

Five Reasons Why Your Sale Got Stuck

Maybe once you worked with the buying team for many months. You had access to the “key decision maker”. You received positive feedback about your offering being a good fit for the prospect’s needs. You mutually determined a favorable return on investment which indicates that the solution will bring clear value to them. There was no resistance to your sales price...

But the deal still didn’t close. Or worse, it’s just hanging there. What happened? Perhaps the buyer has gone “radio silent” on you and has not recently returned your telephone calls and emails. Why? What’s going on?

Here are five questions to ask yourself to determine why this happened:

1. Was it really a qualified opportunity? Sometimes the opportunity is like a Hollywood set – there is an exterior that appears to be real, but there is nothing behind it. Perhaps it was not budgeted or no one in top management really championed it. Maybe they were just thinking about the product or service you offer and never seriously considered it. Next time, consider vetting the prospects even better. No one can close an opportunity that isn’t qualified, no matter what you do. Consider the time wasted a valuable lesson.
2. Did you push the close too hard or too soon? A premature close before the buyer is ready will often result in a stalemate. The prospect may have been offended that you asked for the order too soon and they want to avoid having to answer this question, so they go into a stall mode. Solution? Next time, ask the buyer all along the process, “What is the timing for this decision?” and “Where do we stand on this?” Comments like, “We have to complete several tasks before we can...” it is too soon to ask for the order. Ask clear questions and listen to the response to gauge when the right time to close really is.
3. Did you meet with the *real* decision maker? Whether you invested a lot of time with the wrong person, or with only a few people on what turned out to be a committee full of decision makers, unless you’re speaking to the right people, you cannot close the sale. To resolve this, ask questions and make sure that the person you are investing in has the real authority to approve the project and write the check.
4. Was the business case strong enough? Were the assumptions tested and valid? Did you get someone on the inside to agree with the values that were determined? The purchase will likely die and the buyer will remain with the status quo, or revisit the project at a later date if they do not clearly see the benefit and accuracy of your assumptions.
5. Did the buyer establish specific requirements and criteria on which they will base their decision and did they share it with you? Did you feel there was a good match between your proposed solution and the buyer’s criteria? If the buyer has determined that your solution is no longer viable they will often become unresponsive or purchase another solution. If you believe that your solution offers exceptional value then you must gain the attention of the buying team to prove your case.

There is always a reason why an opportunity stalls, or the buyer became less communicative, when it seemed they were once interested. Sometimes the reason for the change is not apparent. Often buyers are embarrassed that they cannot move forward and avoid your telephone calls or emails. Most people are not confrontational and not comfortable giving bad news, or admitting they wasted the seller’s time. This may be very frustrating to the salesperson that does not understand what happened. I suggest that you contact the decision maker and ask for a candid conversation to discuss what the cause was.

Perhaps there was a change in corporate priorities and it may only be a temporary setback, but most of the time it will be due to one of the above five reasons. If the sale does not progress through the normal sales cycle or they continue to avoid you and do not provide information then the message is very clear – they are no longer (and may never have been) a buyer.

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