

A tale of two partners - starring Osiatis and Spot One Global Solutions.



Choosing the right partners – a tricky business

What are the three most common mistakes companies make when recruiting new partners?

According to Mariéme Jamme of Spot One Global Solutions, the commonest pitfalls (which can be both expensive and time-consuming) are, in ascending order of seriousness:

- 3 Under-estimating the time it will take to find the right partners and compromising too early
- 2 Choosing a partner that doesn't truly understand your business model
- 1 Choosing partners who pitch their experience in the meeting room, but don't have the right track-record in real-life

Why does Mariéme put number 1 above number 2?

“Because the damage that can be done to your company's reputation by a partner that doesn't perform or that doesn't abide by the rules of engagement in your sector can harm you for a very long time” she advises.

If your partners (or service providers, or system integrators) are to act as your local market go-to guys, and your marketing eyes and ears too, they need to be fully on-board with your messages, your markets, and your values.

And when you're setting up outside your home market, the job of finding the right partner is harder, and the risks attached in getting that choice wrong are even greater.

So how do you find and recruit the right partners, without spending more time flying to meetings than you spend in your own office?

Taking the first steps

The answer, of course, is you bring in a company like Spot One Global Solutions. Although well known as an intelligence-led business development agency, Spot One has a practice dedicated to partner recruitment.

Recognising that a key element in many of her clients' sales strategies was to develop a presence in overseas markets through partner networks, Mariéme Jamme, CEO of Spot One set out to simplify the often painstaking and frustrating work of researching, identifying, interviewing, testing and vetting potential partners for her company's IT and technology clients.

One such client is French IT services and infrastructure specialist Osiatis (<http://www.osiatis.com>).

Osiatis faced the classic dilemma – the company was getting close to winning business with a major UK technology and hardware developer, and needed to build the capability to deliver, implement, train, troubleshoot and maintain locally. To set up a dedicated operation, hire the skilled staff needed, find somewhere for them to base themselves, would have added significantly to the cost of the contract.

On the other hand, could Osiatis' busy CTO, Claude Durand, find the time to make many trips to the UK, interview prospective service providers, and manage the legal processes personally?

Enter Spot One and Marième Jamme via a mutual involvement with a marketing project going on at the same time.

“Marième brought a lot of experience and positive energy to our organization. We were delighted to have Marième in our offices...”

Claude Durand – CTO, Osiatis

It was clear that the targeted, intelligence-led approach that had proved successful in developing profitable and sustainable business for Spot One's other IT clients could be exploited to accelerate the process of finding that critical UK partner in time for the contract to start.

Research and investigation

Initial research and discussions defined the kind of partner Osiatis needed to help it fulfil its valuable contracts in the UK.

Marième and her team researched prospects, categorised them by their capability, size and structure, their ability to support the type of contracts at stake, their market presence and reach, their language support and a dozen other critical measures.

The team then set up initial teleconferences and exploratory meetings and short-listed the best potentials for Osiatis executives to travel to meet.

Spot One set up meetings in the UK, and acted as facilitator and mediator, ensuring that presentations went smoothly and that the true capabilities of each prospect were thoroughly investigated.

Marième comments: “We set up C-level meetings for our clients every day. In reality, the skills needed to ensure the right people meet face-to-face at the right stage in their initial relationships are very similar, whether our client is selling services, or seeking partners!”

An ongoing involvement

With the most suitable partner identified, the job wasn't over. Spot One continued to contribute, smoothing the waters when significant differences in French and UK contract law threatened to jeopardise the hard work, and overseeing the development of the partner programme into a fully evolved and successful operation.

This is an often-overlooked aspect to channel development – ensuring that information, market intelligence and candid assessments of success and challenges encountered flows in both directions.

“We chose SpotOne to find business partners in UK. Marième assumed our case with a very professional approach. The results were quick and very satisfactory. The return on investment was almost immediate.”

Michel Dupitier – Maintenance Director, Osiatis

Indeed, so successful has the partnership between Osiatis and its new partner Morse been, Osiatis still has no intention to set up its own office in the UK, preferring its partners to manage its UK business.

Final thoughts

Reflecting on how this and other partner recruitment projects have developed, Marième Jamme offers these final points as learning opportunities from which she wants all her clients to benefit in some way:

- Research into suitable partners is detailed work – don't compromise or skimp on the attention to detail
- The need for understanding of different legal or contractual frameworks is crucial
- Using an outsourced company can save a great deal of executive time and money by limiting need for travelling and engagement in premature meetings
- Osiatis had been looking for partners for three years unsuccessfully; Spot One recruited a suitable candidate in 6 months
- Using a multi-cultural team eliminates the risk of cultural assumptions and misunderstandings
- Using an external partner can help you understand the complexities of a partly unfamiliar marketplace before you make expensive mistakes or sign costly agreements

To find out more, discuss your project or just talk with someone that understands many of your challenges, get in touch with Spot One Global Solutions:

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