

The Activator Advantage with Matt Dixon

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5Roger Dooley [00:00:05]

Welcome to Brainfluence. I'm Roger Dooley. Today, Matt Dixon is with us again. He's a founding partner of DCM Insights, a consulting and training firm helping organizations improve client relationships. He co authored the million selling bestseller the Challenger Sale and the Jolt Effect book that we discussed on his last visit. Matt's latest book, the Activator Advantage - What Today's Rainmakers Do Differently reveals groundbreaking research on how top professional service providers win and grow client relationships. Whatever you are selling, Matt has some important insights to share. Welcome to the show, Matt.

Matt Dixon [00:00:40]

Hey, Roger, it's great to be back with you. Thanks for having me again.

Matt Dixon [00:00:43]

Yeah. So Matt, I'm curious. Your other books have been focused on B2B sales to varying degrees. This one focuses on more of a specific category, professional services. What caused you to move in that direction?

Matt Dixon [00:00:56]

Yeah, it's actually, Roger, it's a funny story. And this is actually a story we start. I. When I. When we wrote the Challenger Sale, which you mentioned in the your kind introduction before, which came out in 2011, I spent a lot of many, many years and I continue to travel around the world and share that research with sales teams. B2B sales teams. Early on, I would say around 2012, 2013, I actually got a call to come in and present that research to a professional services firm. It was one of the big strategy consulting shops.

Matt Dixon [00:01:31]

I won't mention them by name because I think your listeners probably know who they are. They have a 1 in 3 chance of guessing who they are. One of the big ones. And I was called to present to their partner retreat. I never had a chance to talk to the, you know, the organizing committee or anything like that to get prepped. They just kind of hired me, said show up on this date, you know, and away we go. And so I got up on stage and I started doing my presentation. I was about 45 minutes and it was planned for a 60 minute presentation.

Matt Dixon [00:02:00]

And 45 minutes in. There's 400 partners in this big ballroom and the managing partner who is sitting right up front and turns out he was the person who had hired me to come and give the presentation, started waving his hands in front of the audience to try to get me to stop talking. It was very unnerving. That's never happened to me before as a speaker. I hope it never happens again. And I'm thinking, what is going on here? And I stopped and to be polite and everyone could clearly see this guy was trying to get me to stop talking. I said, please, I was going to take questions in a few minutes. But you got something on your mind, go right ahead.

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Matt Dixon [00:02:33]

And he said, you know, you've been talking for 45 minutes now about sales and salespeople and sales effectiveness. And, you know, I'm sure we have a lot of clients who'd be very interested in this research. It's fascinating stuff. We do a lot of sales consulting here. But what you got to understand is that. And he gestures to the ballroom. These 400 parties, he said, none of us are salespeople. Not a single salesperson.

Matt Dixon [00:02:55]

This entire ballroom, in fact, our firm doesn't sell anything. And the only thing that I could think to say at that moment was while I was thinking, what time is my flight home? The only thing I could think to say in that moment was, let's just stipulate to the fact that there's a mysterious process by which the client's money ends up in your firm's bank account. Can we just call it sales for the next 15 minutes? So, thankfully, you could hear a pin drop. He starts laughing, everyone else laughs. And I said, okay, this is great. But it was funny because that was the moment I realized that, you know, this type of sale which, which professional services folks who are basically selling their own expertise, right there, it's. You're selling yourself, right? You're selling your advisory skills, your expertise, your consulting ability, your legal skills, your accounting skills. It's a.

Matt Dixon [00:03:41]

It's an amorphous thing, first of all, right, you can't touch it, you can't feel it, like a medical device or a manufactured product or a piece of software even. You can't demo it. And so it's a bit of a leap of faith. But the other thing that makes this really, really different is it's called in the professions a doer seller world. Because these partners, these professionals, these lawyers, accountants, consultants, they're not just selling the work, but they also have to deliver the work. So they're not even full time salespeople. And candidly, a lot of these folks did not get into their professions because they wanted to be salespeople. They made partner.

Matt Dixon [00:04:14]

And then suddenly it was something they had to do. It's not something they enjoy doing. And many of them actually shy away from it. So that taught me right away that this, this segment, which is actually a huge sector of the global economy, is not a segment that I'm ever going to present our B2B sales research in again. So I present. I spent the next 10 years avoiding invitations to partner retreats because I didn't have anything to share with these folks until now. So we. We decided to do a bespoke piece of research that was really focused on people who sell expertise as their.

Matt Dixon [00:04:45]

As their job. And that's the activator advantage.

Matt Dixon [00:04:48]

Right? You know, your experience with a speech really sort of sends chills down my spine. The last thing anybody up on stage wants to have is somebody, apparently the big boss in the front row frantically waving their arms, making you stop. It's a little unnerving, but it sounds like you handled that pretty

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well. And actually, the response reminds me a little bit of a situation when I was a very young engineer. I was probably one year out of college as an engineer. I went to a training seminar at some, you know, some remote location. And what I found was that I was the only one from an equipment provider there. Everybody else were more the equipment consumers.

Matt Dixon [00:05:26]

And when I got back, I mentioned to this sort of a grizzled old sales manager who had been there for a million years. I said, boy, you ought to send a salesperson those things. You know, there's a lot of potential customers there. He looks at me, says, you know, we consider all of our people to be salespeople.

Matt Dixon [00:05:41]

There you go.

Matt Dixon [00:05:43]

The light bulb kind of went off then. But I was. I was new, but I learned that. But, you know, Matt, you identified five kinds of people in the book. Can you briefly enumerate those?

Matt Dixon [00:05:56]

Sure, sure. Yeah. And, you know, just maybe just to take one step back. I think what's interesting is that we've entered this very unique environment, and it wasn't. While the. I think the story is. I think it's unnerving for people like us, Roger, who do these speeches as part of our job. But it's.

Matt Dixon [00:06:14]

But it's amusing to everybody else. But as funny as I think it was more than just personal interest is why we did this research. We've actually been tracking this space for some time, and there's something really interesting that's happened in professional services. You know, that whole industry is kind of revolves on this axis, this assumption that if you do good work for a client and if they like you and you've got a great relationship, they'll just keep coming back to you over and over again. Right. It's a pain to go hire a new lawyer every time you have a piece of legal work or a new consultant or a new search partner, a new investment banker. Right. Or new accountant, for goodness sake.

Matt Dixon [00:06:47]

So you just tend to go back to people once you've got that relationship. And I think what we found in our research is that kind of default posture of client loyalty where we just assume clients are going to come back to us over and over again. That's starting to break down. And now when we go out to clients, you know, five years ago, yes, most of them would agree, of course I'd go back to the same service provider. But today it's a bit of a jump ball in looking out five years from now. We ask these people, how likely are you go back to the same firms if you have a great experience and you like the partners you work with? And only about a third of those executives we surveyed said, yeah, I would automatically go back. And so we're entering this world where the client's posture is increasingly one of disloyalty. And there are lots of reasons for that.

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Matt Dixon [00:07:27]

It's not because firms and partners are screwing up. It's because there's lots of other alternate ways of getting service right. Alternate service providers, these increasingly AI enabled tech providers, outsourcers, boutique and niche firms that you never competed with before that are suddenly coming in and showing up and trying to steal your lunch from you. So there's a lot of options out there to clients and clients are trying to get great value for money. So it's a much more competitive environment. So it was into this kind of backdrop we asked the question, well, what does this mean for today's rainmakers? What does it mean to be a rainmaker today in this much more fraught client buying environment? We collected data from 3,000 professionals, lawyers, accountants, consultants, investment bankers, search professionals, PR consultants, et cetera. And we found, as you said, that every single one of them falls into one of five statistically defined profiles. So I'll go through them really quickly.

Matt Dixon [00:08:21]

So the first one is the expert profile. The expert is the person, as the name suggests, has a lot of expertise. They really pride themselves on being one of the leading experts in their space. So if you have this kind of legal issue, I'm the person you want to hire. If you have this, you're looking for this kind of support on a deal, on the investment banker you want to work with. And so these folks do a lot of public speaking, they post a lot of thought leadership, they publish in journals and things like that. They care a lot about rankings. So like in law, they care a lot about chambers rankings, for instance, which is the annual ranking of best lawyers in different disciplines.

Matt Dixon [00:08:57]

And what they're hoping is that if a client has a specific need, the client will find them and then call them. So they tend to be very reactive. Right. These, these folks are very reluctant business developers. They really don't like selling. Actually, they kind of hang out a shingle and they wait for the, they aggressively wait for the phone to ring, as one CEO told us. So that means in practice though, that by the time the clients reached out to the expert, they're probably also talking to a few other people who claim to be experts in the same space. And now it's a competitive, you know, maybe oftentimes an RFP or structured purchasing process.

Matt Dixon [00:09:29]

The second profile is the confidant. The confidant I would describe as sort of a, an old school trusted advisor. So these folks, they try to build a moat around their clients by delivering great work, product, great client service. They really bend over backwards for their clients. They aspire not just to build deep business relationships, but actually really personal relationships with their clients as well. In fact, a lot of these confidants, you would hear them, Roger in the interview say, you know, I, this person, we went to law school together, I went to business school with this person and now they are my clients and I'm their, their service provider. So they have these very deep relationships and their mindset is as long as I bend over backwards for my client, deliver great work, and I have a really deep relationship, they'll keep coming back to me like I shouldn't. It would, it would be unthinkable for them to talk to anybody else because we have a really tight relationship.

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Matt Dixon [00:10:21]

Now what's interesting about these folks is they tend to have very sharp elbows inside the firm because they've invested so much in these relationships. They don't really like sharing them with their colleagues. So they tend to box other people out. You know, firms talk a lot about, let's collaborate across practice groups and bring more holistic solutions to our clients. These folks are not about that. They don't put any notes in the CRM system. They don't invite anybody else into their client because they're, they're worried that somebody might come in and screw it up for them. Right.

Matt Dixon [00:10:43]

Because I've invested so deeply in this relationship, I can't have you mess it up for me. The third one is the activator. So as the name suggests, that's the winning profile. We'll get to that in a moment. But activators are very different from the expert and the confidant in a few key respects. So first, they're super connectors. These folks are very active on LinkedIn. They're big users of tools like LinkedIn, Sales Navigator or Equilar's Exec Atlas to really manage their network as a strategic asset.

Matt Dixon [00:11:09]

So they're kind of building a stocked fishing pond and then harvesting work from that fishing pond. They're also very active in live events. So these are the kind of folks who go to a conference or an event where a lot of partners will kind of stand in the corner and wait for a client to approach them and talk to them. These folks mainly clumping with their colleagues, right? These folks are working the room so they know who's coming to the event. They've set up breakfast and lunches and dinners and coffees and. And then they're working those connections after the event. Now what's so interesting is the way that they turn those connections into paying client relationships is they are very focus on proactively bringing new ideas to those clients. So how do I not wait for the phone to ring like an expert, but proactively reach out to my client with issues, opportunities, risks, growth, ideas, things that the client might not even be thinking about, but bring those to them in advance so that I can shape the client's understanding of what they need.

Matt Dixon [00:12:02]

And ideally in a way that creates kind of a category of one where I'm the only provider who can help them with this. Or at the very least, there might be others who can help you, but I've got a leg up because I'm the one who is thoughtful enough to bring you the idea and to alert you to it. Now, these folks are also different from confidants in the sense that they, they don't box their colleagues out, they look to bring their colleagues in. And the reason they do it is not just that they have a lot of pride in their colleagues, but I think more to the point, they know that in a world where clients are very kind of, they're kind of, you know, willy nilly when it comes to sticking with their service providers. They're very quick to change service providers depending on their needs. These activators know that. Look, if my client's buying from me for my expertise, that's fine. I'll take that all day long.

Matt Dixon [00:12:44]

But what's much better is if they're not just buying from me, but I have other colleagues across the firm

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supporting them on different initiatives and different opportunities. That creates more points of connection. That's the kind of relationship a client's going to think twice before they sever and go with a competitor. The fourth profile is the debater profile. The debater is actually very interesting. I would liken this person. For those who know the challenger sale research to kind of a challenger profile, they're much more focused on really reframing the client's understanding of what they need. So these folks come in, they tell the client they're thinking about it all the wrong way.

Matt Dixon [00:13:17]

I interviewed a search partner from one of the big search firms and he does CFO searches for big Fortune 500 companies. And he said, look, every time a Fortune 500 company hires a CFO, they bring in all the big search firms. Like everyone's coming in and pitching because it's a big hire, it's a strategic hire. And so everyone's coming in pitching. He said, my goal is, is that I come in and tell the hiring committee they've got the job spec all wrong. They're looking at totally the wrong talent. Right. You need to be looking over here, not over there.

Matt Dixon [00:13:47]

And I ask like, oh, how does that work out for you? And he says, well, I lose like 90% of the time, but the 10% of the time I win. The client tells me it's because I help them think outside the box. I really reframe their understanding now. Tip in my middle a little bit to the results. Those folks don't do very well when you look at the performance analysis. And what was so interesting to me as one of the authors of the challenger sale, because that's a winning profile in B2B sales, these are the top performers when you're selling a product is that when the person is the product, when you're selling yourself, it's a little bit of a tough posture to adopt with your clients. There's a time and a place, clients tell us. For my partners and my firms I work with to push my thinking and push me outside my comfort zone and challenge my thinking.

Matt Dixon [00:14:24]

But if every time I sit down with you, you're telling me I'm doing it wrong, like I don't have time for that. Yes, ultimately a relationship based sale. So again, if you're selling a product, you can get away with it. If you are the product, it's a different ball of wax. And then the last one's a problem solver. So the. Oh, sorry. The realist.

Matt Dixon [00:14:41]

So the realist is very focused on problem solving. The realist is the kind of, I would call them the above board, transparent, honest, truth teller with the client. And those all sound like great things, but the way they come across with the client is very glass half empty. So they're much more about telling the client that things are going to cost A lot more than they think. They're going to take a lot longer than they think. The outcomes are going to be less impressive than they think. You know, like they're all about tamping down expectations. And the reason they do it, it's not because they're Debbie downers.

Matt Dixon [00:15:09]

The reason they do that is because they know that clients have been bur by professional services

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providers. Everybody has had a bad experience with a consulting firm who's left them holding the bag on a big set of, you know, implementation recommendations, but with no plan to do it or no support to do it. The lawyer who likes to send the surprise invoice that you weren't expecting or that is twice what you had budgeted for that legal matter. We've all had these experiences before. That's why realists are so brutally honest with the client. But you know, again, tip in my middle a little bit to the results, but they don't do very well either. The reason is that clients say, look, I appreciate the candor in the transparency and honesty, but I want my partners to paint the art of the possible. Not just what can't be accomplished, but what could we accomplish together? What might we be able to pull off if we work really hard at this? And so I think it's just that negative posture, that glass half empty posture that rubs clients the wrong way.

Matt Dixon [00:15:59]

So those are our five profiles. They're pretty evenly distributed, but you do find interesting peaks and valleys. Like if you look at law or accounting you find a lot of confidants for instance, and that doesn't surprise anybody who works in a law firm or an accounting firm. In consulting you find a lot more realists. So there's kind of interesting peaks and valleys of the population, but generally speaking they're pretty evenly distributed.

Matt Dixon [00:16:21]

Well Matt, if the activators are the one that make the sales or make or make make the Rainfall, how, what percent of you probably don't want 100% activators on your team? What is a reasonable percent to shoot for? I'm sure there's a broad range, but in since nobody is probably a pure anything, a pure activator or pure realist. But you know, how, how many of these do you need? And then I guess the second thing is how do you develop them? I mean if you've got this team, you say gee, I've got some people maybe kind of lean and activators, but I don't really think I've got anybody that meet those criteria. How do you develop your people or recruit them? How do you deal with that?

Matt Dixon [00:17:08]

Yeah, it's a great question. So I think I'd say a couple things. One is that activators. And you hit on this point, Roger, just in your question itself, is that the way we teach this to partners is that these are not mutually exclusive profiles. So in other words, every single partner out there in the world has all five of these approaches. Actually, the way I like to think of them is like the equalizer bars in the stereo. You know, you got your bass and your treble and other ways that you can dial in the sound exactly to your liking. And so what we tell partners is don't think about it.

Matt Dixon [00:17:39]

As I want to go from being a realist to being an activator. What you want to think about instead is I've got some activator, I want to increase the levels, right? And what we found is, so we've got a diagnostic we do that's built back from the research. And we've run this now with thousands and thousands of partners around, you know, well over 100 firms around the world across all segments of professional services. And it gives you a 0 to 100 score, an activator score, after the diagnostic. And we find it follows

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a pretty, as you would expect, a normal distribution. So you got a lot of folks who are, you know, below 20 on their activator score. You got a huge chunk of folks in the middle from like 20 to like 80. Right.

Matt Dixon [00:18:16]

It's a big bell curve. And then you got a handful of folks, another 20%, who are kind of off on the right hand side. They have very high activator scores. So to answer your question, I think most firms would find that probably about 15 to 20% of their partners fall into that activator profile already without them doing a thing. But then the more important question is, like, how do I get everyone else to actually do a little bit more of what the activators are doing? And specifically, those folks are kind of stuck in the middle. Right? Can I move the needle a little bit and try to get them to do a little bit more of what makes those activators who they are. So I think that gets down to, obviously, coaching and training and development and all that good stuff. But specifically, what are we training them to do? So I think if I were to sum it up in our book, we talk about the activator model, we talk about the mindsets and the habits and the specific tactics and techniques.

Matt Dixon [00:19:06]

But the highest level, there are three key behaviors that set activators apart. The first one is that activators demonstrate a commitment to business development that is very unique in professional services. Remember, this is a world in which people sell because they have to, not because they want to. Right. It is a very different world. And for people who don't want to do this and aren't comfortable doing it, what ends up happening is that client work will crowd out any time they've allocated for business development. You know, and then what they end up doing is just waiting for the phone to ring or waiting for a lead to come in from marketing. And so if we need our people out there, like an activator, and activators are very different, activators don't, you know, get do BD when they get around to it.

Matt Dixon [00:19:46]

They have a cadence and a routine that's almost on a daily basis. Right. It's not huge chunks of time, but it's 15, 20 minutes here and there in pockets of the day to build pipeline to work opportunities to propose new ideas to clients, to cross sell and collaborate with their colleagues. And, and the question is, like, how do we get other people to try to develop some of those muscles and some of those routines and ideally develop a little bit more of that muscle memory. So the second piece that makes activators unique is that they connect broadly and deeply. So they connect. We mentioned this before. They're really purposeful, strategic builders and managers of their networks, but they're also connecting internally.

Matt Dixon [00:20:25]

They're always trying to find who's the colleague that has a really unique idea that my client might value and how do I get that person in front of my client. And so developing that mindset around connection in, bringing the breadth of the firm's capabilities to bear to a client, but also thinking about your network. And your network is not just a, you know, a dumping ground for connections you get on LinkedIn. It is something you need to invest in, you need to strategically manage, because that's where your future

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opportunities are going to come from. And then lastly, the last behavior is that activators create value proactively. So this is all about not waiting for the phone to ring, but bringing new ideas to your clients proactively. So what is the thing you know that your clients need to know? What is the thing that your most advanced clients are doing using your support and your expertise that you wish every client could take advantage of? And by the way, if all those clients knew what that client knew, then you would have a line around the block of other clients who want to hire you for your expertise. But how do you teach them to value those opportunities.

Matt Dixon [00:21:23]

And that's all about trying to figure out who are my ideal clients, what are the things that I know that my clients need to know. And then how do I craft that in a compelling and sticky message and then use my network and use the different channels like firm events or industry conferences or LinkedIn to start to send that message out into my network so they can get some, some echoes back from my, from those clients. So those are the three key behaviors. And I'll tell you that in our experience there's a, I think pervasive view in professional services, which is really unfortunate. You talk to firm leaders at some of the biggest firms in the world and what you'll hear from them is stuff like, well, we've determined that you can't teach people to do this stuff. You can't. There are only certain people who can be rainmakers here. And some people are just not cut out for it.

Matt Dixon [00:22:12]

In our experience is the exact opposite. That if you take your typical partner who has kind of a low to moderate activator score, that with the right training, with the right focus, not trying to go from 0 to 100, but trying to move the needle a little bit, you can see real demonstrable improvement. And then the business results follow. You see bigger pipeline, you see more closed deal, you see higher rates that they're achieving with their clients. It doesn't happen overnight. But when firms are committed to this stuff, everyone can get better at this. And that's often the question I ask these firm leaders who are convinced that only a small handful of their partners can ever be rainmakers is maybe, but do you believe that every partner can get a little bit better at this? And most leaders agree to that. They say, yeah, I think we can all get a little bit better.

Matt Dixon [00:22:55]

But I still think that only, and that's true, you're always going to have a small handful who are your rock stars, right? But everyone in our research shows that in our experience shows that everyone can get better at this.

Matt Dixon [00:23:04]

Kind of interesting. I had an old business partner who had been a sales manager and his maxim was when he was confronted with the salesperson who was underperforming was that almost always the problem was they were not engaged in sufficient sales related activity that they were doing other stuff. They were researching, they were thinking, they were agonizing over why they weren't making sales, but that simply steering them in the direction of doing more of what they were supposed to be doing

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almost always cured the problem. Now a little bit different situation where you don't have people who aren't salespeople, but if you just nudge them in the direction of those activities, that will help. It's bound to produce some results.

Matt Dixon [00:23:47]

That nudge concept, Roger, is really, really powerful. And I think it's really important here, right, because what's so interesting, and you've hit on a really important point, is in most professional services firms, these are democracies. So it's actually quite different from a sales organization. Like you and I both heard the adage, like if it's not in the CRM system, it doesn't exist. Right? And like we're going to sell this way. And this is our go to market approach and this is our sales methodology, our sales process. And so heads of sales in a B2B sales organization can drive an edict from on high and say, this is what we're doing. And if you don't want to do it that way, there's the exit.

Matt Dixon [00:24:20]

You can't do that in a world where the salespeople, the partners, own the firm and the person who's telling them to do stuff was actually elected. Not they weren't hired by the seat, they were elected by the partners. And so it creates a very interesting dynamic. So you're dealing with a couple of funky things here. You've got people who don't want to be selling, right? For the large majority of them, they don't have a natural aptitude or affinity for it in sales. These people by and large chose sales as a profession. And so sales training is all about harnessing their desire into more of a productive end or outcome. So think about challenge or jolt.

Matt Dixon [00:24:57]

As an example, when we're teaching people to be activators, a lot of it is about getting comfortable. Even with the idea of commercial interactions with clients. How do we do it without being pushy or aggressive or kind of salespeople, right? Because this is something they really shy away from. Sales is a four letter word in most professional services firms. The other thing is, again, it's a democracy. They don't have to do what they're learning. They could go back to doing what they're doing before. And so you got to nudge them exactly as you're saying.

Matt Dixon [00:25:20]

You got to create that desire to improve and that pull through. And a lot of that comes from those little kind of incremental improvements that they look back on three, six, 12 months later and say, holy smokes, I can't believe how far I came from. Right. But, but it is a very different behavior change game when you're talking about partners in a professional services firm than.

Matt Dixon [00:25:39]

Salespeople, Matt, you surveyed a few thousand people for this project. Surely there were one or two things that surprised you. You probably went in with some expectations and what, what surprised you at the end of the process?

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Matt Dixon [00:25:54]

Yeah, there's a couple of things I share with, I share with you. I've learned to be surprised by lots of things. And we go about this, I find that we go out and do this database research, whether it gets challenged or adult, it's activated. We find all kinds of surprising things. But I'll share with you a couple things that are surprising, I think to partners. The first one that I think surprises them is that I think when they hear the research, they go immediately to this place of think about a law firm. In a law firm, you typically have a billable hour requirement as a partner. Your firm says you've got to bill this many hours and you've got to also develop new business within your current accounts and you got to land new accounts.

Matt Dixon [00:26:32]

And a lot of partners psych themselves out because they say, how can I sell or develop business when I've got so many, so much delivery I've got to bill out for? And I think when we show them, and so they assume activators are just not doing the delivery work, they're just focusing on sales and they're sending all their delivery work to their under, you know, their underlings or to their team or to other people, the their sales focused partners. But when you show them that actually these folks spend not that much more time selling than you do, but they just do it more effectively and they're much more thoughtful and they're focusing their time in the right highest leverage areas. That's kind of a little bit of a brain twister for partners. I think the other one in this one, I get lots of like surprising reactions to. We collected a lot of client data through the course of this and the biggest complaint by far that clients have of the firms and partners that they work with, whether it's law or accounting, consulting, any of these areas, the biggest complaint they have in this just dumbfounds partners is I wish I heard from my partners more often. And partners are hugely guilty of this mindset that they don't want to bother their clients. And so that leads to a behavior where they sit back and wait for the phone to ring. I'm going to wait for my client to realize they have a need, a risk or an opportunity, and then they'll reach out to me for Help.

Matt Dixon [00:27:48]

But what clients say is, look, I don't know what I don't know. You know, I might be a general counsel, I might be a cfo, I might be a head of hr. I'm so heads down, executing on my own plan and my own strategy, my own company. You guys talk to more heads of HR CFOs in a week than I'm going to talk to all year. So bring those ideas to me. I rely on you to be a window into the outside world for me. And you know what? Partners also then get surprised when they lose a deal to a competitor. Why? Because that competitor, that partner from the other firm was thoughtful enough to reach out and make a client aware of an issue or an opportunity they weren't even thinking about.

Matt Dixon [00:28:25]

And you know, those who are proactive are often winning that work. And so this, you know, again, this, this idea that clients, it's not just that they'll tolerate it, they actually expect it and they reward it. When you reach out to them proactively, it will always make time for a good idea that you have that they need to have. That just, I think bowls partners over. I think a lot of salespeople say, well, of course, but again,

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they're salespeople. These are not, these are doer sellers. These are partners in professional services. And that idea really surprises them.

Matt Dixon [00:28:54]

Changing gears. Matt, if I were peeking over your shoulder during the course of a typical day, how would I see you using AI?

Matt Dixon [00:29:04]

Oh my goodness, great question. I found that AI has become this phenomenal research assistant for me and wingman, wing person, if you will. Co pilot. I know that's a trademark term, but it's a powerful. Again, as a researcher, I find it to be a powerful supporting vehicle. I think so often what I find. I'll just give you an example. We were meeting with a firm the other day, kind of specialty consulting firm, not a broad based management consulting firm, but kind of focus in key areas.

Matt Dixon [00:29:39]

And the first thing I did was I went to their website and I couldn't make heads or tails of it. I mean it was like, because it was written by the marketing teams, like we're the leading global solution provider of like all this stuff. I didn't really understand, but it sounded really generic and broad. And then I just typed the question into ChatGPT, like what does this firm actually do? Who do they sell to? What are they? What are they best known for? And the insight I got back was way more targeted to my specific question, which is where do these guys actually play? They don't play across the board, but I just couldn't tell from their website. And I think as a, as a researcher or even, you know, we sell training around Activator, I wanted to know that stuff, but I don't have time to sift through, you know, that gobs and gobs of information now to get to the answer. There are other ways we use it as well. So, you know, we do. We put together a lot of content.

Matt Dixon [00:30:30]

And so I found it to be a really powerful, I would say, atomizer. What I mean by that is I might record some content for our company or write some content, and I want to be able to use this in different places, like LinkedIn in little sound bite kind of ways, or on our website or other places. And it's really good at taking an hour of content and figuring out, like, what are the themes in here and what are the nuggets of information and then kind of packaging it up. It's not perfect, but it gets me a lot of the way there, versus me having to spend hours and hours and hours doing it. So those are just a couple of examples. Obviously, you know, stuff that we're all using it for today, like doing zoom calls and interviews, whether those are research interviews, sales conversations, even team calls, and getting those summary notes afterwards that are, again, pretty good. Like not 100% accurate, but pretty darn good. And it just saves you so much time, especially if you miss the call.

Matt Dixon [00:31:27]

And it gives you that kind of digest of, here's what happened. Here's where your name came up. You know, here's, here's what actually happened on there. That was stuff that, you know, again, this stuff is.

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This has happened so fast. But it just. A couple years ago it was just like, there's technology that can do that today. It's very commonplace, I feel like.

Matt Dixon [00:31:44]

So it's, it's pretty fun. Just when you look at the little steps in your workflow and how much you're actually relying on AI oftentimes without you even knowing it. I mean, so much of this stuff is like, I'll go and Google something and you know, you've got Gemini right there and it's producing, like that's the first thing that comes up. And it's actually the result I'll rely on the most versus having to read through or click through other links below. So again, it just, it's just happening, woven into natural workflow.

Matt Dixon [00:32:08]

Now, this is the problem that website owners are facing these days. Nobody has to visit their website anymore and get their product look at their ads or whatever, however they happen to monetize. Do you, do you have a preference among the big language, large language models, you know, chatgpt, Claude and so on?

Matt Dixon [00:32:24]

I don't, you know, I think, I don't know that I have a preference per se. I think others on my team, the research team or the product team who use this stuff like you know, all day, every day would probably have stronger opinions than I do. Again, I tend to like when it's served up to me in an easy way and it's woven into platforms I'm already using, whether that's like G Suite stuff or it's Microsoft stuff or Zoom, I just find that like amazing because I don't have to go anywhere, I don't have to do anything. It's just like right there baked into the platform. I'm, it's in the place I'm already working.

Matt Dixon [00:32:58]

Frictionless. Yeah, that's great Matt. Hey, enjoy the new book and some great insights. I'm going to have to figure out how I can apply some of those myself, although I am a, I guess professional service firm of one. But there's some good lessons in there for sure. So Matt, how can people find you and your ideas online?

Matt Dixon [00:33:17]

Yeah, absolutely. So DCMInsights.com is our company and there's actually a page there all about the activator advantage. So it's got a lot of resources, it's got interviews like this one, it's got some webinars we've done, it's got some content that you can download and you can sign up for updates about book launch goings on information for bulk orders as well for partner retreats and things like that. And then connect with me on LinkedIn too. I love connecting with folks who heard me on shows like yours. And if you have a follow up question, I'd be, I'd be happy to try to answer that for you or otherwise let's just get connected so you can. And I'm pretty active on LinkedIn so fantastic!

Matt Dixon [00:33:56]

Matt, thanks for being on the show!

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Matt Dixon [00:33:57]

Thanks Roger. Appreciate you having me!

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