

## What Influences Your Prospects Decision to Buy?

"One of the concerns I had about calling on key decision-makers was determining what I was going to say. My experience had been selling much lower in the organization and I considered myself pretty effective at the standard features and benefits presentation. I knew that this wasn't going to be enough if I was fortunate to get the attention of the top person.

Over time (and more than a few botched attempts) I was able to determine what was important to these senior level executives. Although it varied somewhat depending on who I was talking with, the key areas of concern included; increased efficiencies, growing market share, reducing expenses and increasing shareholder satisfaction. Once I figured this out, I was able to align the benefits of my products and services with what was top of mind with the senior executive. It was a subtle rather than dramatic shift in how I sold. I truly think it made me more effective. If nothing else, it raised my confidence level that I was communicating on the same level as the person I was talking with. This made me, at least in my own mind, equal in stature to the top person." Tim Lang, Professional Services

The more you know about the individuals on your account the more effective you'll be at managing the account as a whole. The more knowledgeable you are about this particular account the more you'll be able to make accurate judgements about the issues that affect other companies in the same industry. For example, if managing supply chain relationships is an issue for your client, it's possible or even likely that this may be an issue for other companies in the same industry. If nothing else, it will give you a bona fide reason for calling other companies to determine if they are facing the same issues. Having assisted one company in an industry goes a long way towards establishing your credibility with others in similar fields.

Although your long-term strategy should be to become an industry expert, it's important to remember that sales is an intensely personal process. Companies don't really buy from companies as much as people buy from other people. The client really isn't Citibank; it's Nancy who's a senior executive in the finance department. Thus, it's very important that you have a deep understanding of what motivates your decision-maker.

Business success and personal achievement are usually intertwined. This is important to keep in mind during the sales process, since individuals usually will not agree to a business decision unless they feel that it's both in their own personal interests and in the best interests of their company. As an extreme example, getting a prospect to buy a product that could result in the elimination of his job is a highly difficult sale. Prospects are most likely to buy products and services if, 1) it helps their company achieve its goals, and, 2) helps them as individuals achieve a personal goal. We refer to the first as business results and the second as personal wins. We need to discover what constitutes results and wins for everyone who has influence on our account.

What might a result be for the decision-maker? It could be increased efficiency, greater market share or an increased percentage of repeat customers. Other results might include greater employee utilization, reducing the cost of sales, or lowering expenses. These are all business results that are of importance to decision-makers.

The more you can tailor your communications to the specific needs of your audience, the more effective you'll be. For example, if you discuss technical specifications and ease of training with a senior level decision-maker, she probably won't particularly care. Conversely, if you talk about how your product fits into the broad business objectives of the organization, a lower level manager might find the discussion to be intellectually interesting, but it won't relate to the specific reasons for why he should buy your products. Successful communication of results depends upon tailoring what you say to meet the business interests of the person you're speaking with.

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### About the Author

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