



Dialog 3: Ludwig and Dorothea

Manager Helps Employee / Employee Wants Manager to Do It For Him

Ludwig is an associate director of business development at Moonlight Research Associates. He's working on a deal with Symphony Pharmaceuticals to conduct a large clinical trial. He's having a conversation with his manager, Dorothea, about the presentation he has to give to Symphony's selection committee.

Step 1: Permission

Ludwig: Hey, great news! Symphony Pharmaceutical's selection committee shortlisted us for the blepharitis trial, and they asked me to create a presentation for the bid defense meeting. I really want it to be perfect. Could you put something together for me?

Dorothea: Let me see what you've already come up with.

Ludwig: I really don't know what to put into the slide deck. There's too much at stake for the company here, and you're so good at this. You've done this so many times, I'm sure it wouldn't take more than half an hour for you to customize one for Symphony. And the deal could be worth millions to us.

Dorothea: This is a big opportunity — I really appreciate you wanting it to be perfect. I also really believe in you — which is why I put you on this deal in the first place. And you've rewarded my faith by moving the deal as far as you have. I know this part is new for you, and I'm happy to help you strategize. Do you have time now?

Ludwig: (a little deflated) Yeah. I just really don't want to mess this up when we're so close.

Dorothea: Look, I know you feel like you're in over your head. Listen carefully to what I'm about to say: that feeling of overwhelm, of being unprepared for what's next, will never go away. At least, it won't go away if you're doing this right. Because in sales, the reward for each win is a chance to play at a higher level. And putting together these custom presentations will be important for you moving forward. So let's think about it together.

Ludwig: (brightening) OK, I hear you. I'm nervous, but let's do this.

Ignores the request, and opens with a bid to think it through together (chapter 10).

Agrees with Ludwig -- this is a big deal -- and expressing confidence (chapter 10).

Introducing a better outcome than the other person initially wants (chapter 14).

Step 2: Outcome

Dorothea: Good. So what's the outcome you want out of that meeting?

Ludwig: Well, I want to land the Symphony account. I want them to choose our bid.

Dorothea: Can you be more specific?

Ludwig: What do you mean?

Going for clarity (chapter 16).

Dorothea: I can tell you how to win the account.

Ludwig: What? How?

Dorothea: Undercut our competitors by 50%.

Ludwig: You're not being serious.

Dorothea: Of course not. But that's how some of our competitors think. Bid low, and then try to claw back to profitability through change orders. Our clients hate it, but low initial bids are very alluring to them nonetheless. And of course, our operations teams will curse the day you were born. But if your only goal is to land the deal, that's one way to do it.

Ludwig: OK, let me rephrase. I want to land the Symphony account with a deal that is profitable for us and a great value for them. I want to propose a solution that meets everyone's needs that they will select over the others.

Dorothea: Terrific. And what outcome would you like for yourself?

Ludwig: Well, I'd like to be the account manager. And — like you said — I'd like this success to set me up for more complex and lucrative opportunities in future.

*This outcome checks all the boxes:
Positive, clear, and meaningful.
Energizing outcome achieved (chapters
15-17).*

Step 3: Opportunity

Dorothea: So tell me where the deal is now.

What's happening now?

Ludwig: Well, they've narrowed it down to us and two others. They're devoting next Tuesday morning to our presentations — we each get an hour, and the order will be determined at random — and they'll spend the afternoon deciding.

Dorothea: Tell me about your interactions with them.

Ludwig: I've had several screen demos with their clinical project managers and data managers, who are pretty stoked about our reporting technology. Our user interface will save their associates a lot of time compared to the others. And they love that it's so mobile-friendly. One compliance officer said that he's rooting for us, because off the record, we have the most robust data security protocols. I've tried to talk to the economic buyers, but

haven't gotten past their gatekeepers. I'll be meeting them for the first time on Tuesday.

Dorothea: That all sounds excellent. What I'm hearing is, your job in that presentation is to demonstrate that our solution is the one that best meets their needs. What do you know about their criteria for choosing?

Ludwig: Not much.

What have you tried?

Dorothea: What have you tried, to get that information?

Ludwig: Well, I read through their annual report from last year, and the first quarter 10-Q. So I know what their pipeline looks like in terms of ongoing and upcoming trials, and the last five years of clinical trial success rates.

Dorothea: I'm impressed! You have done your homework. Now let me tell you my process for creating presentations for buyers. I find out about the people I'll be meeting; what's important to them, what goals do they want to hit, and what risks are they most concerned about? What have you tried to get that information?

Ludwig: I didn't actually spend much time thinking about that. I was so busy reading the official statements and talking to user and technical buyers, I haven't paid much attention to the actual people I'll be presenting to. I feel like an idiot!

Finding the Opportunity in the Problem

Dorothea: Welcome to complex sales — there's always some T you realize you haven't crossed. That's why we're talking. And here's your opportunity, and why I refused to do the presentation for you. If you want to grow in biz dev, you've got to get good at doing this work. Because nobody else will have the access and knowledge to put it all together. This is really the art of sales.

Ludwig: I'm excited to learn, but I'm not sure where to start. How do I find all that out?

Dorothea provides context to "what have you tried" by teaching Ludwig about her process (chapter 20).

Empathizing and not taking the bait when he criticizes himself (chapter 22).

Dorothea is 100% transparent about her motives in refusing to do the work for Ludwig.

Step 4: Plan

Identify Options

Dorothea: Excellent question. Let me ask it back to you: knowing what you know, what might you do to get this info?

Ludwig: Well, I could ask the people at Symphony whom I do have access to.

Dorothea: Great. Start making a list. That's number 1. What else?

Ludwig: I should start with the compliance officer, the one who's rooting for us. He's got the most to gain or lose if they choose another partner.

Dorothea: Excellent. Add it to the list. What else?

Ludwig: I can't think of anything else.

Dorothea: May I make a suggestion?

Ludwig: Of course.

Dorothea: I do what you do in terms of research: annual reports, press releases, quarterly statements. And then — here's the ninja move — I look for discrepancies between their audited reports and their less formal communication, like press releases and letters to investors, and interviews in the financial and trade press. It's not easy, and it's a lot of work, and it's definitely a skill you have to grow through experience, but it pays off.

Ludwig: If I take a crack at that, would you be willing to go over it with me and point out anything that I've missed?

Dorothea: Of course. Put it on the list. Anything else?

Ludwig: That sounds like a lot of work, and a great start. Is there anything else you'd suggest?

Choose

Dorothea: Not right now, but I love that you're asking. So given the options on your list, what would you like to do? What feels exciting?

Ludwig: I'll talk to the compliance officer, and ask him about the decision makers' likely criteria for choosing. I'll

Asks permission to give advice. Frames it as a suggestion that he can feel free to accept or reject it (chapter 24).

also ask them who else I should talk to to prepare for the presentation. And I'll dive back into Symphony's investor portal, looking for those discrepancies and hints about their strategic goals and potential threats. After that, you'll help me create the presentation?

Dorothea: I'll think it through with you, like we're doing now. Do you feel like you're learning anything useful here?

Ludwig: Totally. I'm starting to see the difference between mediocre and great sales.

Dorothea: Great. We can talk about how to tailor the presentation after we've answered those questions about what your buyers care about, want, and fear. And I want you to understand that you're never going to have perfect clarity during this process. There's always uncertainty. And when we meet next, I'll show you how to use that uncertainty to your advantage in the presentation. It's actually better to come in curious and humble, than to wow them with the perfect solution. The more they feel they've contributed to your proposal, the more likely they'll be to choose it. Human nature, eh?

Ludwig: This is great. Thank you so much.

Commit

Dorothea: So tell me exactly what you're going to do, and by when, so we can schedule our next meeting and keep the process going.

Asking for specific actions and timelines (chapter 26).

Ludwig: I'll reach out to the compliance officer and the trial leads as soon as I leave here, and I'll spend this evening and tomorrow all day going through the investor portal. Can we meet again to go over what I've found on Wednesday at 9:30am?

Dorothea: That sounds great. It's in my calendar. Let me ask you: when we started talking, you didn't have a lot of confidence in yourself. Right now, on a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being not at all confident and 10 being totally confident, where are you in terms of what you just said you'll do?

Ludwig: I'm at a 10 in terms of doing it. I can't say I'm totally confident that I'll get it right.

Dorothea: I'm glad to hear that. You probably won't get it 100% right. As my old boss used to say all the time, if it were easy, we wouldn't get paid so well. I expect that you'll

Lowering the pressure to increase probability of success (chapter 26).

improve as you practice and pay attention to feedback — mine, and much more significantly, the prospect. And you won't win them all. But the difference between mediocre and great business developers is whether or not you learn from your failures as well as celebrate your successes. It's all useful feedback, if you look at it right.

Ludwig: Dorothea, thanks so much!

Dorothea: You're very welcome. I look forward to our next conversation.