



Diagnosing the Stalled Decision

What do you do with Stalled Opportunities?

One of the most common complaints or challenges we hear from our clients has to do with stalled opportunities. The scenario typically goes something like this: a sales cycle is progressing with an individual - all the buying signals are being observed - and then...nothing happens! No return phone calls, no return emails, no communication at all!

What do you do?

After reviewing over 5,000 stalled sales cycles with our clients over the years, we have identified the five most common explanations for a sale in limbo.

Lack of Connection to a Critical Business Issue

Unless your solution has Increased Revenue, Time to Market, Cost Management, Improved Quality, Competitive Differentiation, or some other looming business issue tied to it, you can expect a stall. Senior executives are only spending on matters that directly impact their business.

There are only three questions a sales rep has to ask to uncover business issues...Why? Why? Why?

Why do you want this solution?

Why are those problems important to solve?

Why would that matter to you or any other executive?

Lack of Perceived Value

Most people can only juggle five or six critical issues at a time. We prioritize these issues in order of their "value", the benefit tied to solving the issue. If a value isn't seen, an issue will quickly fall to the bottom of the list. Can your prospect articulate the "value" or impact of addressing their business issue? If your solution, from their perspective, doesn't have enough value to get in their top five or six issues, you get stalled or put on the back burner. Ask the prospect to quantify the impact of resolving the business issue. And better yet, ask them how the solution will impact them personally.

Lack of Differentiation

Lack of differentiation will cause the prospect to spend more time evaluating, which translates to a stall. If you are unable to differentiate on capabilities and solving problems, you will be forced to differentiate on price. Please look up the previous article on differentiation for more on the subject.



Decision Authority

Decision authority is one of the most common causes of a stalled decision. The buying frenzy of the last decade all but eliminated the need to call on the real decision makers for everyday purchases. Those days are over. In order to avoid a stall caused by lack authority, you need to ask your prospect some key questions including, "Have you made this type of decision before?", " When and how?". Triangulate your information by asking these questions to multiple people in the organization in order to find out who really has the decision making power in the organization.

Risk

Selecting a new vendor or a new solution involves risk for your prospect. The prospect's perception of risk can span business impacts like lost time or money; or personal ramifications like career or reputation. As a prospect gets closer to making a decision, the risk becomes greater in his/her mind. Common tools for alleviating risk include supplying references, trial usage, demonstrating credibility with iron clad implementation plans, guarantees and your executive backing. Once you identify the likely cause of your stall, you can craft a strategy to reenergize the sales cycle by focusing on the missing link or underdeveloped component.