



Wendy Fitzpatrick of Yardi Systems is taking clients to the next level by applying teachers tactics to closing deals

November 20, 2009 - Spotlights

In her early years, Wendy Fitzpatrick nurtured an ambition to teach. But an administrative assistant job with software provider BJ Murray steered her toward property management technology, a specialty she has maintained for 13 years. Today Fitzpatrick, senior sales executive for real estate investment and property management software developer Yardi Systems' Northeast Region, applies a teacher's tactics to closing business deals-capturing prospective clients' attention with an enthusiastic and persuasive delivery, reinforcing the presentation with one-on-one instruction, and ultimately creating a learning experience that pays off for years.

"It's really rewarding to sit face-to-face with clients and explain how our products can help their business get to the next level," said Fitzpatrick.

After attending Nassau Community College and Queens College, Fitzpatrick joined Murray in 1996, eventually moving to client services, then sales. An acquisition in 2003 brought Murray, a division of Realm Business Solutions, into the fold of Santa Barbara, Calif.-based Yardi. Working from the company's Long Island office, Fitzpatrick focuses on recruiting commercial and residential property managers in New York, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Connecticut, the Boston area, and Vermont into purchasing the Yardi Voyager property management and accounting platform, along with Yardi CHECKscan, Yardi PAYscan, Yardi Investment Management, Yardi Portal, and other products that integrate with Voyager.

Many of Fitzpatrick's prospects are DOS-based companies whose upgrade to a browser-based system is overdue. Such change isn't always easy, and Fitzpatrick devotes much energy to making the transition palatable. "One challenge I frequently face is getting clients out of their comfort zone and helping them understand the efficiency and cost savings available to them," she said. "In response, I discuss the limitations and frustrations of their current systems, and demonstrate how Yardi's products can make their work so much easier, I speak to our full value proposition: centralizing multiple databases, operating from a single platform, calling up key performance indicators and portfolio-level reports on a screen in seconds, using less paper for printouts."

Sometimes merging databases is a painful process, but it's worth the effort. Fitzpatrick recalls a client who had relied on his staff to log him in to the property management system. "He was so enthusiastic about Voyager that, for the first time in years, he wanted his own login," she said, "The biggest reward comes from seeing a client six months after an upgrade and hearing them say it's the best thing they've ever done for their organization, that they streamlined their processes, became more efficient and grew their portfolio without growing staff."

Fitzpatrick establishes many client relationships at trade shows and sales seminars, along with the occasional cold call. "Most of my clients are within a four-hour drive, so I'm on the road a lot," she

said. "I prefer to deal face to face, rather than on the phone, and give as much time as needed to describe our products' value without worrying about missing a flight."

This schedule inevitably poses challenges to her personal life. "Just as our products help clients work smarter, I have to be highly efficient in my own life," she said. "I have two young sons, so I might have to meet with clients in Manhattan in the morning and New Jersey in the afternoon, then be home in time to see the boys at football practice home on Long Island, then help one of them prepare his student council poster, which of course is due the next morning. It all works because I have a tremendous support system at home and I work for a fantastic company that sells what I believe is the absolute best product in the marketplace."

While both aspects of her job-property management and software-are historically male-dominated, "that doesn't make anything more difficult for me. I gain confidence just from showing the clients the product," Fitzpatrick said. She keeps up on industry issues and touches base with female colleagues as a member of Assn. of Real Estate Women and Commercial Real Estate Women Network.

Despite her success, Fitzpatrick demurs at the suggestion that she's a sales natural. "I'm really not a salesperson. I truly think we have a fantastic product that sells itself. I just have to meet with a client, talk about their business and find the gaps they might not be able to see. If the product weren't so good, I couldn't make the sale. But I love what I do."

New York Real Estate Journal - 17 Accord Park Drive #207, Norwell MA 02061 - (781) 878-4540