

HOW YOU CAN COMPETE AGAINST THE DO-NOTHING SOLUTION

Many salespeople have difficulty competing against the challenging decision by a buyer to not make a purchase and remain with the current solution. The decision may be to 1) do nothing, stay put, or accept the *status quo*, or 2) continue with the current supplier. How should a salesperson best compete against those two options?

The first goal for a salesperson is to discover what caused the company to look at alternatives. What was the “spark” that initiated the search? Perhaps it was procurement looking for a lower-cost solution. That is becoming more common. Or, is the prospect dissatisfied with the current supplier’s performance, such as missed delivery dates, quality issues or poor customer service. Or maybe simply an unacceptable increase in the current provider’s costs. Once we have this information, as well as the reason why the prospect decided not to purchase, we can prepare an updated sales plan.

If the evaluation began because of performance issues, or to obtain a lower price, staying with the *status quo* delays addressing the problem. The salesperson should continue to stress the benefits, such as a reduction in quality issues, that the company will derive due to a change in suppliers. Sometimes companies are talked out of making a change by an appeal from the current supplier to the executive for another chance and a promise to do better in the future. Sadly, their tactic to buy more time to fix the problem rarely works and the company will resume the search at another point in the future. Your commitment to providing a better solution to the customer will win out if they trust you and believe your value proposition.

Consider that the decision to remain with the current supplier may be due to a reluctance by the buyer to change to an unknown supplier. This presents a challenge to a salesperson because it is perfectly rational to be risk-averse when considering a change of suppliers. A recommended strategy here is to offer to provide a less strategic or costly product to the prospect to earn their trust, or even to provide several deliveries of the product being considered, at no cost, for them to compare quality, pricing, delivery, and after-sale service. Also, you can refer the buyer to some of your other customers to allay their concerns.

Sometimes the decision was made without considering many factors, such as the additional resources that may have been required to implement workarounds and the benefits that a better solution would provide to the company. The buyer may have been looking at the expenditure compared to the existing visible costs, which may not have considered both explicit and implicit costs. It is the salesperson’s responsibility to provide further education to the prospect of the true costs and benefits of your proposal and the consequences of remaining with the *status quo* and urge them to reconsider their decision.

Bottom line: A decision by the prospect to stay with the status quo is not hopeless. But it requires you to do research to gather information on what initiated the evaluation, why they decided to remain with the status quo, and then to use your compelling value proposition to persuade the decision-makers that it is not in their best interests to delay the change any longer.

