

Why Salespeople Fail in Complex Sales

What is a complex sale?

A complex sale is characterised by multiple stakeholders directly and indirectly involved in the decision process. The sales process requires numerous interactions with stakeholders over an extended period. This can result in a long selling/buying cycle and impact on the seller's revenues and cash-flow. Stakeholders can be in various regional or country offices. There may not be a budget allocated for the product or service.

Common problems salespeople face in complex sales

These can be one or more of the following:

- Business drivers and related initiatives have not been accurately assessed
- All stakeholders in the decision process have not been identified
- Every stakeholder has not been contacted and/or interviewed
- Decision responsibility is assumed and based on a stakeholder's title
- The financial decision maker is only targeted
- Too much time spent with a stakeholder of limited influencing power
- Avoid approaching a stakeholder due to anxiety
- Failure to leverage past or present relationships
- A bloated sales pipeline
- A lack of knowledge or inability to adjust to complex sales
- The sales presentation is out of sync with a stakeholder's prime interest
- A lack of skills to adapt to individual stakeholder buying style.

What to do?

1. If you have been used to selling in short daily or weekly cycles, then new skills and attributes need to be developed. Get specific coaching on how to sell in a complex sales environment. Selling to four stakeholders for example, each with their own buying motive can make the sales process difficult, but far from impossible. Change past short-term sales to setting measurable and accountable daily tasks that become steppingstones to a future sale.
2. Complex sales can be demanding with long hours so ensure you top up your energy regularly. This can be relaxing with family and friends, enjoying a hobby, or taking the dog for a walk.
3. See the buying cycle from a prospective client's point of view. There are potential risks particularly if your organisation, product, or service is not well known. They may fear losing credibility and possibly their job if they make a wrong decision. You take time and care to develop trusting relationships in your personal life so why not in sales?

Complex sales are challenging but the intrinsic rewards make it well worth it.



Kurt's expertise is in improving the sales effectiveness of his clients' businesses by generating more sales in a more profitable manner. He has guided companies to increase sales 10-56%. Clients range from small to multinational companies in Australia, the Middle East, Asia, and Europe.

If you have any questions about this article or want to discuss a specific sales issue, then contact me directly on +61 412 252 236 or email kurt@salesconsultants.com.au.