



HOW TO SHORTEN YOUR CUSTOMERS BUYING CYCLE!

I used to work in an industry where the summer was a dead time for sales. customers would shut their production down for a week or two. Contacts were on vacation and nothing moved. Then late August and early September would come and sales would start happening. This resulted in the sales people moving too fast and mistakes happening. I effected both the sales person and the customer.

The problem was easy to fix and once we identified the solution and put it into action. We ended up with busy profitable summers and calmer fall selling seasons. The added benefit was not only did it help improve our sales results; in fact a few records were set in what used to be considered the worst selling months of the year. The technique also resulted in a shorter sales cycles and improved forecast accuracy throughout the rest of the year.

What was this miracle of miracles? The solution was to get the customer to focus on the operational date. This was when they determine they must be 100% operational with their new equipment. Over the years we have learned that this formula can be applied to just about any product or service and is not just for summer time selling.

The key is for your sales people to find out the date the customer must have the system in operation. From there they would work back the time lines to the date the customer had to sign the order if they wanted to meet their cutoff date. This is a powerful closing technique because it is the customer who determines the timelines not us.

Here's an example: You find out from the customer that the new widget fabrication system must be operational in 60 days. You must probe the customer to find out the implications of not meeting this deadline. The key is the reasoning must be their words, not yours.

You then have the customer work back the time lines from their date. If the new system must be operational in 60 days and you will need 5 days for installation and training then we need 55 days. However, most vendors require 10 to 12 business days from the receipt of a signed order to build the machine. Now you are at 43 days. You determine their internal program to evaluate the vendors will take 20 days. Now you have 23 days left. Once the evaluation is complete it will take 5 days to get the paperwork signed off and the internal approvals in place. 18 days left from the 60. You have to research your requirements before you establish your evaluation criteria and that may take 10 days. You now have 8 free days in the 60 day process, which allows for shipping and lost days. By using this process, your client is no longer thinking they have two months before they need to act; you now have a motivated client who has determined their own buying cycle.

I always did this exercise using a calendar and a white board so the client would get a great visual of the time as it was slipping away quickly.

The great thing about this approach is it can work for almost any product or service. By being the sales person who helps the prospect understand the time lines and the critical dates, you are increasing your personal worth. No need for offer end of month specials or big discounts to close the deal. They customer is in the driver's seat and you are along for a ride on your road to success.

By employing this approach we turned summer doldrums into busy profitable selling months. Once the customers began to understand how their summer holidays, short staff and closures where going to impact



their busy fall production months we had no trouble keeping the sales pipeline full and more importantly profitable.

AIM HIGHER!

Robert J. Weese
B2B Sales Connections Inc.

Robert J. Weese is managing partner of B2B Sales Connections, the [online sales training website](#) with free sales resources, a specialized sales job board and free resume listing services for business to business sales professionals. He has a proven track record of success, with over 29 years of direct sales, management and executive level business to business experience. His accomplishments include being named sales manager of the year for North America for a dealer organization, being in the 100% club of a Fortune 500, and achieving outstanding sales growth in a national channel sales organization. He is currently a member of the Ajax Pickering Board of Trade, as well as an Ambassador for the Toronto Board of Trade. For more information, please visit www.b2bsalesconnections.com , or contact Robert directly at rjweese@b2bsalesconnections.com or www.linkedin.com/in/bobweese.