



SUNCOAST SPARK · REFINE

Is Your Champion Actually a Champion?

A practical test for separating friendly contacts from people who can actually move a deal internally.

Suncoast Spark · Free Resource for B2B Account Executives

WHAT A CHAMPION DOES

A champion is not someone who likes you. They are someone who works for you internally.

A real champion typically does all of the following — not just a few of them.

Believes the problem matters

They feel the pain personally or understand why it is a business priority — not just a talking point.

Believes change is necessary

They are not content with the status quo and are willing to say so internally.

Sees value in your approach

They understand how your solution connects to their business outcome — and can explain it without you.

Has credibility internally

Their peers and leadership listen to them. Their endorsement carries weight in conversations you are not part of.

Gives you insight you could not get yourself

They share real information: who the blockers are, what the approval process looks like, what the politics are.

Helps navigate internal politics

They know how decisions are actually made — and they guide you through it.

Gets you access to others

They open doors to decision makers, economic buyers and other stakeholders without needing to be asked twice.

Takes action when you are not in the room

This is the defining test. A champion advocates, positions and moves things forward on their own initiative.

 A champion does work inside the account.

THE DISTINCTION

Friendly Contact vs. Champion

Both will take your calls. Only one will move your deal.

Friendly Contact	Champion
Likes the product	Explains internal dynamics
Takes meetings	Introduces decision makers
Responds quickly	Shares objections honestly
Shares positive feedback	Helps position the case internally
Says they will "socialize it"	Uses influence on your behalf
	Takes measurable action without being chased

Friendliness and responsiveness feel like progress. They are not. Measure behavior, not warmth.

Score your champion on eight criteria.

Answer each question based on observable behavior — not what they have said, but what they have done.

1 Do they have influence?

Do others listen to them in meetings? Do leaders take their recommendations seriously?

2 Do they have access?

Can they get time with the economic buyer or executive sponsor — without needing approval first?

3 Do they have motivation?

Is there a personal or professional reason they need this problem solved?

4 Do they understand the business case?

Can they articulate ROI and impact in terms the CFO or CEO would care about?

5 Do they share internal information?

Have they told you who the blockers are, what the approval process looks like, or what the real concerns are?

6 Will they introduce you upward or sideways?

Have they made an introduction — or committed to making one?

7 Will they challenge internal resistance?

Are they willing to push back on skeptics or blockers — not just tell you about them?

8 Have they taken action without being chased?

Did they do something to move the deal forward before you followed up?

**7–8 ✓ Strong
Champion**

You have a real champion.
Invest here.

4–6 · Developing

Test them. Coach them. Give
them what they need to act.

**0–3 · Contact, Not
Champion**

Do not build your forecast
around this person. Find
another path.

TEST WITHOUT ASKING DIRECTLY

You never ask: "Are you my champion?"

You ask questions that require a champion to answer. A friendly contact will give vague responses or redirect. Use these asks deliberately — one per conversation, not as a checklist.

“Who else needs to see this before it becomes real?” Tests access and knowledge of the decision process.	“Would you be comfortable helping us get [executive] involved?” Tests willingness to use influence on your behalf.	“What objections do you expect internally?” Tests honesty and whether they are inside the conversation or outside it.
“If you had to explain the case without us in the room, what would you say?” Tests whether they can actually carry the message internally.	“What do you need from me to make that conversation easier?” Tests whether they are willing to have the conversation at all.	

Pay attention to hesitation, deflection and vagueness. Those are signals too.

WARNING SIGNS

When your champion may not be a champion.

Enthusiasm is easy to mistake for advocacy. Watch for these patterns across multiple interactions — one instance is noise, a consistent pattern is a signal.

Only engages when you initiate

A champion takes independent action. If every touchpoint starts with you, they are a responder — not an advocate.

Avoids introductions

They always have a reason why now is not the right time to bring in the executive or other stakeholders.

Cannot explain the decision process

They do not know how this type of decision actually gets made — or who really owns it.

Protects you from objections instead of exposing them

They say everything is fine. A real champion surfaces the concerns so you can address them.

Says "everyone likes it"

Universal enthusiasm without specifics is a red flag. Deals die from unnamed blockers, not from known ones.

Owens no actions

After every meeting they are positive but have committed to nothing. Check your notes — do they have open items?

Has enthusiasm but little influence

They believe in the solution but no one who matters listens to them. Affection without credibility is not enough.

Gives vague answers about approval

When you ask how decisions get made, they say "it depends" or "there are a few people." A champion knows.



AE ON DEMAND

Do not build your forecast around an untested champion.

AE on Demand helps account executives evaluate stakeholder strength, identify missing influence, test champion evidence, and determine the next stakeholder move — inside ChatGPT or Claude.

Bring your real deal. AE on Demand will help you work out who your actual champion is, what evidence you have, and what to do next.

Explore AE on Demand at aeondemand.com

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