



Become Better At Selling Strategic, Complex Solutions

Today selling is more complex. There are more people involved in the sale, they take longer to decide, and their decision making process seems to be a blurry fog. It used to be that sales people could make a single call on a single buyer and that person would make the decision. This is no longer true. Our businesses have become full of people who want to collaborate and get buy-in from others and people who don't want to be held responsible for making a single solitary decision that others will have to live with.

A few years ago, it took an average of five to six calls on a prospect before they would make a decision. Today, according to statistics it takes an average of eight to nine calls before a decision is reached. When you think about this, how many calls are you making on the account? Here is more food for thought. Where it took only one person to make a decision, a few years ago the average number of people involved in the sale was three to five. Today, that number is now six to eight people involved in the decision. When you think about this, how many of the people do you know who are involved in the sale – let alone meet with them?

When you think about this, it's not difficult to realize that much of the sale takes place when you are not there. The people talk to each other and make decisions we are not even aware of that contradict what we were told before. And sometimes the person we are told is the decision maker is no longer the decision maker because of internal power struggles, a realignment of priorities, delegation and committee empowerment. A lot of times, we never even meet the final decision maker who signs the check. And we all know and have experienced that it is not unusual for a sale to be derailed at the last minute by something completely unforeseen.

One of the biggest factors to lost sales, is that average performing sales people do not meet with the multiple people involved in the sale. They meet with one person typically and rely on that one person to be their surrogate. Does this sound familiar? The big excuse is, "I don't know how to go around this person without offending them."



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Now with the global economy, we have competitors from India, China, Europe and other countries, who are hungrier, faster, and less expensive than we are. And they are making things even more confusing for the prospective client which entails getting more people involved from their side, or the hiring of consultants to advise them how to procure, which all leads to an even longer sales cycle.

So not only have we gone above beyond features and benefits of a solution, the client wants to know what quality standards are in place, service levels, guarantees, warranties and free support beyond the sale. There are too few of them (prospective clients) and too many of us (providers of services and solutions). So with that being said, we can ill afford to not plan out every step of the strategic complex sale. Here several critical pieces of advice to help you and your team to become better positioned with the prospective client;

1. Learn to deal with multiple decision makers in an organization, each of whom can influence the purchase. You need to understand their role and as importantly, understand what their expertise is that others will acquiesce to or not argue against because of that expertise.
2. Become excellent at questioning, building rapport, and demonstrating our expertise throughout the sales cycle.
3. A common selling approach is needed so the members of your sales pursuit team can speak the same the language and quickly grasp the strategy evolution.
4. Forego the feeling to sell – and instead try to educate the prospective client as to all the options and the advantages and disadvantages of each option.
5. Try to identify the economic buyer immediately. Look for someone who is responsible for the P&L, but not the CEO, unless you are in mergers and acquisitions. Then you need to identify the economic buyer's "go to" person and work through them.
6. When you meet with various people in the account we need to provide a brief recap with the economic buyer and the "go to" person, if possible, in person.
7. Perform account mapping - that is, an alignment with of their execs with your execs.
8. Begin developing a win theme and deal strategy on paper as soon as possible and convey that to all the members of the team.
9. The pursuit team needs to meet in person regularly and use visual tools such as whiteboards to build a win-strategy among the team.

