

## Big Deals: “Hunting Elephants” with Aon Canada

Thomas Cadman and Gilles Corriveau, Aon Canada: Two men with distinct histories. However, both executives have won big deals, and both are now deeply committed to widening the use of structured sales practices at the international risk management service and insurance consulting powerhouse.

Corriveau acts as Executive Vice President and National Sales Leader for Canada, as well as a National Originator and Relationship Manager, meaning he initiates new prospect relationships. Cadman is Senior Vice President and Regional Sales Manager for Southwest Ontario and the Atlantic Region. He started with Aon ten years ago as an Account Manager and credits using disciplined sales methods for his rapid rise.

The *Sales Performance Journal* asked Cadman and Corriveau to describe their current take on the management of Aon’s large sales opportunities. An edited transcript of this conversation on “the biggest of big deals” follows.

**Sales Performance Journal:** When we talk big deals for Aon, clearly we’re talking huge, often international, companies, similar to Aon itself. What can you tell me about how a huge, international company such as Aon manages its own large opportunities?

**Gilles Corriveau:** Well, a big deal could be large [for us in terms of revenue] and have no complexity. However, if it is global, and a large deal with much complexity, we must put a very broad team of people with different areas of expertise on the account.

We have created two units to address complex sales. One is the Risk Management Practice [RMP]. Clients in this area could be various sizes up to and including our largest, but the one thing they have in common is they need very sophisticated products. There is not just one solution to negotiate to eliminate, mitigate or transfer their risk.

Then there is the Global Large Company Group [GLC]. They stay informed on world events, and meet quarterly to discuss opportunities, strategies and sales approaches. Our largest clients with international operations often fit into, and are served by, both.

**Thomas Cadman:** In the GLC, we’re working to increase our share of large clients around the world by creating experienced teams of industry experts. Because we know if our people are working in isolation, they are not delivering the best of Aon.

**GC:** In these largest clients, you have geographic, cultural and technological challenges. You must

develop relationships both inside and outside Aon. We make sure sales leaders from the major countries we do business in are meeting regularly, either virtually, or in person. You can't limit yourself. After all, the more you know, the more you know.

**SPJ:** What methodology do you apply in the pursuit of these large accounts?

**TC:** Every Aon office is different. A big deal in our office [in Toronto] may be different from an office in Edmonton. But the protocol on large accounts includes assigning a SAM--*Strategic Account Manager*--and using Blue Sheets [a tool used in the Miller Heiman *Strategic Selling*® program] to ascertain our client's business requirements, which in turn helps determine our service strategy from a resource perspective.

We've learned we must treat our customers as our greatest asset, and grow that asset. It's up to every Aon employee who interfaces with clients to demonstrate and deliver our distinctive client value. This will increase customer loyalty, improve our retention and create a win/win environment, which will ultimately grow our greatest asset, our customers.

To identify the right talent to bring to a client, we've got to know our client's business, identify their points of

pain, then bring our resources to bear where we can. The Charter Statement [a component of the Miller Heiman Large Account Management Programs that allows you to focus on the destination of your strategy], which I use religiously, also helps with this preparation and focus. The tools help identify where our opportunities are.

**GC:** [We also know when to] let go of certain initiatives that aren't working. It used to be all initiatives just kept going. Now, sometimes we'll sit down with a Blue Sheet and say, 'No way!' No matter how reputable the name, how big the opportunity. It frees up resources, so we don't become like a duck paddling furiously underwater, not going anywhere. Being able to say no is just as important as being able to say yes.

**TC:** There is big benefit in a well-organized sales meeting. It lets you evaluate opportunities, challenge sales staff and link sales professionals. It's about creating a winning environment.

I believe winning is contagious. The more sales meetings involve successful people and passionate individuals, the more this positive culture trickles down to the entire organization. So instead of having a sales force of eight to 10 people working

for the success of the organization, you could potentially have hundreds all wanting to contribute to a company’s growth.

However, individuals can be overly optimistic, so as Gilles mentioned, meetings can serve as a qualifier and reality check, too.

**SPJ:** What is the biggest challenge you face once you’ve determined you’re pursuing the business?

**TC:** It’s not unique to Aon, but getting to the economic buyer or key decision-maker is absolutely paramount. We need to directly interface with our prospects to demonstrate our unique capabilities and distinctive client value so we’re not treated as a commodity. We don’t want that decision-maker getting information on us secondhand.

**GC:** And getting our staff to talk strategy and vision once they reach that decision-maker. If our staff begins talking insurance, they’ll be pushed back to a lower level that won’t buy on our value proposition. Upper-level executives don’t have time to talk insurance wording, etc. They have other colleagues assigned to that process who are rarely the ‘economical buyer’.

### About Miller Heiman

Miller Heiman has been a thought leader and innovator in the sales arena for almost thirty years, helping clients worldwide win high-value complex deals, grow key accounts and build winning sales organizations.

With a prestigious client list including Marriott Corp., Dow Chemical, Pepsi, Schwab Institutional and Wells Fargo, Miller Heiman helps clients in virtually every major industry to build high performance sales teams that deliver consistent sustainable results to drive revenue.

The company is headquartered in Reno, Nevada and has offices around the world. More information can be obtained by visiting the company’s website at: [www.millerheiman.com](http://www.millerheiman.com).