

Gui Costin

Capital Raising Campaign Strategies

WITH GUI COSTIN

The Deal Scout Podcast

JOSH WILSON: Good day, everybody, welcome to The Deal Scout. On today's show, we're going to have a conversation with a guy who is in the world of capital raising and building out culture and leadership within investment groups. He's calling in live from Dakota Studios. This is really cool. He's got the most amazing background and setup there. Mr. Gui, welcome to the show.

GUI COSTIN: Thanks, Josh. Thanks for having me.

JOSH WILSON: Yeah. All right, so you do a lot of things, right? You got a lot of businesses that you guys have built. And you've got this amazing niche that you've built over the years doing this. What is it that you do?

GUI COSTIN: So, we have two businesses. One, we help investment firms grow by raising capital for their investment funds. And we have four long-only firms we work with and one private credit, one private equity. And we raised in the neighborhood, depending upon the market, around \$30 billion. And then five years ago, we took the database that we use every single day to raise capital, and we commercialized it. And we turned it into basically a vertical ZoomInfo. And so, if you're an investment firm and you're a fundraiser, you would subscribe to our database, you would log in, and you'd be able to book meetings in cities across the country with both institutional and intermediary investors, including family offices, RAs, et cetera.

JOSH WILSON: Did you say \$30 billion?

GUI COSTIN: Yeah.

JOSH WILSON: OK. Let's unravel that for a little bit. How have you done that? We've interviewed 2,000 people over the years, and a lot of them talk about cap raising. And it's one of the biggest challenges for a founder or for a small investment team to raise capital, especially right now. It's a little weird. You've done \$30 billion, so you've got some reps under the belt. Let's have a conversation about how you guys accomplished it, and what have you discovered?

GUI COSTIN: Yeah. So, number one, it's cold outreach. So, the whole secret to fundraising for investment firms, not private companies... we don't raise capital for private companies necessarily. Our expertise is raising money for investment firms and their funds. And it's cold outreach. So, what you need is you need a very accurate database of investors because everybody's calling on them, right? So, you just have to be very dedicated on a daily basis to being a professional meeting setter upper. That being said, once you get in the meetings, you have to be the most sophisticated storyteller. Josh, that's two sides of the same coin. Very pedestrian job, right? Because you're just grinding away trying to book meetings with potential investors. And then when you get into meetings, you have to bring the story to life.

JOSH WILSON: Now what does a sophisticated storyteller look like? Because we might see one side who's sophisticated. We might see another side who's great at marketing. You have to bridge the gap and be both. What does that look like?

GUI COSTIN: So, a sophisticated storyteller is able to take a very complex story, typically an investment strategy, a private equity strategy, private credit, private real estate, and simplify it and make it very easy to understand because, at the end of the day, you're generally never calling on the end buyer, the end investor. You're always calling

on an intermediary, who then has to sell your idea down the line to the next person, then to an investment committee. So, it has to be a story that's very easy to understand and that takes, I think, a lot of sophistication in really understanding what the buyer is listening for. And you have to tell them what they want to hear so they can diligence your strategy properly.

JOSH WILSON: That's such a good point. A lot of times, I think people get on these calls, and they'll pitch their idea, and it's complex. And they're trying to show you their pitch deck and they're selling to you. And a lot of times, especially for family offices or institutional investors, there might be two other people that they have to hand off this information. It's like a game of Operator. By the time it gets to the actual decision-maker, they're like, I don't even know what that is. Pass, right?

GUI COSTIN: 100%. That's the whole game. That is the whole game. You're selling down the line, right? Because every time we leave someone's office and walk out into the street, they walk down the hallway and they say, hey, how was the meeting with Gui? What do they do? It's like, man, that was really hard to understand. After an hour, I really don't have a clue. That happens all the time. However, if you practice and really are thoughtful... I've been trying to educate my kids on private equity and private credit. And I'm like, guys, you're going to hear all these crazy terms. They're 20, 23 years old. And I'm like, look, it's the simplest game in town, OK? They're simply buying businesses. They're going to own them for three to five years. They're going to try to improve them and get 3x return, and then they sell them to another private equity firm or another or a company. And private credit is they're making loans to businesses, just like Dakota, right? And so, it's actually quite simple. Now the devils in the details, as we all know, to

get a deal done and then operate a business, et cetera. But the concept is very simple.

JOSH WILSON: So, you built this database of all these institutional investors and family offices. And then you've got a community of investment groups that need that money to bridge the gap.

GUI COSTIN: Yeah.

JOSH WILSON: Right? And when it comes to building something that's really important to you is the people aspect of these investment groups and culture. Why don't you explain, what does it take to be a good salesperson in the world of investment?

GUI COSTIN: To be a good salesperson in the world of investments requires, one, the ability to... you literally have to check your ego at the door every day because you have to convince yourself and get comfortable with being a professional meeting setter upper. People didn't go to college to wake up every day and send 30 cold emails, of which two get responded to. Maybe two, maybe one, right? It's emotional. You have to deal with rejection, right? So, you have to have this mentality of perseverance and resilience. And then what you have to be able to do, as I said earlier, once you get in the meetings, because he who sets up the meetings against the most qualified buyers, if you have a good product, you will win, right? There's just no doubt you will win. But if you're going to go to Cincinnati, book five meetings, you spend all that time, you get it done, you have to be able to go in and connect. And I'll give you some details about it. But you have to be able to connect with that due diligence analyst in a way that's very meaningful so they can then champion your idea to their colleagues, to their investment committee.

JOSH WILSON: So, you think the top of the funnel essentially is... the main goal for top of funnel, get the meeting, right? Get the right meeting.

GUI COSTIN: Get the right meeting.

JOSH WILSON: And then the next step is, give them the ability to resell what you're selling.

GUI COSTIN: Yes.

JOSH WILSON: Right? How do you do that?

GUI COSTIN: OK, so it's three parts to an investment meeting. Think of these as the rocks and the stones, as Steve Covey would say, right? And then you put in the sand. It's kind of your own personal deal. So, number one, have to kick off the meeting. For the first two minutes, you have to answer 15 to 20 questions that you know is in that buyer's head. So, if I called on you at your family office and we were simply talking about a 22-stock large cap growth product, I would have to say 15 to 20 things where your brain is going like, OK, it's out here, now he's got me right here. OK, super focus. I call it punching them in the nose, right? By the time the two minutes ends, I've answered every question, where now, the next step, part two, is we need to get into a conversation. Can't be a monologue. If you've met portfolio managers, they're very analytical. They can just go on forever and not stop for 45 minutes. It has to be a back and forth. And then I'll give you the killer. This is the best advice I can give any fundraiser, bar none. I look at you, Josh, and I say, hey, look, I really enjoyed our meeting today. I felt that you really got to know Edgewood and our strategy in large cap growth. Just two

questions for you, if you don't mind. Do you see our strategy fitting in your asset allocation mix? If you say no, I know what the follow-up is. Mailing list. If you say yes, then I say, Josh, do you anticipate doing a search at your family office for large cap growth in the next 12 months? If you say no, I know what the follow-up is. Mailing list. If you say yes, then I say, well, what would be the logical next steps to get you information so you can better familiarize yourself with our investment strategy? So, 99.999% of salespeople will not ask those two tough questions. They will leave the meeting. And we banned the word great meeting at our company about 17 years ago. I can't come back to you and say to you as my partner, hey, Gui, how was the meeting? Oh, great meeting. Great meeting. It was awesome. Josh and I really bonded. It was really cool. All right, that's not what I asked, OK? What's the current status and what's the next step, right? And most people won't want to give you bad news after the meeting. That's why you have to ask the two tough questions in the meeting. So, the answer is, Josh, the follow-up happens in the meeting. And what you end up doing is you save hours, and weeks, and months of time by asking those two simple questions.

JOSH WILSON: Say them again.

GUI COSTIN: OK. Yep. So, the two tough questions are... we've met for 30 minutes, an hour. Hey, do you see our strategy fitting within your asset allocation model? So, is there a fit for a large cap growth? Or let's say you have a more esoteric health care or biotech private equity fund, right? And I ask you, hey, would this fit in your asset allocation? It's like, to tell you the truth, no, we really... it's too risky for us. We're not going to do biotech. Well, guess what? The quick "no" just saved me a ton of time. If they say yes, however, biotech and health care really interest us. All right, well, as you know, our fund, we're doing our final close on

03/31/25. Can you make that final close? Too tight. I need three board meetings. Not going to happen. But, no, actually, yes, I can. OK, great. Then what would the next step be to better familiarize yourself with our strategy? So, you're basically calling them out in a very polite way to say, is there something here or not?

JOSH WILSON: Get to no quick because it saves time. Time is the most valuable asset we have. And I promise you, you waste one of our family officers' times, you're not going to get round two. It's just not going to happen. And then we don't want your newsletter. We don't want this. So, I love the fact that two minutes, you're going to get through the crock brain and give you everything that you need. Then you're going to move them into a conversation. And then you're going to get to a yes, get to a no. The no's right now, newsletter. The yes's, get your time frame narrowed down to a call to action. Is that right?

GUI COSTIN: Bingo. Perfect.

JOSH WILSON: I love that game, too, by the way. All right, so as... as we're going through this now, we talk about... let's go database side.

GUI COSTIN: OK.

JOSH WILSON: Right? I get hit probably 20 times a day from ZoomInfo or from these other groups. Hey, do you want to buy our investment banker list? Do you want to buy our family office list? Do you want to buy our this list? Talk to us about what makes yours stand out in the marketplace.

GUI COSTIN: So, number one, it's built by fundraisers for fundraisers. So, we are the customer, we are the user. And we only focus on one

avatar. And our purpose... you know how you go through your whole Ninety.io or EOS, entrepreneurial operating system, you go through your purpose and the whole thing? So, our purpose is to make the life of an investment salesperson easier. So, everything we do has to say yes to that. And so, what we have, what does a fundraiser need? They need a complete, accurate, and updated daily database of contacts because if you log into Salesforce and all the contacts are stale and the emails are all bouncing, it's a useless product. We're manic about completeness, accuracy, and outdatedness. That's the difference. We're the customer. So, a database built by fundraisers for fundraisers. And then making sure the information is complete and accurate. So, you don't want to go into Atlanta for a day of meetings and look at your family office list or look at your RA list and have 40% of the market there. You need as close to 100% as you can. Why? Because most people are going to say no. You're traveling there. You don't want to go to an office building in suburban Atlanta and miss the billion-dollar family office that's below the floor that you're meeting on, right? And it's right there. You could've just stopped in and said hello to them as well.

JOSH WILSON: Yeah, leave ego at the door. Now when it comes to entrepreneurs, founders, fundraisers, from my own personal experience, ego gets you into the game.

GUI COSTIN: Yeah.

JOSH WILSON: My ego, which I've been humbled, I've been bankrupt. I've had my butt whooped financially. I built a venture capital private equity. I've got my teeth kicked in by failures. And I'm thankful for all those because I think it's helped me moving forward. But I think when it comes to salespeople, there is an ego that will get you into it. Do you

think that's true? Is my assumption correct for salespeople? And then, how do you humble yourself and become that person that will actually be a closer? Walk us through that transition.

GUI COSTIN: Interesting. So just on the front end, what I meant about checking your ego at the door is you have to convince yourself you're a professional meeting setter upper. And that's just your fate in life. My uncle is a life coach, Brad Costin. He's a legend. One of his great lines is, he who gets reality fastest wins. And so it's like, once you get the reality that you're a professional fundraiser and you literally have to send 20 to 30 cold emails a day, that's step one. In investment sales and fundraising, there is no closing. There's asking the tough questions to get a sense of, where are we, but it's a consultative sale and it's an educational sale. So, think about it. You have to present to the family office investment committee. And they ask you to present two strategies, one of which they're going to pick, OK? If I've educated you 10x more than the other salesperson has on our investment strategy, you're so prepared you can answer any question very simply that comes in front of the investment committee, whereas the other one, the salesperson hasn't done as good a job, and it's OK, you're familiar with it, but, boy, you really get my strategy, guess what's going to happen? You're going to fall on my side because I've done such a good job educating you on every potential question an investment committee would have. So that's fundraising. And it's doing it in a very easy to understand way, but it's an educational process. And really, if you want to think about it, Josh, it's simply de-risking the conversation because you're asking someone to take career risk every time they make an investment. That family office officer, they recommend a fund, and that fund is really poorly it's going to hurt their Comp. And, B, they could get fired. So, it's like you're playing with fire. And so, what you have to be able to do is be unbelievably educational in your sales approach.

JOSH WILSON: That's great. Why is culture so important to you? You said you guys are intensely focused on culture. Why is that so important to you?

GUI COSTIN: Well, first, every business is a people business, right? You can't get anything done without people in a company, right? And then it's how you treat people. And if you create an environment where people know that you have their back, they're going to be treated with kindness, not nice, kind, which is a very big distinction because if something's not going quite right and you have to sit down and have a hard conversation, nice is not having that conversation. Kind is having that conversation. Do it with kindness. And be very clear about expectations but treat people just how you'd want to be treated. Most leaders, and a lot of people in businesses, think it's OK to make a joke, or say one weird off comment, or call someone out publicly, or what have you. All that does is hurt someone. It's emotional. It's how you treat people. And so, no one wants to be treated like that. You're old enough and you've worked in enough jobs or what have you and been around people. And it's like, for instance, one of our sales guys takes an afternoon off to play golf. And I call them and they're like, hey, I'm just on the golf course. What's going on? OK, good. You know what lot of people say? Oh, must be nice. That famous line. Well, that just kills them. It's like, really? I've been working really hard, setting up a ton of meetings. I'm just having a nice afternoon. You know what I say? I say, hit them well. I'm not going to bug you anymore. And then what ends up happening is they all treat one another the way I'm treating them. And I'm looking at Jamie right here in our... we have a studio team of five people, world class team. They're like a family, get along great. We have an absolute ball together. But it's all how we treat each other.

JOSH WILSON: Yeah. What's up, Jamie? Shout-out to Jamie over there in the studio. You're doing a phenomenal job, Jamie. Good job.

GUI COSTIN: They do.

JOSH WILSON: So, Gui, how did you learn that... the people side? So, we look at investment groups... and I've dealt with thousands of people. And a lot of times, it's very... not all, but some is so numbers-driven by CPAs, CFOs, institutional investors. And it's like, hey, get to the numbers. Let's look at an Excel spreadsheet. And there's no... really emotion or people in that Excel spreadsheet. And it can be a very factual abacus game, right? How did you attach people? And, yes, de-risking and, yes, it's financial, yes, there has to be those components of the investment piece. How did you connect those two in your own personal life and business?

GUI COSTIN: Well, it was just through a lot of failure, you know what I mean? And I started this company in '06. It was extremely emotional and stressful getting off the ground. It was a startup. There was a lot of yelling and screaming. There was a lot of craziness. And then over the years, you try to temper things. You put processes in place, which were very, very effective. In the beginning, it was kind of a locker room, 8 to 10 of us. Tracy's been with us the longest. She has been. But then it was nine other guys, sales guys, just cranking. And I was very direct a lot of times. I thought I was being funny, the whole thing. I didn't really tease as much. But then as we started our database business, it was an abject failure right out of the gate. It was a total failure. And it was stressful. You're teaching people how to do certain things. I was getting frustrated. I was giving myself permission to say things and act in a way, raise my voice in ways that wasn't professional. And so, what I did is, over time, I learned. But really, if I'm being totally honest, it was when I

hired my two best friend's daughters that I knew that that ship had sailed, right? No, it was four years ago. 4 and 1/2 years ago. No more permission to behave in any other way than was completely professional. And now today, and Jamie can attest to this, everybody can attest to it, that even in the early days, Jamie and I didn't really go at it. But remember, it was four years ago. And he's in our office. He just starts. He's got the video going. We've got the sunlight. And he wants me to say something, and I'm like, no, this, that. And it was all tense. And it's not that way, clearly, anymore. But it's really through self-awareness. That's what it comes down to. You've got to be self-aware. Then you also have to realize is that it's no fun coming to work with a lot of agita, and a lot of drama, and a lot of politics. I don't want to talk about people. I want to talk about my customers, and our customers, and how we can help them. And I also want to have fun at work. So that's kind of why. I just want you to know, where we are today is a far cry from where we started. And it was through a lot of emotional ups, and downs, and behavior that I had to learn how to be a quality leader.

JOSH WILSON: Shout-out to Tracy. Tracy, you're doing awesome. And ending with Gui. Good job. When we go through failures, you a look at the sales team. And someone wants to be a cap raiser because it sounds sexy, it sounds fun. I want to raise capital. And I think that a lot of people are drawn to that. Entrepreneurs, they want to get in the game of venture capital and private equity one day, and this idea of cap raising. And you're saying, yes, that's great. Appointment-setter. You're a professional appointment-setter. The reality. Those who get to reality first wins, from your uncle. That's great. For people who don't get that reality, what path will they take? If they think that cap raising is this glorious thing, what happens if they don't catch reality? They might not have a job for very long, but what does that look like long-term?

GUY COSTIN: That looks like 18 months, and they're gone. And that's the reality. I just finished our Dakota Way book, and I talk about 18 months quite a bit. And the reason a database can be a lifesaver is because we save you that first six to nine months of trying to figure out who to call on. Whereas if you start a job day one and you have Dakota Marketplace, you have a database of qualified buyers to do cold outreach to. There's no more researching. You're don't need to go on any websites. Nothing. Just go into our database, go to Boston, New York, Atlanta, Chicago, what have you, and it lists out everybody in a very neat, clean way. But you have to have the discipline to be calling on qualified buyers on a daily basis because, essentially, it just becomes then a numbers game. More qualified buyers in your bucket, the better. And then what you have to be able to do is then go build relationships and tell your story time and time and time again. And, by the way, with the proliferation of all these private funds, as I'm sure your family office is seeing so many people are calling on you guys, it just means there's more and more fundraisers out there to compete with. But you can win through cold outreach because I will tell you, Josh, very few people believe in cold outreach to the level that we do. The best do, but very few people do. Why? Only one reason. It's emotional. And it's really painful emotionally.

JOSH WILSON: It is... it is. I'm a sales guy. I've been in B2B sales for a while. Had to make 100 calls a day, and they're tracking it, and I have a script. That was tough. But the idea of knocking on a door, cold-calling, or cold-emailing, it is an emotional thing. There's anxiety attached to it. I don't know if I've gotten over the fear of that, or if maybe I just have too much of the pressure of getting it done, being an entrepreneur. And I know the pain of not being able to afford groceries, so that propels me forward, right?

GUI COSTIN: Yeah.

JOSH WILSON: But cold-calling works, cold-emailing works, and you built a business around it. Why do you think that sets you apart from other groups? That was a long way to ask you that freaking question. But go to cold outreach. Why does that work versus other people?

GUI COSTIN: For some reason, people don't believe... so think about it. The job of your family office officers... we call them due diligence analysts. Our parlance is their job is to find the next great investment idea for their organization. But they can't field 300 calls a day. And what I say is, you have to be... and so some people don't believe that they should be bugging people. I don't think we're bugging people. If you have a great investment strategy that you're marketing, you should be excited to do cold outreach, to tell them about it. It's their job to learn about it. A lot of people don't have that belief system, but you've got to really believe that... and we've had many, many people thank us after we've gone through 6, 9 months, 12 months of due diligence. They finally make an investment. The investment works. Hey, thanks so much for reaching out to us. This is how we get most of our ideas. So most due diligence analysts at family offices get their ideas from salespeople calling them. Now if you want to be respectful, you have to send a respectful email. What I mean by that is most people don't know how to send an email. So, if I send you an email and I say, meeting request, May 24, 3:00 PM, you're going to say to yourself... your brain's going to go, oh, my gosh, somebody wants to meet with me. What do they want to meet about? You open the email, right? It's hard not to open the email when someone says meeting request. And then we only allow people to say one sentence, maybe two. And so, it's back to those two minutes. It's like, you crack them right in the nose with who you are, and what you do, and why they should take a meeting. And then you have a clear

call to action. Can you meet May 24 at 3:00 PM in Boston or what have you? And then they either say, no, I can do 2:00, or they'll ignore you. But at least they're seeing your brand. They see that you're requesting a meeting. And we've taken this to a science, and it's worked for two businesses really, really well. But a lot of people don't have that belief system that that actually works. And then what you have to be able to do is give your salespeople a group hug. You can't be in this beat down, you didn't do this, you didn't do that, all that negativity. You have to understand that they're sending these emails. It's emotional. You have to have compassion for your sales team and tell them that, and share that with them, and tell them how much you appreciate them because I think they're doing the hardest job at the company because it's just simply emotional. And without it, we have no business, right? Jamie doesn't have a studio. I can't be doing this if our team's not doing cold outreach to book meetings. It doesn't work. And so, everyone, hey, guys, keep sending the emails. We love you. You're the best. And that's how we treat them.

JOSH WILSON: Man, that is such a unique approach to building salespeople because, I'll tell you, it is hard. And usually, the salespeople get kicked in the teeth, the most by the customer. And then marketing goes, hey, we sent you a bunch of leads. Did you close them? No. Then they get kicked in the teeth by the marketing team. And then the founder's going or the leadership's going, hey, look at our revenue's down. Salespeople, go, go, go, go, go. We're going to cut your commission, increase your sales volume. And it's a tough job. Salespeople bounce from job to job to job to job. You're building a different environment where they're actually valued is what—

GUI COSTIN: Yeah, all 77 of our teammates are highly, highly valued. But I always say, there's no harder job than just the pedestrian job of

sending emails to book meetings and being told no 95% of the time. And one thing you just brought up, Josh, which I love, we've not changed our commission structure since 2011.

JOSH WILSON: Man, how many times did that happen? Is that right? I hit 110% of my goals? Cool.

GUI COSTIN: Cut.

JOSH WILSON: You're like, what? Especially if we're doing well.

GUI COSTIN: If people approach those breakpoints and they end the month just missing the breakpoint, we always kick them over the breakpoint. Always.

JOSH WILSON: Yeah. Man, that's very cool. All right, so you've got a few different brands you're building. Why don't you give our audience a place where they could go and learn more about each of your brands, and then maybe a quick value proposition on what each one of those are?

GUI COSTIN: Sure. So Dakota.com is where you can find everything. [Dakota Marketplace](https://Dakota.com) is our database where you can sign up for a [free trial](#). And then one thing, I will just give a little shout-out to our tech team, Priya and the team. We just released version 3 of our Salesforce app. So, imagine being able to take the entirety of ZoomInfo's user interface and drop it into your Salesforce. We just did that. We took the entire user interface, and all the data, and everything from our Dakota Marketplace database, and now there's an app that you can get in the AppExchange, download it right into your Salesforce instance so you only have to log into one place. And if you think about you've been in

sales a long time, right? CRM adoption is one of the main goals of a sales organization. But for the most part, you log in, and the user interface is not very good, and it's not well-designed, and it's not for your industry. And then, two, the data is stale. And we solve both of those problems. With the click of a button, you get a perfect user interface design for the investment management industry with clean, accurate, up-to-date data.

JOSH WILSON: Yeah. Let's go back to metrics and CRM. What metrics should a sales leader measure? Because I think, sometimes, if you measure the wrong thing, you're going to get the wrong results. So, if you're just measuring email sends, I send 1,000 emails a day, and I look awesome. What do you measure? What metrics should we look at?

GUI COSTIN: You are so spot on. So, for software, there's only two metrics that matter. First-time demos scheduled daily, re-engage demos scheduled daily. Those are the only two numbers that matter from a software sales perspective. From an investment sales perspective, it's first-time meetings. I would say the lifeblood of any business are new prospects. And so, you've got to book first-time meetings on the investment sales side. And then you have to measure your penetration rate against channels. So, for instance, if there's... let's just make up a number... 800 family offices in America and 2,600 RAs that matter, you know what I mean? That would fit for us. There's a lot more than that in our database and everything. Over time, you need to measure your penetration rate against those. So, against your ideal buyer. And so that's on the investment sales side. And, by the way, we track first-time demos and re-engages daily. And if a business development rep sets up nine during the week, it's a \$900 bonus, a hundred bucks a meeting. If they hit 10, it's \$1,500. And it's on scoreboards. It's everywhere. We have a 7:45 check-in daily for the

sales team, a 5:00 check-in. We go over the most important things, which is the results from the day before, the calendar. And then each business development rep has to go through what their plan for the day is. We call it city scheduling. So, they always have five cities on the calendar at any given time they're scheduling meetings for. So, if you think about what's the cool thing about that, there's nothing to think about when they walk through the two doors at about 7:30 every day. They know exactly what their plan is, which is great for a salesperson.

JOSH WILSON: That's great. Yeah. And as a salesperson, I've been in far too many jobs in my life. My wife could probably tell people what I do now, though. It's funny. We've been married 15 years. Being an entrepreneur, you bounce around a lot trying to figure out who you are and trying to figure out your fit. But also, a place to fit. I want to follow a leadership group that gives me a clear path to success. If I have to create that own path within an organization, that's a different job. I have to now wear two different hats, salesperson and then builder. Those are two different things. And jumping, really, [INAUDIBLE]. You've built a path for your salespeople. you've got two different groups that you're helping to sell. One is your fundraisers, cap raisers. And another is your software. Let's talk fundraisers. You said the lifeblood is first-time meetings with these groups. What other metrics should we look at in fundraising?

GUI COSTIN: So, one thing that you just brought up that I think is one of the most overlooked things in business is the sales process. And the question is, who owns the creation, implementation, and execution of the sales process? In my opinion, it must come from the CEO. Now the CEO can then have the VP of sales administer it, right? And the whole thing. But it has to be owned by the CEO because the CEO has to know that's the machine that's generating all the potential opportunities. And

what we do, and to answer your question directly from an investment sales perspective, we always have five cities. So, at any given time, when our guys come in, they can go to Boston, New York, Philly, Washington DC, Pittsburgh, let's say. They book out Boston, that falls off because now we have our five meetings in Boston. Then they add on another trip to New York, or they add on Chicago, or San Francisco, or LA, or whatever it might be. And you're simply ripping out emails against the list in our database. And that city scheduling has driven our entire business for 18 years. I've never seen anything work better than that. But most people are like, man, that's a lot. There's just a lot of, oh, my gosh, really? All that. And so, you have to embrace the suck, if you will, they say in sports. You have to embrace that. And you have to embrace the suck because it's going to get you results. And, by the way, as my one good friend said who does this... one of my best pals... he goes, Gui. He goes, we're not dropping these kids in Fallujah with a 90-pound pack on their back, right? You're just sending cold emails. So, let's just put it in perspective a little bit to ease the emotional burden. It's not, right? But those who embrace that are the winners. And it's so much fun to watch.

JOSH WILSON: Yeah. Face-to-face versus Zoom, right? You have software? You can Zoom all day, or some type of video conferencing. But when you're talking in hundreds of millions of dollars doing cap race, do you think that it performs better having a face-to-face meeting, bringing them donuts, or fruit bowls, or whatever in the morning?

GUI COSTIN: 100%. Or, as I say internally, at 1,000,000,000%. Yeah, face-to-face is everything. I'm fine with Zoom, right? But you want to win? You get face-to-face. Josh, we do something really crazy at our company. Twice a month, starting in Jan of '21, we host two Dakota Cocktails events in two cities across the country. So last week, we were

in LA. Next week, we'll be Boston. And the following week, London. And we generally get about 100 fundraisers that show up with prospects and customers. We send five to six people. Let's say it costs on average 10 grand. And so, we're traveling the country, getting face-to-face with our customers. And I just can't tell you what an unbelievable thing that is because it's a networking event. They're getting great value because they're getting amazing venue, like the Beverly Hills Hotel, free food, free drinks, free networking. No sales pitch, no presentation, no handouts, nothing. Just simply networking. And they're absolutely brilliant, and they've worked so successfully.

JOSH WILSON: If we look at the last four years, it's been a crazy world that we live in. COVID really made everything virtual. But now we're kind of going, I think the face-to-face, belly-to-belly... I'm old school. Face-to-face, belly-to-belly, person-to-person is what I desire, and I need as a human, that connection. For people who have the ability to be flexible, how did your team navigate those waters going from face-to-face, belly-to-belly to Zoom, to now back to knocking on doors and connecting with people?

GUI COSTIN: So, one thing we never did, we never stopped selling. My team was almost laughing out of their seats when I was doing a... we host a show every... that's why I have this studio right here, we have this studio, is because we host Dakota Live, I think we're on episode 250, where we share all this information with fundraisers. And so, people come in. We get tons of credibility. We interview an allocator. We cover metro area like Boston. These are all the investors you call on. We cover a key account, like JP Morgan Private Bank, break that bank down. Hey, this is where you want to focus. And so, we were doing Dakota Live, and I said, jeez, the stock market's going down so fast. I was like, Bodhi Miller couldn't ski that slope right now it's so steep. And then everyone

was saying, oh, we'll start selling in the fall. And we said, we'll start selling today. And we never stopped selling. We never stopped sending emails. We never stopped setting up calls. And then as soon as we could get on the road and get face-to-face, we did. And our team, we call it the white of their eyes. We believe in face-to-face, seeing the white of their eyes. And who wouldn't? And the good news is, Josh, if the competition isn't traveling and you are, and you're cold-calling and they aren't, to me, it's just the easiest thing in the world. And how much fun is it getting face-to-face with people, building a relationship, exchanging, having a conversation? So, yeah, we're big believers in the face-to-face across the board.

JOSH WILSON: Yeah, all right. We've got probably 12 more minutes left. There're a few questions that I want to ask that might be difficult questions to pose, but I think that it's important for sales leaders, CEOs, and the people who travel. I'm married 15 years and I got three beautiful kids, 11, 7, and 4.

GUI COSTIN: Congrats.

JOSH WILSON: Thanks, man. Surprised that she held on that long.

GUI COSTIN: No, it's great. Love kids. Love my kids.

JOSH WILSON: I do, too. How do you maintain a good balance for entrepreneur visionary? I'm a founder myself and in this game, and I've got to travel for my work. How do you manage that family balance with execution balance as a CEO and as a sales guy, investment banker?

GUI COSTIN: Yeah, so when the kids were in high school... they're almost all out of college. And I have one left in college, a junior. I really

didn't travel a ton when they were in high school. I was just around. And so, I made that decision. Probably cost me a little bit of money. We had a good team that was traveling. It doesn't mean it was zero travel, but I was always around for the important things. I made that decision. It was six years. So, with three kids in high school, making every sporting event. And, by the way, Dakota, we have a family-first philosophy. So, I say the one way you want to get fired at Dakota is miss one of your kid's sports events, recitals, what have you, because of a business thing. Unless the building is on fire, you better go to your kid's events and whatever that means. You can't miss anything family oriented. So, family first. And, by the way, that ends up I would still travel, but that's how I balanced it. And now it's very strategic. I'm traveling for the next three weeks. We're all traveling. So that's how I kind of balance it out. I travel when I need to travel, but I have to tell you, it's a game-changer when you get face-to-face.

JOSH WILSON: Yeah, it really is. What question should I have asked you during this interview that I screwed up and did not ask you?

GUI COSTIN: I think you nailed a lot of it, you know what I mean? I think, anyone listening, is that these businesses, it takes a lot of vulnerability to really be that type of leader that has compassion because most people think that people are going to take advantage of them. And it's really not the case. How about this just to compound this? Since day one, we've never had a T&E policy. We've never had a vacation policy. Take the time you need and spend the money, stay in a nice hotel, have a nice dinner. You're traveling. It's hard. You're away from your family. Our CFO looks at expense reports. I don't. So, what ends up that translates into is, well, aren't people going to take advantage of you? Aren't people going to take all this vacation or stay in a \$2,000 a night hotel? We've never seen it in 18 years. So, I think treating people like

adults is the way to go, just like we would want to be treated. Fascinating. I just joined our school board. And one of the things during my first board meeting over the weekend, they're just going through some of the characteristics. And one of them was treat others like you want to be treated, right? At the school.

JOSH WILSON: The golden rule, right?

GUI COSTIN: I'm thinking to myself, well, how come so many businesspeople don't do that? They teach you that in school. But then everyone writes all these books on culture because you have to literally unpack it as you become an adult. It's like, why can't you just treat other people like you'd want to be treated? Everyone gets control, command and control, and this, and tracking, tracking amount of time your computer's on, all this stuff. It's insanity to me. It's like, no one wants to be treated that way.

JOSH WILSON: Yeah, absolutely. What's a good place for people to connect with you? Are you guys active on LinkedIn or other social channels?

GUI COSTIN: Yeah, very active on LinkedIn, Dakota and myself. And then [Dakota.com](https://dakota.com). You can reach out. We have all the contact info. You can reach me at Gui-- G-U-I-- @Dakota.com. We'd love to hear from you and answer any questions, chat, what have you.

JOSH WILSON: OK, absolutely phenomenal. Great job today. Fellow dealmakers in the audience, as always, reach out to our guests. Say thanks for being on the show. Their contact information will be in the show notes below. If you have a deal, or a deal type, or a deal structure, or you can educate on a specific type of deal, head on over to

thedealscout.com, fill out a quick form, and maybe get you on the show next. Until then, we'll talk to you all on the next episode. Love you guys. Cheers.