FOR BUSINESSES · GUIDE

# From Contacts to Context

Why relevant relationships are more useful than contextless contact acquisition.

Most organisations do not struggle because they cannot identify prospective customers. They struggle because the first approach lacks the context, relevance and trust that make a meaningful conversation welcome. This guide sets out six frustrations your sales and marketing teams will recognise, and the logic of a different starting point.

## 1. Your problem isn't a shortage of contacts. It's a shortage of context.

**The situation.** Your sales team may already know exactly whom it wants to reach: names, organisations, job titles, perhaps even phone numbers. But knowing someone's name is not the same as understanding their needs, earning their attention or giving them a reason to talk to you.

**Why the usual approach falls short.** Without context you cannot tell what is occupying their attention, which challenges are shaping their decisions, or when they would welcome help. So outreach becomes generic, the message arrives at the wrong moment, and even a genuinely useful product feels like another unwanted sales pitch.

> **What Conversations That Count changes.** Conversations That Count creates valuable, relevant experiences in which prospective customers can recognise shared interests and voluntarily begin a more meaningful relationship.

## 2. Having someone's contact details doesn't mean you have permission to sell to them.

**The situation.** Being able to send somebody a message is not the same as being welcome in their inbox, their diary or their boardroom.

**Why the usual approach falls short.** Decision-makers face constant requests for their time, attention and money, and every unsolicited approach competes with responsibilities they already carry. A message that arrives without relevance or an existing relationship often meets resistance before the offer is even considered.

> **What Conversations That Count changes.** Conversations That Count offers participants something useful first, with your business's involvement made transparent. Commercial contact always remains the participant's choice.

## 3. Your prospective customer may need what you sell. That doesn't mean they trust you enough to discuss it.

**The situation.** The difficulties that make your offering relevant (a succession question, a cash-flow squeeze, a burnt-out team) are exactly the things people are reluctant to raise with an unfamiliar supplier.

**Why the usual approach falls short.** Without that understanding you struggle to make a compelling, relevant offer, and the prospect never sees why you might matter.

**What Conversations That Count changes.** Conversations That Count creates an appropriate setting for useful discussion through trusted invitations, qualified facilitation and clear boundaries. A host's credibility can encourage people to attend. It does not automatically become trust in your business. That trust must still be earned, and the programme gives you a legitimate way to begin earning it.

## 4. Another event. Another logo. Another sponsorship report. But what did your business actually gain?

**The situation.** Your business is regularly asked to fund conferences, festivals, awards, community initiatives and worthy causes. The proposals promise visibility, access to audiences and the goodwill of being associated with something meaningful.

**Why the usual approach falls short.** But the audience did not necessarily attend because of you, and the activity may have little to do with the commercial problems you are trying to solve. Afterwards you receive photographs, attendance figures and a list of where your logo appeared, and your marketing or sales team is still asking how that investment helped it reach the right customers or progress a single relationship.

**What Conversations That Count changes.** Conventional sponsorship has legitimate value for brand awareness and community goodwill. Conversations That Count is a more direct alternative when the goal is to build relationships: it begins with your business objectives and the people you want to reach, and designs the engagement backwards from there.

## 5. Stop interrupting the people you want to do business with. Give them a reason to engage.

**The situation.** Cold calls, unsolicited emails and generic seminars all begin with what the supplier wants to say.

**Why the usual approach falls short.** Each interruption costs the recipient time and attention, so the natural response is to screen it out, and each ignored approach makes the next one harder.

**What Conversations That Count changes.** Conversations That Count begins with something the prospective customer wants to understand, solve, prevent or achieve. That single change transforms the relevance of the first interaction.

## 6. People don't need another lecture about their problems. They need help preparing for and addressing them.

**The situation.** People already live with stress, uncertainty, financial pressure, professional demands and family responsibilities. Awareness campaigns that simply name these challenges add little.

**Why the usual approach falls short.** A session that only acknowledges a problem leaves people no better equipped, and a supporting business gains nothing more than a passing association.

**What Conversations That Count changes.** Each conversation is designed to help participants understand what creates the pressure, what can be anticipated, which decisions improve the outcome and where appropriate help is available. That practical usefulness is what makes the experience, and the business that supported it, memorable.

## Contacts versus context

| Conventional outreach | Conversations That Count |
|---|---|
| A database of names | A relevant audience |
| A generic message | A problem they recognise |
| An unwanted interruption | A trusted invitation |
| Resistance | A useful conversation, then optional engagement |

**Stop asking prospective customers to trust you before you've given them a reason to.**

## Questions to ask about your current outreach

- Do we know what our target customers are worried about this quarter, or only who they are?
- When we contact them, what do we offer that is useful before we ask for anything?
- Who do they already trust, and could that person convene a useful conversation?
- Can we report relationship progress, or only activity and impressions?
- Would our prospective customers describe our approach as welcome?

## What this is not

A context-first approach is not a way to get around anyone's judgement, infiltrate networks or manufacture trust. The commercial association is always transparent, the value genuine, and every participant free to decline. A host's credibility can encourage attendance; trust in your business must still be earned.

Conversations That Count does not guarantee leads, sales, return on investment, trust transfer or access to particular decision-makers. Commercial results depend on many factors, including the participating business's offering, suitability, follow-up and sales processes.

## Next step

Tell us the audience you want to reach and the objective behind it. It takes about two minutes and commits you to nothing.

**Build My Customer Engagement Campaign:** www.conversationsthatcount.org/businesses/#plan

Or contact Pamumvuri directly: **tapiwa@nojobsjustwork.com** · **+263 72 003 7858** (phone and WhatsApp).