



**Ian Segail – Podcast 2**  
**Interview with Savvas Leondas, Leondas Consulting**

(Music Introduction)

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IAN SEGAIL: It just tires you out.

SAVVAS LEONDAS: It just tires you out, precisely.

IAN SEGAIL: But it's a natural response though.

SAVVAS LEONDAS: It's a natural response, that's right.

IAN SEGAIL: Or times are bad, quick do more.

SAVVAS LEONDAS: Do more, that's right. Exactly. And that's, the question is not just about doing more. The question is about doing it more effectively and efficiently and having a rifle shot as opposed to a shotgun.

(Music)

IAN SEGAIL: Welcome to another salestutor.com.au podcast, which supports business owners and sales leaders with ideas and tactical insights to accelerate their sales revenue.

(Music)

IAN SEGAIL: Hi, I'm Ian Segail, the author of *Bulletproof Your Sales Team*. I'm really excited to introduce you to my guest today, Mr. Savvas Leondas. Savvas has close on two decades worth of experience in business strategy, coaching sales people, developing programs and personality profiling tools. Savvas typically works with small to medium sized businesses, SMEs, using his vast knowledge and experience to help them increase the effectiveness of their sales people resulting in both short, as well as long term increases in business.

Savvas has designed and written and delivered a variety of sales, leadership and management and communication courses, and I've known Savvas for the last, what is it? Fifteen years or so. Him and I have been working together on various different projects and we've become firm friends. He also holds a Bachelor of Engineering from

(inaudible) University. And, in fact, he spent 10 years working in a wide variety of roles in the engineering and IT fields prior to setting up his own professional services business Leondas Consulting.

What I love about Savvas is he's so passionate about what he does and his business philosophy is really very simple – add value. Create long term relationships, stay profitable and enjoy the journey. Welcome Savvas.

(Music)

SAVVAS LEONDAS: Thank you, Ian.

IAN SEGAIL: It's lovely to have you. So maybe we can start by you just sharing with the listeners a little bit about your background and how you came to be in the business you're in and doing the work that you're doing.

SAVVAS LEONDAS: Yeah, sure. Actually I started 20 or so years ago. I started off in personal development industry, for a better word with things like leadership programs, sales, communication, motivation, goal setting, those types of things.

Today I work with a variety of clients, I have about 500 clients that I work with primarily in the SME space.

IAN SEGAIL: Right.

SAVVAS LEONDAS: A variety of industries, all sorts of shapes and sizes. And key areas that I work in, one is that I refer to as business strategy, which covers things like team building, business planning, it's what I refer to as my bus analogy. Making sure that the bus is heading in the right direction and we've got the right people on the bus and they're doing the right things, that kind of thing.

Coaching is another aspect of my business.

IAN SEGAIL: Okay.

SAVVAS LEONDAS: It's another aspect of my business. I do both executive and business coaching. Sales is another area that I have a lot of experience in, so I finished writing my own sales program, just finished writing a book in sales. It's been in the making for a couple of years, but it's coming out in the not too distant future. So I do a whole range of things around selling, whether it be around processes or systems or regiment or how do you get sales people performing better. Whether it be on an individual basis or on a team basis.

IAN SEGAIL: Okay.

SAVVAS LEONDAS: So obviously sales development. And I still do a fair bit of work in the development area, in the management and leadership development areas through an organization called Leadership Management (inaudible), I've been affiliated with them for 20 years. So that's brief background.

IAN SEGAIL: Okay, okay. Say just in terms of the first point you mentioned, making sure the bus is pointed in the right direction. In terms of your experience, is that common? Are people not sure of where they're going or how they're going to get there? What's the – what typically do you find there, redirection?

SAVVAS LEONDAS: That's an interesting question actually and with the experience I've had particularly within the SME space, or even individuals – at the end of the day my primary contact is either the owner or the CEO or the principal or the senior management. One of the most challenging questions that people find difficult to answer whenever I ask the question is: So what is it that we actually really want to do here? What's the – whether it be from a personal point of view or business point of view.

And this, in fact, is the most difficult question for people to answer. And that is: What is it that you really want?

IAN SEGAIL: Because they're not sure?

SAVVAS LEONDAS: Yeah, this is a good question. It's an interesting observation or phenomenon. When you ask people what they really want, the typical answer that I get is what I don't want.

IAN SEGAIL: I know what I don't want, I don't know what I do want.

SAVVAS LEONDAS: (Laughing) Well, what do you want? You get stuck because people I guess they're conditioned from a negative perspective to think about what they don't want rather than what they do want. And so, in fact, as we work through the process and I work with people to help them clarify and crystallize the result that they're working towards, it becomes quite exciting, quite motivational, quite inspirational.

IAN SEGAIL: Right.

SAVVAS LEONDAS: Once you're clear about the result that you're working towards.

IAN SEGAIL: Isn't that fascinating because I know with myself too and working with sales leaders and saying, "Okay, at the end of the day what does success look like?" And I find it really challenging – they know what the number looks like. So we know, "Yes, I need to get X percent margin or X amount of dollars." But that's just a number, it's not really – I think what I'm hearing from you, it's more the reason why. It's the bigger question.

SAVVAS LEONDAS: Yeah and that's the piece that provides the motivation. You work through a variety of different goal setting programs and be setting goals for a long time. The goal is the what. The motivation is the why. And it's the why that most people are challenged with, because the what is easy. Because you can, relatively, isn't even the word for a number of people it's quite difficult for them to kind of state clearly what the outcome is.

But even once you get past that point, the next question is: Well why do we want that?

IAN SEGAIL: Why do we want it?

SAVVAS LEONDAS: And that's the point of I guess where I get a lot of blank faces, blank looks.

IAN SEGAIL: And I suppose if you were working with say an executive team and you've got different people wanting different things, then it gets even more complicated.

SAVVAS LEONDAS: That's right. Exactly. It's been an interesting journey and it's an enjoyable journey. I've had a lot of fun working with different organizations.

IAN SEGAIL: The other thing you mentioned is it's one thing to get the bus pointed in the right direction, it's another thing to get the right people on the bus.

SAVVAS LEONDAS: Yeah. Well coming to the times that we're coming in now, both worldwide as well as here in Australia, naturally we're being affected by what's going on worldwide. Especially in the last probably three to six months, it's becoming a little bit easier to actually find people.

IAN SEGAIL: Right.

SAVVAS LEONDAS: Whereas up until I would have thought October, November of last year, businesses were still finding it difficult to attract...

IAN SEGAIL: Attract good people.

SAVVAS LEONDAS: Well, it's not even so much attracting good people, it's the availability of people. It's one thing to attract the right person, it's another thing for the other person to be available to be attractive.

IAN SEGAIL: Gotcha. Okay.

SAVVAS LEONDAS: So I think given what's happened in the last few months, I think that will ease the pain a little bit for businesses to actually begin to attract the right people. But then, on the converse, what's now happening is because some organizations are beginning to feel the challenges economically, brought from a worldwide point of

view and a domestic perspective – what they’re doing is they’re saying, “Well, do we actually need to put on more people or are we better off to...?”

IAN SEGAIL: Get rid of or not hire at all.

SAVVAS LEONDAS: ....not hire.

IAN SEGAIL: Do more with less.

SAVVAS LEONDAS: What’s in fact happening is that a number of my clients are saying, “Well, instead of me recruiting, what will happen is as people choose to leave my business I just won’t put somebody else on.” And so they’re not deliberately getting rid of people necessarily. I mean, I know a number of corporates have but certainly within the SME space, they’re not necessarily deliberately getting rid of people.

IAN SEGAIL: But if someone leaves...

SAVVAS LEONDAS: But if someone leaves they’re not replacing them.

IAN SEGAIL: They’re not going to plug the hole.

SAVVAS LEONDAS: And so what they’re doing instead, they’re saying, “Well, okay. Let’s have a look at the people that I do have and the thinking process they’re working through. How can I make the people that I do have currently perform better? How can I make sure that I focus them in areas they’re good at? So I take advantage of their strengths rather than trying to fix or manage their weaknesses.”

IAN SEGAIL: Right.

SAVVAS LEONDAS: Let’s just focus on what the person’s good at, because what I want to do is maximize the return investment on my human resource asset.

IAN SEGAIL: Right.

SAVVAS LEONDAS: And so the processes they’re working through is, “How can I make what I already have more efficient, more effective. Let me get to the point where my profitability is at the stage where I want it to be, and then once I’m at that point, then I’ll put people on.”

IAN SEGAIL: It’s interesting, we have a thing called Ten Times Value.

SAVVAS LEONDAS: Right.

IAN SEGAIL: And everyone that you hire, whether it be internal or external, should return Ten Times Value.

SAVVAS LEONDAS: Right.

IAN SEGAIL: So if you're paying someone 100,000 dollars a year, you should be getting a million dollars in value from the person. Whether it's ten or whether it's five, one needs to think about it in those terms.

SAVVAS LEONDAS: I think you've actually hit the nail on the head from (inaudible) perspective, absolutely. That's very much reflected in how people are thinking. In other words, they absolutely want to maximize the value. It may not necessarily be reflected in the dollars of being returned.

IAN SEGAIL: Of course.

SAVVAS LEONDAS: The interesting thing is that in times like these, people are saying, "Well what other value is this person actually bringing to the organization?"

IAN SEGAIL: Right.

SAVVAS LEONDAS: It's another way in which I sometimes refer, from time to time refer to, is what other currencies is this person bringing to this organization?

IAN SEGAIL: Right.

SAVVAS LEONDAS: It may be through contacts. It may be contacts, it may be the relationship they create, the quality of the relationship they have with their client. It may be the introductions they can make to the business. It may be the image they can create in the marketplace about the businesses they're working with. So there's a lot of other currencies, not just monetary currencies that all of a sudden come into play and become just as important for the business owner as the revenue.

IAN SEGAIL: Right.

SAVVAS LEONDAS: Don't misunderstand me. The revenue is still critically important.

IAN SEGAIL: Of course.

SAVVAS LEONDAS: But I'm saying there's a number of other currencies that all of a sudden become just as important. And so this is where it becomes, "How do I make my business become more efficient, more effective?" Because if an individual can return ten times the value, then you don't need to put somebody else on.

IAN SEGAIL: Correct. Can you share a practical example of that?

SAVVAS LEONDAS: An example of that might be a salesperson or a sales manager is an example who's been in the industry for perhaps ten years. And either

through personal contacts or through business contacts, or through his sales team, may have created relationships that he may be able to introduce his clients to.

IAN SEGAIL: Yes.

SAVVAS LEONDAS: And so his clients, his or her clients benefit as a result of knowing the sales manager.

IAN SEGAIL: I see.

SAVVAS LEONDAS: Not necessarily because he's going to bring more business to his business, but...

IAN SEGAIL: He's adding value for his clients.

SAVVAS LEONDAS: ...he's adding value to the client. And as a result, the client perceives the sales manager or his sales people.

IAN SEGAIL: Which increases loyalty.

SAVVAS LEONDAS: Much more. It's a stronger resource. The person presents more value to the client.

IAN SEGAIL: I'm with you, which means he's providing greater value to the owner company.

SAVVAS LEONDAS: Precisely. And so what that does is it promotes loyalty, it develops trust even further between the organization and the client.

IAN SEGAIL: Right.

SAVVAS LEONDAS: And so during the difficult times, I guess, they're more likely to stay with you than go shopping. More importantly, and just as importantly, when the times come good again, they'll hang around for longer.

IAN SEGAIL: Gotcha.

SAVVAS LEONDAS: And that's just one example of how that...a different currency can be reflected in practical terms.

IAN SEGAIL: That's a good example. Right.

SAVVAS LEONDAS: So another example is working with an association as an example, or a body or an entity that has a variety of businesses attached to it. For example, accountants, associations, clubs, chamber of commerce. There's a range of those types of entities whereby if we can deliver value to the accountant's client, if we

can deliver value to the association's member, it then becomes – it's the same concept, but it actually reaches the next group of people.

IAN SEGAIL: I'm with you.

SAVVAS LEONDAS: So it's not just the value that you're going to bring to the accountant, but it's also then the value you're going to bring to the accountant's network. And so you're reaching a much wider span.

IAN SEGAIL: So it's also a case of often we have employee, i.e. like the accountant, who happens to be a member of a group that we never tap into to, that's the salesman's job, right?

SAVVAS LEONDAS: Precisely.

IAN SEGAIL: I'm with you.

SAVVAS LEONDAS: So they're the – what an example of currencies that an individual can bring to an organization.

IAN SEGAIL: And every individual has a network of...

SAVVAS LEONDAS: Absolutely.

IAN SEGAIL: So are we minding that network.

SAVVAS LEONDAS: Absolutely, be it social, be it business, be it through school in a whole range of different ways.

IAN SEGAIL: Right.

SAVVAS LEONDAS: And people aren't necessarily consciously thinking of those networks. And they aren't necessarily – it's not a question of doing it deliberately, I've never done this deliberately. It's not something I've practiced, nor have I encouraged my clients to do it deliberately – but it's an awareness thing.

IAN SEGAIL: Right, because we put our head down and our bum up and we go to work.

SAVVAS LEONDAS: Precisely, exactly. And so what can tend to happen is in more difficult times what can tend to happen is you just double the number of calls. Well, you can. You more than likely – you're more likely to double the number of no's, which is fine, you're still going to get to yes regardless, as you know, sales to some degree is a numbers game. And so the more quantity, the more quality eventually you're going to get to, yes.

IAN SEGAIL: Right.

SAVVAS LEONDAS: I don't have an issue with that in any way, shape or form. That makes sense. But to me, it would make more sense if you were to stop and think and plan your approach a little better and make your call or make your efforts...

IAN SEGAIL: More productive.

SAVVAS LEONDAS: ...return a higher investment.

IAN SEGAIL: So let's talk about that for a moment. Because I think the natural response in a situation like this is sales manager says, "Fine, ramp up activity."

SAVVAS LEONDAS: Yes.

IAN SEGAIL: Go, go go. "If you are calling, let's have a look at your call sheets. You were calling 30 people last week, double it, triple it."

SAVVAS LEONDAS: Absolutely. Exactly.

IAN SEGAIL: If you just ramp up activity, all you end up doing is just burning out your salespeople. So while they can sustain it for a short period of time, it's over the long haul that creates (inaudible). So how does one then focus on not just the activity, but on the quality aspects? So how do we make what we do, not just take last year and ramp it up, but how do we ramp up, yes sure, but how do we actually make it a better quality of call?

SAVVAS LEONDAS: Yeah, so I think there's a number of different aspects to this, Ian, that I think is important to I guess highlight. One is, when you just ramp up activity, what you're doing is actually creating more work for the person. And if it's not actually producing results, it's actually a demotivating thing, rather than a motivating.

IAN SEGAIL: Okay, yeah.

SAVVAS LEONDAS: Because all you're doing is simply – it's like being in a pool and you're drowning as it were. So the harder you kick and the harder you move, the worse it gets.

IAN SEGAIL: Because it just tires you out.

SAVVAS LEONDAS: It tires you out. Yeah, precisely.

IAN SEGAIL: But it's a natural response though.

SAVVAS LEONDAS: It's a natural response, right.

IAN SEGAIL: Or do more.

SAVVAS LEONDAS: Do more, that's right. And that's – the question is not about just about doing more, the question about doing more, more effectively and efficiently, and having a rifle shot as opposed to a shotgun approach.

IAN SEGAIL: Right.

SAVVAS LEONDAS: So how do we do that? In real terms what does that look like? And there's probably a couple of different ways. I'm sure there's more than a couple of different ways, but there's a couple of different ways in which you can look at this, whether it be in terms of approaching the individual or in terms of approaching the company or the type of industry for a better word.

So if we looked at the individual first, how do we make our call more effective to the individual? And let's say, for example, you might be working from referrals, which as you know, it's been a concern that I've been working with for a long time now. And so in good times, as an example, Ian may have had lunch with Bill and at the end of that lunch, Ian calls Savvas and says, "Savvas, I think it would be a good idea for you to get together and touch base on a couple of things."

And during good times, what happens is Bill actually has time on the mere fact that Ian suggested Bill, Bill chat with Savvas, Bill has time to do that. In more difficult times, Bill is much more likely to scrutinize what he does with his time, because he's under pressure to perform better.

IAN SEGAIL: So everyone's becoming more discerning about where they invest their time, their dollars, their...

SAVVAS LEONDAS: Absolutely. Absolutely. Much more acutely aware of, "What am I actually doing with my resources?" And time is one of those resources.

IAN SEGAIL: Right.

SAVVAS LEONDAS: So once in good times, it would have been good enough for me to get a (inaudible) from Ian that says go to lunch with Bill. In more difficult times, that's not good enough.

IAN SEGAIL: Right. So even if you just call someone and use your typical approach, "I'd like to get together, have a cup of coffee and chew the fat or what have you." Please are today, "Sorry, I don't have time for it."

SAVVAS LEONDAS: Precisely, exactly.

IAN SEGAIL: "Show me the money. What's the value?"

SAVVAS LEONDAS: Absolutely. And so how do we then make the call to Bill during difficult times as opposed to during good times? So what we're going to do is

actually make sure that we understand what is Bill's issue? So if Ian rang me and said, "Savvas, it would be a good idea if you would talk to Bill." Then before I say, "Yeah, that would be great, I will." Before I do that, the sort of questions I might be putting to Ian are things like, "Well, so when did you have lunch with Bill? How did the conversation come about for my name to come up? What were the issues that Bills was discussing that you thought would be worthwhile for Bill to get in touch with me?"

IAN SEGAIL: Right.

SAVVAS LEONDAS: "From your perspective, how do you think I might be able to add value to Bill? What was Bill's comment when you suggested Savvas touches base with him? What was Bill's comment, what was his response to that? And how did Bill think that – why did Bill think that..."

IAN SEGAIL: I would add value.

SAVVAS LEONDAS: Precisely.

IAN SEGAIL: I gotcha. As opposed to, Bill says, "Ah, don't even call me any time soon."

SAVVAS LEONDAS: Exactly. Precisely. So that's how you make the call more effective. So it doesn't mean that let's say for instance that your business has been based in referrals. It doesn't mean you simply ask for more referrals. Yes, you're going to have to ask more Ian's for referrals, yes. But what's just as important is the referrals you do get is about qualifying and understanding as to who I'm going to call and why I'm going to call them.

IAN SEGAIL: So how does that then translate when you then call Bill?

SAVVAS LEONDAS: So what happens then is Bills then is much more likely to be more receptive when I'm calling and saying, "Bill, I understand you had lunch with Ian and a couple of issues came up that you both discussed and both of you had sort of spoken about the possibility of you and I getting together to address the issues that you mentioned to Ian over lunch." So the purpose of the call is to actually look at another opportunity when you and I can meet so we can address some of those issues.

Now what I'm doing is speaking to Bill and speaking to Bill about his issues and what's current on his mind, rather than in good times where I can just pick up the phone and say to Bill, "Good day Bill, I understand you had lunch with..."

IAN SEGAIL: And my name is enough to get you an appointment.

SAVVAS LEONDAS: Exactly.

IAN SEGAIL: I'm with you. Gotcha. Then if we take that same approach and apply it to regular say prospecting where I'm cold calling or calling on someone I don't know, or calling on corporates (sic) – how does that translate?

SAVVAS LEONDAS: So the way it translates then to if you're cold calling or whatever is to actually understand the person or the position, whether it be sales managers or whether it be an industry or whatever – is to understand what are the issues that they are facing right now so you can actually talk to them about the issues they're facing, rather than just because you got a new product or a new service and you want to talk to them about it.

In more difficult times, what you need to do is make your marketing or prospective activities more target focused specifically on the issues that are facing the target market that you want to reach. So what are the issues that accountants are facing? What are the issues that sales managers are facing? What are the issues that lawyers are facing? What are the issues that plumbers are facing? The building industry is facing?

So it's about understanding your client or your prospective client much more strongly before you make the approach. As opposed to in good times, you make the approach anyway because people have plenty of time, they'll have a look at anything. They'll be happy to look at how they can expand their horizons. Now what they are doing is they're scrutinizing every single aspect of their business is being scrutinized in saying, "Well, how can I make my business more efficient, more effective? How can I get a high return on my investment from a business perspective whether it be the human resource perspective, whether it be the computer perspective, whether it be the phone systems, whether it be the furniture, whether it be the location, the building?"

IAN SEGAIL: How do I get more from this?

SAVVAS LEONDAS: Correct.

IAN SEGAIL: Okay. So what I'm hearing is as a buyer, I've become more discerning about my time, about where I invest my time and about who I listen to, because the truth is the CEO said, "There will be no more spending for the next six months." And so therefore anyone who calls, I can't talk to them because there will be no spending.

SAVVAS LEONDAS: Precisely.

IAN SEGAIL: So unless you can come in and talk to me about the current problems that I'm facing, you really have nothing to talk to me about.

SAVVAS LEONDAS: So it's during this time where you say, "Well the CEO said there's no spending." And this is, in fact, one of the ways you can add value. One of the ways in which you can – this other currency comes in, Ian, in that, "The CEO said there's no spending. So what do I do? I don't talk to anyone?" On the contrary, it's during this time where you can look for ways in which you can add value to your client, because for

whatever reason, there is an expenditure that's been suspended. It doesn't mean you stop talking to them.

IAN SEGAIL: Right.

SAVVAS LEONDAS: What it does mean is you – you may not necessarily spend as much time with them, but it doesn't mean you stop adding value to the client.

IAN SEGAIL: Okay.

SAVVAS LEONDAS: So instead of, if the expenditure is gone, it doesn't necessarily mean you stop talking to them for the next six months. If you were talking to them once a month, you might talk to them once every three months. If you were talking to them once a week, you might talk to them once every two or three weeks. But the purpose of the call is, "How can I add value to my client?"

And the way we can do that is through other relationships or contacts. If I know the issues that are facing my client, then I may know someone or I may know something that may be able to address the issue for that client.

IAN SEGAIL: What I'm hearing then is it still comes down to understanding the problems that my client is facing.

SAVVAS LEONDAS: Yeah, and I guess to a large degree, Ian, that fundamental never goes away. Meaning, whether it's good times or more difficult times, when it comes to selling anything to anyone for that matter, that's got to be your number one priority.

IAN SEGAIL: Right.

SAVVAS LEONDAS: You absolutely need to understand the client's issues in order for you to be in any way, shape or form, effective at building a relationship with that client be it transactional or be it long term.

IAN SEGAIL: Right.

SAVVAS LEONDAS: So it's just that in difficult times that becomes far more critical because people have less time than in good times when you can just walk up and show them whatever it is they might be willing to look at. In more difficult times you need to understand much more strongly the client need, the client issues.

IAN SEGAIL: Right.

SAVVAS LEONDAS: So how do you find that out? There's a whole host of ways. We've already covered the one in one situation from a referral point of view. But

from a corporate, an industry or a position perspective – so for instance, whether it be about sales managers or company or a particular industry – a whole host of ways.

You may already, if you already have clients that are in that position, industry or company, then you can actually talk to them and find out what their issues are. So that's a very much direct approach in terms of understanding what the issues are – is simply by talking to your clients and understanding what issues they currently have.

The web is another way. If you're looking at approaching particular companies, have a look at their website and understand a little bit more about them before you actually make the call. So do a little bit more research. So quite a number of organizations on their website they might have newsletters, they might have on their home page – they might have issues, they might have news about the company, what's going on with the company. It might be in growth phase, they might actually be getting rid of people. They might be looking at innovative products.

So understanding a little bit more about what's going on in the company, and that may well be available from their website.

IAN SEGAIL: Especially with a public company.

SAVVAS LEONDAS: Precisely. Exactly. Or if not, if that information is not available from their website, you may know people that know their organization. Talk to them before you talk to that company.

If it's an industry association, then talk to the industry body whether it's the accountants, talk to the institute, if it's the plumbers, talk to their association, if the photographers, talk to their association – so talk to the industry body. Or you may have friends that are photographers, so talk to them and find out what are the issues in the photographic industry? Or you might have clients, so talk to them and find out what the issues are and so on.

So there's a range of ways in which you can actually do the research.

IAN SEGAIL: So that's once you've done the research, then when you're planning your approach, you're planning it around the problem or the issues.

SAVVAS LEONDAS: Issues, correct. Because then the person is much more likely to listen to you, because you understand them before you even approach them. And so they're not just getting a call from someone trying to sell them something. They're actually receiving a call from someone who understands their issues and wants to talk to them about their issues. Much more likely to...

IAN SEGAIL: ...to have a connection.

SAVVAS LEONDAS: Naturally.

IAN SEGAIL: So in a situation, well, let's say for instance, my clients that I'm calling on businesses like mining or banking – business has gone down.

SAVVAS LEONDAS: Right.

IAN SEGAIL: There is no business.

SAVVAS LEONDAS: Right.

IAN SEGAIL: I now need to go look for new markets, new channels. What now?

SAVVAS LEONDAS: I'm not sure if we've touched on this before Ian, but in terms of the SME, they're absolutely, absolutely, ideally positioned to take advantage of new opportunities. What I mean by that is, because they're much more agile, there's much more of an organization – the organization is much more agile and they can respond to innovation in terms of whether it be banking and finance. And we know that they're having difficult times, then let's come up with a product that will address their issues during difficult times.

Or if the majority of my business has been in banking and finance and I've been dealing with a couple of other industries – I haven't really been doing a lot of those industries, then how can I then – let's understand those industries. Let's understand what their issues are and let's then come up with a solution that will address those issues. And so you actually create an opportunity and I can create a new market for my business during this difficult time.

So that when the good time comes around, I've still got the banking and finance clients, but I'm now in a new industry that's I've created during the...

IAN SEGAIL: I've got a new market.

SAVVAS LEONDAS: Precisely. So the way forward from that perspective when you've got an industry that's going through a difficult time, or you've got a company that's going through a difficult time, is not necessarily to lose touch with that business or that industry, but look for ways either that you can provide a solution that will address their needs at this point in time, or look for a different market or create a different market that you have a solution for.

IAN SEGAIL: So this becomes really understanding your product or your capability as an organization.

SAVVAS LEONDAS: Correct.

IAN SEGAIL: Understanding what that is, understanding the problems your capability or your products solve, and who else needs that.

SAVVAS LEONDAS: Spot on. Because in good times, you don't have to do that. If you're in good times...

IAN SEGAIL: They knock on your door.

SAVVAS LEONDAS: ...they knock on your door. You've already got an established client base. They're asking for it. So you have to stop and think. And here's the thing that I think is important for most SMEs is that during more difficult times, they actually need to stop and think.

IAN SEGAIL: So don't just ramp up the activity. Let's talk about where, how, what.

SAVVAS LEONDAS: All that does is simply create more commotion when you're drowning and it makes it worse.

IAN SEGAIL: Yeah.

SAVVAS LEONDAS: What you want to do is stop. And, in fact, if you stop, you actually float.

IAN SEGAIL: Right.

SAVVAS LEONDAS: So you actually survive.

IAN SEGAIL: Gotcha.

SAVVAS LEONDAS: And so what you want to do is stop and think. And this is one of the key strategies and this is where most SMEs actually you find that most SMEs take advantage of these times because they do that because they stop and think. What other markets can I approach? What other products can I introduce into my line? In what news ways can I service my clients?

Because an SME's much more agile, it's much easier, not easy, I'm not saying it's easy at all, but it's easier for an SME to switch their business around than for a large corporate.

IAN SEGAIL: Yeah. So what do you do when someone's not just buying as much? So, for instance, if I'm a wholesaler and I'm selling to retailers and they're just not stocking as much. I've still got a budget that I need to achieve or is it just a matter of cultivating new sources of business?

SAVVAS LEONDAS: So that's one approach. The other approach is to actually talk to clients and understand what is – again it's going back to understanding what the issue of the client is. In any form of selling, the key thing is to understand the client need before you make your approach with what it is that you have to offer.

During good times, because the client has time they're much more open and much more likely to listen to – receive a call or receive a leaflet or look at something and look for different things that might be available on the market. During difficult times, because their time is much more scrutinized, they're much more aware of where they're spending their resources not just their time. What we need to do from a sales perspective is be much more aware of that and recognize that what I need to do is actually understand the client before I approach them. And that becomes much more evident, much more clear, much more stronger aspect of the sales process than in good times.

So again, when you ask me the question – what do I do as a wholesaler when the retailer stops stocking, what do I do? Well, understand the retailer. You'll find that each individual business is going to have different issues. So for instance, if one organization has a cash flow issue, the real issue is not so much stocking, the real issue is the cash flow. So okay, let's make the payment terms different. So it doesn't stop the supply, it just means that...

IAN SEGAIL: That I might become your banker for 60 days as opposed to 30.

SAVVAS LEONDAS: Exactly. But if the issue is a profit and loss issue, then that's a different issue all together.

IAN SEGAIL: I'm with you.

SAVVAS LEONDAS: Then in that situation, stay in touch with your client and go and look for new business. I'm just giving you a very simply example here but...

IAN SEGAIL: Sure, sure.

SAVVAS LEONDAS: ...you know, there's a whole different...

IAN SEGAIL: But it still comes back to understanding what are the issues and how you can help your client solve that issue.

SAVVAS LEONDAS: Correct. So if it's a P&L issue and the issue's about finding good people, then I might know a recruitment company that's really good in that industry that might introduce you to a client of mine that might be able to address that issue. So this is the currency that I was referring to before. So sure, right now I'm not delivering value in terms of from my company's perspective, it's not a direct value. But I'm providing that value indirectly by introducing someone to my client.

That does a number of things. From your client's point of view, it builds even more trust with the sales person because the client recognizes that, "I'm just not here to get money from you. I'm actually here because I care about your business." And so it builds trust. So your relationship becomes stronger. It adds value to my client because I'm already

addressing, I'm addressing an issue not necessarily from my company's product and services, but because I know somebody else.

The client sees not just me, but sees my business as more than just a person where I buy my kitchen knives from. It now becomes a resource for me that perhaps I can resolve a number of other issues, not just my kitchen knives.

IAN SEGAIL: Right. So practical example might be, I can ramp up say training. If the staff is failing to move stock, let's help them, ramp up training so we bring in at our own expense, we might bring in a "retail sales trainer" to teach your people how to sell.

SAVVAS LEONDAS: Exactly.

IAN SEGAIL: So we're adding value helping – if you move your products, we move ours.

SAVVAS LEONDAS: Exactly.

IAN SEGAIL: So if I can just in the limited time we have left, if I can just peel back to something which I know is a strength of yours, and I think it's something that is so relevant in today's market, which is really tapping referrals.

Because to approach new business today is a lot harder than it would be without an intro in any, in selling anyway, it's always hard. But certainly in tough times. You have a terrific process that you use for getting referrals. Can you maybe touch on some of that?

SAVVAS LEONDAS: Yeah, I mean, the process of asking for and getting referrals in is intriguing to me, as you know, to some degree comes naturally to me. But in another way, it's actually the – I can't think of anything more natural that happens, because we – every one of us does this. It's just that we're not aware that we are actually doing it.

So perhaps let me, without necessarily given time, without necessarily having a whole session on how we do that – if we just look at some of the key elements of how do we ask for referrals in order to get them. The number one focus when it comes to asking for them and getting them is your attitude towards it in the first place. You as an individual need to absolutely feel comfortable about asking and about giving. That's got to be a fundamental with anyone who wants to develop a referral business.

It's the mindset that says, "This is how I do business." It's the mindset that says, "I'm totally comfortable with asking for referrals."

IAN SEGAIL: And most people aren't.

SAVVAS LEONDAS: Most people are not, because to them it's kind of asking for help and most people think that they don't need help.

IAN SEGAIL: Or it might be asking for a favor or I'm going to put you under pressure because I'm asking you to introduce me to your friends or whatever.

SAVVAS LEONDAS: Precisely. And that's something that most people need to get their head around, in that...

IAN SEGAIL: Or their heart.

SAVVAS LEONDAS: ...or their heart. They just gotta get around it so from a foundation point of view, that's critical in order to build that up from a longer term perspective and build the business around referrals.

IAN SEGAIL: So let me understand, so there's two aspects, the technical aspect, which is the how to ask for referrals.

SAVVAS LEONDAS: Correct.

IAN SEGAIL: And then there's the emotional aspect, which is getting your own head and heart around the fact that you should and you can feel comfortable to ask.

SAVVAS LEONDAS: And, in fact, it's only natural. Let me give you an example. If your child were sick and you had to take him to a doctor and you didn't know a doctor that was, that had an issue with that particular sickness that your child has, what would be the first thing that you would do?

IAN SEGAIL: Call someone and say, "Who do you know?"

SAVVAS LEONDAS: So I would call someone and say, "I need some help her. My baby's sick. I need to get, what doctor can I go and..."

IAN SEGAIL: Right.

SAVVAS LEONDAS: It's not rocket science.

IAN SEGAIL: So what we do is do this anyway?

SAVVAS LEONDAS: Precisely.

IAN SEGAIL: You're telling me now to do it proactively.

SAVVAS LEONDAS: Precisely. And so it's understanding that it's not an issue. It's just about people actually understanding that we do it naturally anyway. It's just a matter of you transposing that mind set or that paradigm into the business environment. So from a foundational point of view, that absolutely needs to be there. Because if it's not there, you're going to, when you go and ask for referrals, you're going to sound like a

(inaudible) then it's just going to come across. So then you don't get them and you say, "Well I ask, but I don't get them."

IAN SEGAIL: (Laughing)

SAVVAS LEONDAS: (Laughing) I'm not surprised.

IAN SEGAIL: Correct, right.

SAVVAS LEONDAS: And I've done this. I've even, in years gone by – I don't do it anymore. But in years gone by I would actually write scripts for people that said, "This is what you say. Go use these words and it works." And it doesn't work.

IAN SEGAIL: It's not exactly what you say, in this case, it's the where it's coming from, the intent.

SAVVAS LEONDAS: Correct. The intention. In this space where you're at. Absolutely.

So that's the first thing to understand. Then there's the technical things. I mean, obviously you need to have a specific goal that you're working towards. That goes without saying, "What is it I'm trying to achieve? How many referrals do I want over what period of time?" All those types of things need to be in place.

So then when it comes to actually how to ask for referrals, I think the most important thing is to be natural in terms of your asking. And so don't go looking for scripts, create your own. And so the way that you're going to ask is the way you ask. What is important though when you're asking is to be aware of the question you're asking. Most people say, "Well, Ian, I'm just looking to expand my business. I'm just wondering, do you know some people that I can talk to?" Wrong question. Because the answer to, "Do you know someone I can talk to?" Is, yes or no.

IAN SEGAIL: Is, "No, I don't."

SAVVAS LEONDAS: Yeah. And the easiest thing you are going to do is you're busy already anyway. He has me asking a question about I'm forcing you to think about people. I don't want to think. The easy thing to say is, "Well, I don't know anyone." And that's not true.

IAN SEGAIL: Or, "Let me think about it, I'll get back to you."

SAVVAS LEONDAS: That's even worse. That's even worse.

IAN SEGAIL: And now because I'm going to hound you until you do it.

SAVVAS LEONDAS: Precisely. But the thing is you say to me, you're going to think about it – you don't have time to think about it. You're busy doing what you're doing.

IAN SEGAIL: Correct, and I'm not going to think about it.

SAVVAS LEONDAS: You're not going to think about it. That's reality. Of course you're not going to think about it. But you don't want to say no because you don't want to hurt my feelings or for whatever reason you'll say I'll think about it. And then I end up calling you every five seconds about what's going on.

So number one is the question you're asking making sure we don't ask a closed question. We ask an open question. So instead of saying, "Do you know someone?" You ask the question, "I'm just wondering, Ian, who are some of the people that you're aware of that may be worthwhile for me to touch base with?" So the question is, who, "Who do you know?" Or, "Who are some people that you're aware of?" Or, "Who are some of the people you have spoken to in recent times that you think might be worthwhile for me to talk to?" So the question you need to ask is one, the answer to which is a name.

IAN SEGAIL: I'm also hearing two things. I'm hearing a, it's a who, but I'm mostly hearing a context. So, "Who is it?" And the context is, "Why is it?"

SAVVAS LEONDAS: Correct.

IAN SEGAIL: So, "Who do you know that does x?"

SAVVAS LEONDAS: Exactly. So that's one of the tactics in terms of how you actually ask the question. And another tactic is the person says, "Well, let me think about it or I don't know anyone." And that's going to typically be the response unless you have a really strong relationship with the person, that's a different story. That's a relatively typical response. "I don't know anybody or I can't think of anybody right now. Let me get back to you or not off hand. Or let me look at my database, or let me look through my business cards." Or whatever.

One of the ways in which you can go back to that is say, "Well, I appreciate you doing that, but I'm just wondering, one of the things that I'm looking for is in the retail industry and in particular in the North Shore. I'm just wondering who might be the first shop owner that comes to mind in that area that might be worthwhile for me to call on."

So what you're doing is you actually have some prompting questions you can ask the person to make it easier to them top pop up with a name.

IAN SEGAIL: Right. Because the broader the question, which is, "Who do you know?" Is such a broad question.

SAVVAS LEONDAS: It's too difficult.

IAN SEGAIL: Whereas who do you know on the North Shore, who is left handed, that needs a screwdriver.

SAVVAS LEONDAS: That's the one. That's the one. Or, "What companies do you know that are in the, the supply glasses? What companies do you know that are in growth mode? What companies do you know that are in such and such an industry?"

IAN SEGAIL: Or at this moment, "Who do you know out there that's really doing it touch in the marketplace?"

SAVVAS LEONDAS: Exactly. If you're looking to promote products today to sales managers for example, "Who are some of the sales managers you know who are on top of their game? Or who are some of the most successful sales manager you know? Or who are some of the sales managers that you know who are in this industry, in that industry or..." and so it's a question, it's a matter of then devising questions, prompting questions that are relevant to you that are in linen with the market, the industry, the company, the individual you approach – individual with that profile or organization, and then a matter of then creating prompting questions that I can ask people I know to refer me to those people.

IAN SEGAIL: And what about your thoughts about preempting that? So when you start your relationship, one of the reasons why people do business with us is because they get referred, kind of like the reason I'm here today. And assuming our relationship is successful, one of the things I will be doing is asking you to refer me to others.

SAVVAS LEONDAS: That's right.

IAN SEGAIL: What are your thoughts around an approach like that?

SAVVAS LEONDAS: Um, Ian, absolutely spot on. In fact, probably in the last ten to fifteen years, that's been precisely the way that I approach any new client that I go to, is make it clear up front that that's how I do business. I don't necessarily ask for a referral at that point, I simply set the ground, I sew the seed. I sew the seed that this is how I do business. And so it's – and it's somewhere along the lines of, "Ian, thanks for making time obviously we're here because Bill suggested we catch up. And in fact, that's how all of my business is actually conducted on that basis." And so I might just leave it as something as simple as that, or I might say something like, "Well, given the relationship, Ian, that you have with Bill, you can appreciate that Bill asked we catch up. That's, in fact, how I do business all the time. And, in fact, that's the intention out of this relationship. What I want to do is make sure that the value I deliver to yourself or from this engagement is such that at the end of this engagement you say to me, 'Well, Savvas, you need to go and talk to Mary.'"

IAN SEGAIL: So in other words, you'll be in fact, killing two birds with one stone because you're actually saying, "I intend to add so much value that you just won't help yourself to refer me on to Mary or Bill or what have you."

SAVVAS LEONDAS: Absolutely. That's right.

IAN SEGAIL: I'm with you.

SAVVAS LEONDAS: Exactly.

IAN SEGAIL: Okay.

SAVVAS LEONDAS: And so I put myself in (inaudible) to say, "At the end of the day, I know I can deliver value in the same way that I delivered value to Bill, I'm going to deliver value to Ian. So that Ian, surely who knows Mary or Steve or Matthew or whatever."

IAN SEGAIL: Wonderful, wonderful. I'm really conscious of time and today has been incredibly valuable, not just for myself but hopefully for everyone else listening.

SAVVAS LEONDAS: Sure.

IAN SEGAIL: I would love to get you back in here again and pick your brains again, so I'm hoping you'll join us for round two at some time in the near future.

SAVVAS LEONDAS: Yeah, absolutely. And it's been really enjoyable for me also and it's not often that I do this, but it's great. I mean, it's worthwhile for both myself and obviously if we can work together I can add value to your business, then by all means, great opportunity.

IAN SEGAIL: Fantastic. Thank you very much for your time.

SAVVAS LEONDAS: I look forward to round two.

IAN SEGAIL: Beautiful.

SAVVAS LEONDAS: Thank you.

(Music)

IAN SEGAIL: For more information on service and the services that he offers through Leondas Consulting, contact him at Australia, which is area code 610298165318. That's Sydney, Australia, 98165318, or you can email Savvas at Savvas, which is S-A-V-V-A-S, @Leondas, L-E-O-N-D-A-S.com.au.

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Until next time, thanks for listening.

(Music)

END OF PODCAST