



CONTROL YOUR SALE'S TIME FRAME

Many sales representatives absolutely dread their monthly sales forecasting meetings with their sales manager. Why? Often, it is because they really don't know what is the next step to close the sale. More importantly, they also don't know when that step is going to happen. As such, their forecasting accuracy is less than desired, and that makes for some unpleasant meetings!

To eliminate this, as sales professionals, we have to do a better job of controlling the time frame of each potential sale.

After your next sales presentation, try asking the following closing question: "Mr. Prospect, in your opinion, do you feel this is the right solution for your organization?" Let's assume for the purposes of this newsletter, the prospect answers yes.

The next logical question then becomes "Great, Mr. Prospect, what's the next step?" Regardless of the answer you receive, you should always respond with clarification as to the time frame of when the next step will be completed.

For example, if the next step is that your contact needs to meet with someone higher in the organization, you should confirm when that meeting is going to take place, as well as what will happen after. "If you are meeting with you boss next Tuesday, I will call you Wednesday morning."

Sometimes, the customer will respond that they will call you when they are ready. Chances are that that won't happen, so you must control the time frame. "I can appreciate that you need some time to think things over. When should I expect to hear from you?" If the prospect says, Thursday, you should confirm that if you don't hear from him by then, you will call him Friday. This way, the sale is always moving forward and more importantly, you know when.

Other ideas to control the time frame of your potential sales include:

- Put an expiry date on every proposal. A thirty day time limit is normally long enough. If you need longer, perhaps you were quoting too early in the sales process in the first place.
- Include an implementation schedule with your proposals. For example, if you know that the customer has to be up and running in 60 days, you can work backwards with operator training times, delivery schedules, and order processing times to know exactly when contracts must be signed.

Before your next sales forecasting meeting with your sales manager, look at your current prospect list. For each prospect, do you know exactly what is the next step to closing the sale? Do you know when that step is going to take place? If you don't, perhaps you should find out!

Aim Higher!

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Susan A. Enns is managing partner of B2B Sales Connections. She has a proven track record of success, with over 20 years of direct sales, management and executive level business to business experience. Currently, Susan provides revenue-generating consulting services to sales organizations and sales professionals in the business to business marketplace, including the operation of Canada's premier niche job board and career website for business to business sales professionals. As the B2B Sales Coach, she writes and edits the company's newsletter, *AIM HIGHER*. For more information, please visit www.b2bsalesconnections.com or contact Susan directly at senns@b2bsalesconnections.com.