

Ian Altman: 00:00 Hey, it's Ian Altman and my guest this week is David Campbell, David's the chief operating officer at optimal networks. They are a managed service provider and IT services company that helps their clients achieve just amazing results. I've worked with David and his team over the years. We're going to talk about the biggest challenge in engaging non salespeople to grow your business, how to build an amazing culture within your organization around growth and the biggest mistake that people make after a meeting, you're going to learn a ton. David's always engaging. Here's David Campbell. David Campbell. Welcome.

David Campbell: 00:42 Thank you. Thank you. Great to be here.

Ian Altman: 00:44 Can you start by sharing something surprising about you that our audience may not know.

David Campbell: 00:50 I am actually a very quiet guy and that's going to shock everyone that knows me. There's listening to this, but when I'm at home I like to binge watch shows and I spend a lot of time not talking drives my wife insane, but I'm not much of a talker when I'm at home.

Ian Altman: 01:08 So you're an outgoing introvert?

David Campbell: 01:10 I am. The outgoing must have introverts. Yes.

Ian Altman: 01:13 I mean, because anybody who knows you, you have this magnetic personality and so for, for you to say, well, I'm kind of a quiet guy, just I'm calling bs on that, but I'm gonna I'm gonna let you own it.

David Campbell: 01:24 It's a contradiction that I still don't. I don't understand. Yes, but I'm a pretty quiet guy at home most of the time.

Ian Altman: 01:31 Uh, well the, the um, though we could have a whole episode on introverts getting comfortable in their own skin. What I really wanted to talk to you about was you've had great success at optimal networks in getting non salespeople. I'm yourself included to become proficient at helping bring in business and help clients get comfortable. And what I want to understand first is some of the pitfalls in partly in some areas of non salespeople, but also what was it that led you as the COO to realize, you know, what some of these people who are quote salespeople aren't being that effective anymore.

David Campbell: 02:12 Yeah. So I think the problem with or the challenge when you have non salespeople, and I am one of those

non salespeople, is the perception of what salespeople are in what they're supposed to do and when you have people who are not salespeople, when you say, Hey, I'm going, we're going to go out and start creating more opportunities, the first thing they say is, well, I'm not a sales guy. And when you ask them what does that all mean? I can't make, I don't want to make people buy anything. And I think that's the misconception that has persisted in sales. I mean, for ever. And one of the things that I, I grappled with personally, I don't want to make anyone do anything. And so we have to kind of work through this idea that a service company and everything that we're doing is to provide a service.

David Campbell: 03:03 And we use, I use examples a lot and I said, well, if you knew that there was something that would help your friend become a better friend, would you not want to let them know that that exists? Of course, of course. Right? And um, so it's something as simple as that and it's really changing the idea that you're trying to make someone do something that, that's by saying that that something that they would not benefit from or don't want to do. I think that's a large, that's the biggest hurdle to overcome for, for non salespeople.

Ian Altman: 03:37 Yeah. And I often say there are three personas in the world of sales, there is the order taker who believes their job is just the client calls up and says, here's what I want. How much does it cost? When can you deliver it? The salesperson thinks their job is to convince people to buy things they have to sell and the subject matter expert is the person the client will actually pay to meet with if that's what it took to get their expertise and, and at optimal. You figured out how to engage the non salespeople, these subject matter experts to help your clients solve these important issues and not feel like they're being sold to. So what are some of the what, what are some of the steps or processes that you follow? What's worked? What hasn't worked? Where do you stumble? So the idea is that people listening can say, yeah, you know what, I got a team of non sales people. So what process do I follow? What pitfalls to avoid? And that way when they're done listening and they're going to feel like, man, I could, I could probably do something like this. Right?

David Campbell: 04:34 So the first part of this is to understand for us like who are we, what is our, what's our charge in the world? And for us it's solving problems. We are experts at solving problems. We're not experts at it, we're experts at leveraging it, but we're really problem solvers. When people call and their machine's not working, um, they want a problem solved and it's not, the machine's not working, it's the machine is causing a situation where they can't get this thing done that they really need to get done for the business. So really taking a step back and not kind of looking at this and in a very a very isolated terms as to were IT people, we're all

problem solvers and our roles in the organization or to solve problems at different levels of the organization. So that was the first thing, the second thing that we had to overcome and once we're able to do that is clients come to us because they want someone to help them understand their, the IT landscape. They want someone to help them understand how to better leverage all of the noise they hear about technologies, how to leverage the pieces of it that are going to be right for them.

Ian Altman: 05:49 So kind of demystifying all this technology stuff that's out there. So if you're running a business, you might hear people talk about cloud and people talking about, um, just different, different, different storage options and different security models and different ways to protect stuff. And fundamentally what they're probably thinking themselves as. Look it, David, here's what I want. Like I got people that work at home. Sometimes I'm on the road and I just want to make sure it's all secure and everything.

David Campbell: 06:16 Absolutely and I think when it is one of those places where there is enough information out there to overwhelm almost anyone and when we were able to kind of break through that we're able to really get to the heart of what are you trying to do? Why do I need office 365 versus an on premise solution and it comes down to simply as what you just said, I have people working all over the place and I just want to make sure they can get their jobs done. Okay. Once we understand what they're, what problem they're trying to solve, we're able to go to the shelf and we're able to take solutions and provide them in the context of the, of the problem, not as the IT like leading IT. It's not office 365 because it's office 3655. It's office 365 because it addresses the set of problems that you're having and is going to offer these sets of results for you.

David Campbell: 07:09 So once we were able to kind of connect those two for people and we hire really great service minded professionals, then it became a challenge, like an internal challenge. Our job is to go out and solve as many problems as we can possibly find an offer clients, our clients as many of the best options that we can, that we can put together so that they're not thinking about it anymore. The goal is to not have clients think about it and to have them focus on that thing they're expert at and that's when, that's when the magic really happens. Yep.

Ian Altman: 07:45 Well, and I think you've, you've had some people who have, who have really thrived and, and really well where you've had people who started in the organization not as salespeople. Yeah. And now they're there either amongst or your top producer in the organization. Yeah. What's, what's the, what's the secret to that? Because I'm sure people are sharpening their pencil right now on that. Dave is going to drop some knowledge on us. How, how are they getting this done?

David Campbell: 08:12 Well, I'll tell you. So the two things I mentioned before is, you know, as the, as, as identifying who we are as problem solvers and then connecting it to solving as many problems as we can. That only gets you so far. We needed something to like bring those ideas together, a process that we use. So of course we were, you know, we've always known about you and we've always known about same side selling, but it wasn't until we actually committed to learning about it at a much deeper level and then committed to actually using the processes and stick into the program that we were really able to see some results. And it just so happened we were kind of coming to this, this crossroads at the same time. We hired a really nice, a really bright guy Todd who had come out of a situation where he was doing more account management work at another organization.

David Campbell: 09:06 Um, but, but wasn't really charged with going out and increasing spend. And when he came on board, um, we came in on board right at the time it was we were, had engaged you and we were doing the training and we were having you kind of talk us through it and he really, it resonated with him the idea of solving problems and not having an adversarial relationship and focusing on results. They resonated. I think what really resonated with him was the process was having something very finite that we could work from a very, a nice base of understanding and then we could go out. So what it actually did was it gave us some things that we could, um, we could review with them. It gave us an opportunity to go out and have him learn, have specific things that we could look at when he came back to tweak to have us when we're going and going, when we're looking at things like we're doing role playing. We could incorporate those things that were, that we didn't do in the last meeting into our role playing activity and then send them out in the world with this new confidence that I wanted. When the situation comes up based on same side, this is what I need to do, and it was, it took us about, it took about seven months, but then all of a sudden it was July of last year and all of a sudden he goes on a tear

Ian Altman: 10:31 and he was not. And it was knocking down business just about every single week.

David Campbell: 10:34 Yes. And uh, and it hasn't stopped. He's been so successful at it. We just hired our second, uh, we call them client success managers. We hired our second CSM because todd was so overwhelmed with opportunities inside of existing clients that he could not handle them all. So we hired a second person and now we're running him through the process.

Speaker 1: 10:56 Well, and it's interesting because there's a couple of things you touched on that I want to make sure that people really get, which is, it's obviously the same side of selling principle, but I want to make sure it isn't lost on people,

which is your focused intently on results. So what does that sound like with a client? What I'd like you to ideally do is say, look, here's what the conversation used to sound like with a potential client two years ago, three years ago, here's what it sounds like today so that people can kind of get a sense of and, and put some, put some meat to what these concepts are because otherwise I'm afraid that people here in concept to talk about results, but like what did it sound like before and how is it different today?

Speaker 2: 11:38 Okay, great question. So before we would go to a client and, or go to a prospect and we'd say something like, so why are we here? And this prospect would say, I don't like my provider. They're not really addressing our needs. They don't answer our phone calls and we're just looking for something different. And at that point our, we'd start salivating because now they've stopped talking. So I can tell them all the great stuff that I can do for them, this other person cant. And we would go and we'd get into this. Then we fall into the salesperson's hell. And um, we never. So after we did that, oh, I like to say you slipped into the very easily, I think we were, we were like, we had a foot on the line ready to jump in and so we were, instead of listening, we were just waiting for people to stop talking because we were, we couldn't wait to tell them how awesome what we had was. So after they told us they weren't happy and gave us a little bit about why they weren't happy, we launched into well with optimal networks, you get a dedicated engineer and our documentation is amazing and we really care about our people and I think that we're going to be a great fit for, you know, and that's how it went. And they said, okay, why don't you guys send us a proposal and we'll take a look at it. Awesome.

Speaker 1: 13:01 And used to chase a ton of proposals and you have a sense of what percentage actually of those proposals turned into business. It's sub five percent. So it made it. So it was very vague about it. You were pursuing more than 25 to 1:25 proposals. Get One, even though your existing clients absolutely love you and sing your praises just for new clients. It wasn't quite connected.

Speaker 2: 13:26 No, and I think what happened, we got great at proposals, like our core competency became producing proposals. We had the best paper, we had the best graphics, the proposals were 40 pages long. We had, we threw everything in a brand new kitchen sink into the proposal and we were cranking them out and we were thinking, man, we're doing great because every almost everyone we talk to wants a proposal and then almost no one. We give a proposal to what side? So, so we.

Speaker 1: 13:59 So how's it? How's it different today? What's, what's changed? What's that conversation like today? So

Speaker 2: 14:06 today there's a couple of things are much different. Our preparation is different and with that I mean when we're going into a new situation, we have in our minds where we'd before we think we're going to help everybody. We talked to anybody who wants to service, we're going to sign them up. And where we are now is we're gonna go in here and we're really going to find out if this is a good fit for us. If there's something we can really do. So we walk in knowing that we're going to ask a lot of questions and we're trying to really understand what is happening here to determine whether or not this is even an opportunity we want to tackle. So when we go in and this is exactly how it happens, we go into, we go into a new meeting and we have a, a process that we go through in front of the prospect will take this notebook and we say we're gonna we, we use a process and it requires us to kind of get through. Some,

Speaker 1: 15:10 just use the same side quadrant.

Speaker 2: 15:12 We use the same side quadrants and I use A. I use a traditional. The notebook. Hunan has a digital notebook, but what he does is he draws the quadrant in front of the client. He writes out each of the titles for the quadrants and then he looks at me, he says, okay, why am I here? You know? And then they start talking and so instead of waiting for them to finish, we are looking for more information. So we're asking a lot of followup questions and we're asking, okay, give me a sense of the kinds of issues you don't like your current provider. Why? What's happening? Give me some, can you give me some examples of what's happening? And as they start going through the examples we follow up with, how is that impacting you? What does that actually. Is that a problem? It sounds like it's a. It sounds. It doesn't sound that great. What does it mean to you? How does it affect you?

Speaker 1: 16:10 And, and so let's, let's say they say, well, you know, it's just kind of a nuisance versus Oh yeah, this is something that's hurting our business.

Speaker 2: 16:18 And if, and they sometimes folks do say that, and this is where, this is where the real difference comes in. When people tell us that, yeah, it's just, it's a headache. The next question we ask is, have you talked to your provider about it? Because we find that if you can have a dialogue with your provider, a lot of times people want to do the right thing, they just don't know how. And so if you've. If you've not talked to him, I'd recommend you have a conversation with them because you're already working with them. Your organization obviously has a comfort level and if you can get them to do what you want, you can just. You can actually alleviate this nuisance and you'll be in a really good situation.

Speaker 1: 16:55 See what I. What I want the audience to hear is that there's people right now cringing and the

audience, there's people listening saying, oh, but man, they missed this opportunity. But what you're concluding is that, look, if it's just a nuisance and they don't feel it's really costing them business, they're just kinda not thrilled with the current provider. Then in all likelihood before they switch, they're going to talk to the other provider because people are uncomfortable making a change and if they don't feel it's really impacting their bottom line, they're probably not going to just make that move without having that conversation. So instead of them figuring that out, you're guiding them to that saying, look, here's probably the next logical step. Now if they talk to their current provider and the current provider is a fool and isn't responsive, they're coming right back to you because they said, man, you know what the people at optimal or actually trying to help us find the best solution with the least amount of discomfort.

Speaker 2: 17:49 Absolutely, absolutely. I don't think it, it paints us as someone who really. And it works out great because we really are that company. Um, it lets people know that we what we want is what's best for them. And if it works out that we can find this, find this place together where we can find some great results, that's great. But if you're in a situation that your sort of unhappy about, but it's not a situation that's, that's really hurting you, you are better served always to go and have a conversation with this other folks and see if you can get it back on track. It serves a dual purpose in that. Once we have that, we know that this opportunity is probably not the right one for us and it gives us a way to get to know faster so that we can go out and talk to some folks who are, who do really need our help or a better fit for us so it works out.

Speaker 2: 18:50 It works out great for us and we were really uncomfortable doing it. It was, I would have. It would have been easier to ask me to recite something in an old Latin than to make me do this, but once I started doing it, there was an empowerment for my side of it from my side of things that I really am here to help them and the best sometimes the best help is to send them back where they came from and and work and work through there and work through whatever issues they have to get with our need to do

Speaker 1: 19:21 call an end to end. To that end, you talked before about you focus on your clients on results, so what does that sound like? What are the things you measure? Because guess what? In my business, it's very easy to measure the sales and the revenue in your business. It may not be as concrete and as obvious what you measure and what results look like. So what type of discussions you have with clients about results, so they get comfortable that you've got a shared interest.

Speaker 2: 19:48 Okay. And I think, and that's, and I think that's a very good point because clients and prospects, when you're talking it, they do, it's a little harder to quantify some of

the results. So when we're talking to prospects about the kinds of results that they're going to need to see, we asked them questions upfront in terms of some of the issues and really try to get to how these issues are affecting you and to try to make them as tangible as possible. Um, and once we're able to do that, so, and we go back and we offer results, we are the kinds of results that we're able to get for folks, are response times to issues, um, the amount of, uh, like the average hourly usage per user of support time per month. And we found that that was a really interesting metric because most of the time when you're not, you're happy your average user is spending a lot of time with support on the average between two and two and a half hours a month getting help. So we take as much of that information as we can and we start to bring out, we think we need to be down in an hour for the first six months and then after 12 months we want to be down to 30 to 45 minutes per user. We also do a, a user survey at the very beginning to gauge the, um, the level of satisfaction in their support.

Speaker 1: 21:20 So it's all like how comfortable are they when they have to access something remotely when they're working from home, things like that. So that if all of a sudden the users are saying, man, my life is really good. Whether I'm in the office, out of the office, traveling, home, it's all good. Everything just works. It's kind of funny. I know we've talked about one of the metrics in your businesses. In essence, man, we want to think of IT like a light switch, meaning you don't think about it, you walk into a room, you flip, the light switch just turns on, and it provides light. You don't think about how it works, you just accept that it does work.

David Campbell: 21:55 Yes. And I think one of the, uh, one of the telltale signs that there is a problem that a prospect is, if the person that we're talking to knows a lot more about the inner workings of IT than they probably want to, where should, and they'll tell you and we ask how much time are you spending on this? And from there we asked the follow up how much time you actually spending on your real job. And that becomes for us a metric and we use that as we're trying to build the results, um, to, to kind of give this person, you know, 50 percent of that time back and turn IT into something that everyone just uses because that's when it's great when it's just something you use and not something you have to focus on. So, um, as part of the CSM role, to kind of close the point here, I'm one of those, we follow up these metrics and we have a mature customer success customer success manager. We set up quarterly business reviews where we are reviewing with the, with the client, we're reviewing the results, the progress on those results and we're reporting out to those to those clients every quarter and every year we reset our results with the client for the 12 to 18 months. So we're very focused on making sure that the results we get from the process are included in our work for the first night in 100 days. And then on an ongoing basis, we're always checking the pulse of are you getting the results

that we've talked to?

Ian Altman: 23:27 So you're, you're integrating tracking results with operations, with the client and ongoing basis so that every quarter you're having a conversation with them that says basically is giving a scorecard that says how are we doing? And then let's reset goals for the next quarter. Absolutely. So that it's not just, Oh, these people are complacent, they have our business and that's gonna lead to amazing retention rates for your client.

David Campbell: 23:51 We are, and I think that's been the biggest surprise. And uh, and for todd, one of the places where he seen overwhelming success in that when you're engaging with a client on a regular basis and the, and the crux of the engagement is how are we doing against the results that you're expecting? It leads, right? It builds trust and from trust it opens up a world of exist of opportunities, uh, that clients are thinking about in the future that you wouldn't have gotten to if we're just happy that we have the business and that the machine's turned on and you're not calling us.

Ian Altman: 24:33 Got It. So what do you, what do you, anticipate will be your growth rate into the next year? So over the next year, what percentage growth rate you think you'll achieve?

David Campbell: 24:49 Fifteen percent is

David Campbell: 24:51 what we're shooting for conservative. I think we're going to be able to do 20 plus percent at least for the next few years because we're just getting, we're just scratching the surface of the process and I've only been doing a, I've only been working in business development for a few months and so all of these things are sort of coming together for us right now and with every success we're starting to get a little deeper, a little better at providing the, providing this, the, uh, using the same side infrastructure to, to get more results. And it's really quite exciting. So I see, you know, especially with the advent of another client services manager that we just hired and the growth of our on the operation side of our business, that it's not unreasonable to assume we can do 20 percent year over year for the next few years.

Speaker 1: 25:42 Yeah. Which is awesome. And before you started this process, you're relatively flat. We're relatively flat. Yeah. So that's, that's tremendous progress. So if you were going to give people advice as to look, here's one thing you should do to get on the same path to get the non salespeople engage in their organization, what should they do?

Speaker 2: 26:04 I think you have to address the elephant in the room because the real issue that you're having, the issue that we had and I think that most people have is the idea of

what selling means. And we talked. I know a lot of people talk a lot about it, but I really believe that the issue here is people don't want to tell people or try to force people to buy something they don't want to buy and as long as you approach it, especially from non sales people, as long as they have the idea that sales is about convincing people to buy something, you're gonna, you're gonna always have that. We're going to have that issue until you can do that. So got it. So what's the best way for people to connect with you to learn more about optimal networks and what you guys are doing?

Speaker 2: 26:49 You can reach out to me DavidCampbell@optimalnetworks.com, or you can go to our website www.optimalnetworks.com and there you'll see a lot of. We talk a lot about the problems we solve. You get to learn a little bit of our culture and if you want to contact me through that, you can reach out to me or you can just give me a call. I'm always available to talk about this stuff because I love problem solving. Uh, so you can reach me at two, four, zero, four, nine, nine, seven, 900. Awesome. David, thanks for hanging out, man. It was my pleasure. Thank you.

Speaker 1: 27:20 There's so much great insight that David shares and if you have a chance to meet him, man, he's just got so much positive energy. You can't help it feel good when you're in the room with him. Let me give you a quick 32nd recap. The key information I think you can use and apply to your business right away. First, when people have this concept that while I'm not a sales guy, I'm not a salesperson, that's a good thing. It means that they're probably more focused on the client than just making the sale. Remember to have that postmortem conversation on meetings and making sure that, hey, are we following our own process or are we being led astray? And then make sure that you demystify the sales process, not only for your own team, for your clients, and sincerely focus on the problems you solve. Remember, this show gets a direction from you, the listener. There's a guest I should have on or a topic you want me to cover. Drop me a note to Ian and Ian Altman.com. Have an amazing week. Add value and grow revenue in a way everybody can embrace, especially your customer.