

# For More Wins, Outwork the Competition

Sure, property owners evaluate speeds, features and prices of broadband offerings – but then they ask, “Who wants it most?”

By Bryan J. Rader / *UpStream Network*

**M**y company, UpStream Network, recently was chosen by the HOA board of directors as the service provider for a large, high-rise condo building. The day after we received the contract, I called the board president.

He told me, “We went through an exhaustive process, evaluating six different options. We then narrowed it down to two companies.”

“What was the deciding factor?” I asked.

“You and your team wanted it more,” he said. “In other words, you outworked your competition.”

So often in the broadband business, we think the better product will win the battle or the better price will drive the deal. Prospects evaluate options and features and pick the best value, right?

Well, there’s a lot more to it than that. You can’t spreadsheet the options among six different providers and pick one based just on speed and price. The formula is much more detailed.

For many years, I was a consultant who represented property owners and condo boards as they pursued the best options for bulk services for their communities. Typically, this required a very detailed, two-month process that culminated in a service provider’s closing with a new client.

We worked with all types of providers – the national big cable guys, telcos, independents, local wireless folks, you name it. What’s interesting is that we always saw clients ask the same question in each bid process: “Who wants it most?”

Sometimes, a provider submitted a bid that had a picture of the wrong property on the cover of the proposal. At other times, we received proposals with information that wasn’t requested, such as a DVR offer that the property owner didn’t want. Worst of all was a provider that submitted a bid without even visiting the property.

Many times I saw service providers schedule site visits and look only at the MDF and IDF closets. What about sitting down with the property manager? A board member? Even the doorman? Learn your prospect. How badly do you want it?

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My company recently did a site survey for a large apartment community, and I flew in for the meeting. I never left the clubhouse! I spent two hours talking with the manager, the maintenance team, leasing agents and more than a dozen residents. I understood the clientele and how we would pursue this opportunity. (The engineers looked inside the closets.)

When I think about our wins, I realize they always come about when we’ve outworked our competition. We preach this internally every day: Go the extra step. Take one more action. Bring energy to the pursuit. Engage more of our team. We do this so much that I sometimes forget this isn’t the norm – until I remember bidders putting the wrong pictures on proposals!

Retention and organic growth require the same intensity. You have to outwork everyone, or you will lose. Don’t rely just on your network. If you’re bidding on a renewal, never ask, “What did we do last time? Let’s do that again.” Dig deeper, and see what’s changed. Different residents? Different needs?

I’m sure that when we don’t win, it’s partly because we simply did not outwork the market. Maybe we didn’t attend to the needs of every stakeholder, or we skipped a step in the process.

In college football, the University of Alabama head coach, Nick Saban, tells his players to “outwork yesterday.” It’s brilliant advice. It keeps raising the bar every day. And it’s worked.

Service providers can use this approach, too. You can’t just have the best network, the best product or the best marketing. You have to be committed to the long-term relationship. Our new condo client certainly believes that’s what separates us from the others. We outworked and eventually won. It’s strong advice going forward. Outwork yesterday. Outwork your competition.

And now I have to outwork *you!* ❖

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