

What to do Well Before a Board Presentation

Presenting to a board of directors, buying group or management committee can turn out to be a minefield with unforeseen traps discovered only when it is too late.

The main reasons are:

- Overconfidence. As one salesperson put it, *“They agreed to the meeting, so why wouldn’t they buy?”*
- It is only a matter of showing the client how good the company’s products and services are. To quote, *“I have facts and charts that prove our products are the best.”*
- Lack of strategic sales competence, relying on sales skills. To quote, *“I have been dealing with the CEO who is the decision maker.”*

From the first sales meeting and every meeting that follows **your client knowledge needs to compound like interest in an investment account**. Strategic sales are often referred to as complex sales because of the number of people involved in the decision process and the long selling cycles. It requires strategic thinking and courage to ask the right questions, questions to ensure you fully understand the sales environment.

Common mistakes made in strategic sales:

- Not identifying all the stakeholders in the decision process
- Not contacting or interviewing every stakeholder. Unaware a stakeholder has no or limited influencing power
- Not qualifying and assume the stakeholder decision is based on their title
- Targeting only the decision maker.

What to do?

The amount of work required well before a board presentation cannot be underestimated. A structure that can minimize the above mistakes is to place various stakeholders involved in your sales opportunity on the basis, metaphorically speaking. Each stakeholder is given a name that relates to their role in the decision process, not title, but role.

1. The Advocate

The advocate is a stakeholder who knows you personally and has experience with your product/service and or your company. They like, trust, and believe in you, and will guide you through the buying process. By developing an advocate early in the sales process, you can reduce your selling cycle time.

2. The Financial Decision Maker

This stakeholder makes the definitive “yes” or “no” proposal decision, even if other stakeholders disagree with the decision. The financial decision maker can be difficult to meet in person and they tend to rely on and are influenced by other stakeholders. Their preference is to review two

proposals before making a final decision. There is only one financial decision maker per sales opportunity.

3. The Screener

It is common for two or more stakeholders to hold this role and they are often the first you engage. Screeners can hold a senior position that may infer final decision authority. Their role is to assess if your product/service will meet their buying criteria. To avoid false identification, ask qualifying questions to correctly distinguish between the screener and the financial decision maker. Screeners tend to reject generic or misaligned proposals.

4. The User

There are numerous stakeholders in the user role. Their evaluation of your proposal is subjective because of potential day-to-day involvement with your product/service. Users are often not taken seriously by salespeople, or they try too hard to convince users. The influence users have on other stakeholders should never be underestimated. Your proposal could be endorsed or rejected by screeners and the financial decision maker based on the user's feedback.

Final tips:

- Pre-plan your questions before every sales meeting
- Look for ways to increase your knowledge of every stakeholder. Develop profiles so you know who is on your side, the fence sitters and those who could vote against your proposal. Note: more than likely there is at least one of the latter
- Though video conferencing is popular, always aim for a face-to-face board meeting. You will have far greater impact compared to a competitor who uses video
- When presenting remain calm and courteous. If a board member behaves aggressively, show empathy whilst standing your ground.



Kurt is a sales practitioner who created sales records in five industries and won major sales awards including Salesperson of the Year. The products and services he sold were newly released, consultative, relationship and retail. He is a recognized sales expert, successful author and respected sales and personal development coach who has guided organizations and salespeople to vastly improved sales performance and profitability. His clients range from small to multinational companies in Australia, the Middle East, Asia, and Europe.

Kurt is the author of 21 Timeless Insights for Sales Success. Available at amazon.com.au or salesconsultants.com.au

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