcome kit

At the deal close:

- Offer thanks for business
- Director/Dean follow-up at training end

FAB
METHOD:
HOW TO TRANSFORM
FEATURES
INTO **BENEFITS** THAT
GENERATE
SALES

REGINALDO OSNILDO

Maximizing Networking Opportunities

Where to Network:

- Industry events
- Advisory boards (create and join)
- LinkedIn (target regional businesses; respond to their posts)

How to Network:

- Be authentic and curious
- Ask open-ended questions

Small Talk to Opportunity: 3 Tips

- Find common ground
- Link conversation to mission
- Offer a next step

2-2-2 Rule



Closing the Deal & Handling Hesitations

Common Objections = Opportunities to Clarify

- Not in our budget
- Already have another provider
- Too much staff time

Have confidence in asking questions:

- Clearly state the value
- Ask for commitment (with contract on hand) or next step

Graceful Exits:

- Stay professional, even with a "no"



Wrap-Up & Quick Tools You Can Use

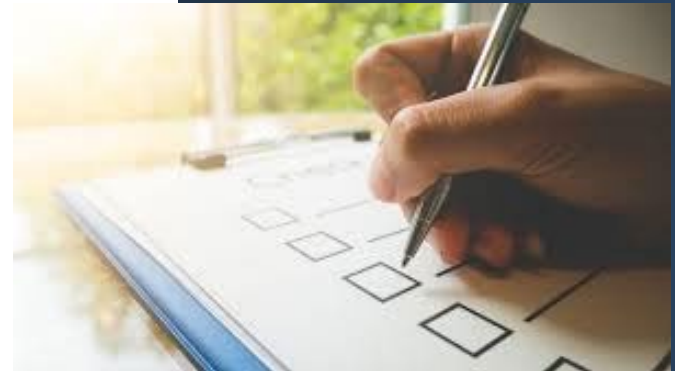
Before, During, After the Pitch Checklist

Tools:

- Email templates
- First meeting (include presentation folder with cover letter, program/department information, and small items of swag/merch)
- Upcoming meeting reminders to include who/how many will be attending
- Follow-up messages (within 24 hours)
- Proposal outlines (define training offerings)

Final Tips:

- Keep it simple
- Be human
- Practice helps





Q&A

Final Thoughts

You can do this!

Alisha Clark, Ph.D.

Dean

Workforce Development and Community
Education

Prairie State College

202 South Halsted

Chicago Heights, Illinois 60411

Office: (708) 709-3500

Email: aclark1@prairiestate.edu

