

“Buying/Purchasing decisions are moving higher in organizations! Part II HOW do I deal with this and WHEN do I deal with it?”

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In [part I of this article](#) we discussed WHY buying/purchasing decisions are moving higher in organizations! We also discussed WHAT we should do in light of these economic and organizational changes. In part II let's discuss HOW we approach the WHAT we should do and, WHEN we should execute tactics and strategy.

Based on the WHAT's discussed in Part I here are some tips and tactics on HOW we respond as consultative sales people:

New Prospects or New Projects with Clients:

- Stop and re-evaluate your pipeline.
- Determine which of those active opportunities will buy from you or anyone.
- Determine if they should be in your pipeline or not (Is it in the sweet spot of your offerings?).
- Ask yourself (your opinion) on a 1 to 10 (1 'not a big issue' to 10 'can't do without it') what the value of your offering(s) is to the prospect.
- If the prospect is a new one and it is on your top 10 list, then in your next call focus on determining via questions (goals, issues, current situation) the severity of the situation. You are trying to determine with the prospect if a project is likely to win support with senior management.
- As quickly as possible try to gain agreement on **VALUE** and determine with the buyer the priority of the need. (Is it in the top 5-7 areas they are focused). If not, then re-evaluate the situation.
- Do some internal brainstorming with your manager or peers on how to get access to other key players if you don't already have that access.

Opportunities that you have been working with for some time:

- Review these opportunities for 1) Goals/Issues, 2) Has a solution been agreed on, 3) Has **Value** been explicitly stated and documented, 4) Are we talking to the right buying committee members, 5) Do we have control of the buying process with the key buying executives (Evaluation Plan)?
- For any open areas above, build a strategy and plan to complete them.

In Part I of this month's newsletter we discussed how Senior Executives are involved in Purchasing Decisions (**Figure 1 page 3**).

Tactics and strategies should be sensitive to WHERE your opportunities are along the prospect or existing clients 'purchasing decision 'time-line. The activities and actions mentioned above will dictate HOW we execute our selling programs.

A brief example of this is:

- If you found or entered into the buy/sell cycle in the EARLY phase of an organizations 'purchasing cycle' you have an opportunity to gain access to senior executives, since they are usually involved in the EARLY phase.
- The HOW of this varies and will determine the sell cycle length.
 - Access to lower levels means potentially a longer sell/buy cycle.
 - Direct access to senior management may result in NO Sell/buy cycle or with urgency/Value a shorter sell cycle.

How & When – Tactics Part II

Determining whether you have a valid opportunity early is important!

- Your 'Sales Messages' are critical at any entry level. They should focus on key goals or issues your prospect may be facing, and I recommend 'aggressive' prioritization with potential buyers of their goals or issues.
- If you entered the sell/buy cycle in the MIDDLE or LATE portion of the "Purchase Decision Cycle" it is imperative that during your re-evaluation of in-flight opportunities you build strategies and tactics for backing up the prospect(s) discussions to the EARLY stage of the decision process (seen in Figure 2).

This is done so that you can work with prospects to determine what their "Vision" of a solution has been, and then hopefully using "Vision Re-engineering/Enhancement" techniques you can insert NEW requirements for capabilities that are UNIQUE to you or have increased Value. (See "Shifting Buyer Concerns" **Figure 2 page 3**).

As we have discussed with our clients and strive for in our own revenue generating opportunities:

"Make Yourself Equal, BEFORE you make yourself different, or you're just different".

Just as importantly, focus on gaining agreement that the project has high priority with your Champion or Sponsor, and that they are willing

to move forward to get the right key executives involved with you at a mutually agreed time BEFORE a decision is made. This tactic will give you insight into whether you are in a good position to win the opportunity or not.

Here are some additional thoughts for working in today's economic situation. These were discussed by us at the [Duluth Business Expo](#). Please feel free to review that presentation.

- Have a process to discover all key buyer *goals, and problems*.
- Train yourself more on *product usage* (how products are used to reach goals or solve issues) tied to value for each key buyer, (*not product features*).
- If you are a manager of sales personnel begin your coaching and involvement with sales opportunities at the *prospecting stage*. This way you can help *shape* the sell/buy cycle rather than trying to *SAVE* it at the end.
- Challenge yourself to call *higher* on both *new* and *existing* customers.
- Sell *reliability, peace of mind, security and safety*. In economic uncertainty safe and reliable is good!
- Have a process to work with *buying committees*.

More to come on HOW's in future newsletters!!

Feel free to [contact us](#) to discuss any of the tactics and HOW's discussed above.

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Reference material

- In a downturn, [Provoke your Customers](#) by Philip Lay, Todd Hewlin, Geoffrey Moore – Harvard Business Review (www.Hbr.org)
- [CNN Money - Psychoeconomics](#) - **Date/Issue:** JULY 1995 VOL.24 NO.7 **Section:** COVER STORY

How & When – Tactics Part II

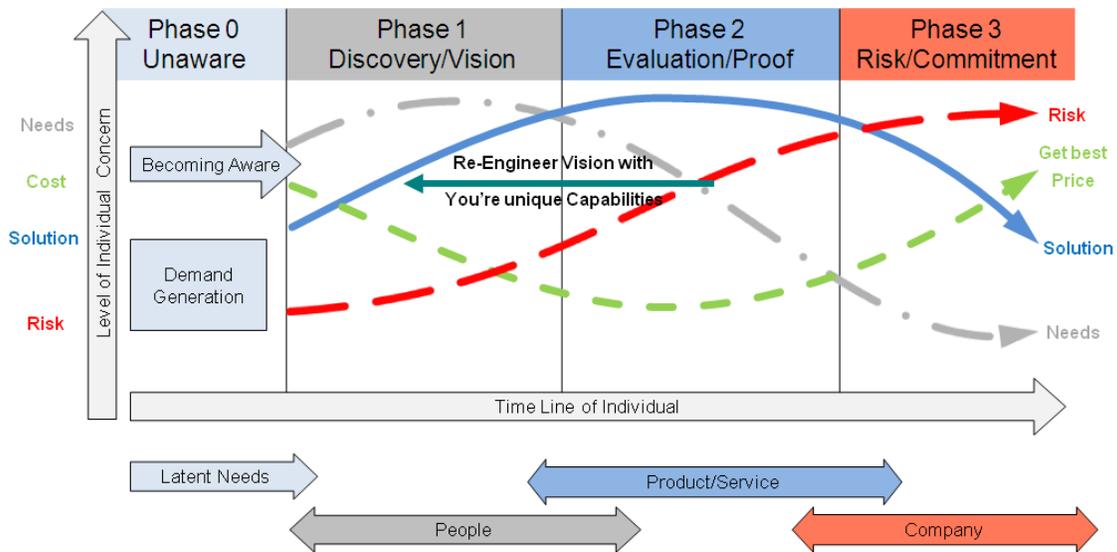
> [Smart Selling in Tough Times](#) – John Kratz, Ken Jondahl, The Vision Group, March 2009 – Duluth Business Expo

Senior Executive Involvement In The Purchase Decision (Figure 1)

80%	80%	80%					
						60%	60%
					44%		
			20%	20%			
Understand current issues	Establish objectives	Set strategy	Explore options	Set vendor criteria	Examine alternatives	Plan implementation	Measure results
EARLY			MIDDLE		LATE		
PHASE IN THE PURCHASE DECISION CYCLE Selling to Senior Executives A white paper written by: Alston Gardner, Stephen J. Bristriz, Jay Klompaker – Kenan-Flagler Business School, University of North Carolina							

Figure 2

Shifting Concerns of Individuals Making Buying Decisions*



*Based on the research of 'The Huthwaite Group'

[Narrated Article on "Shifting Concerns of Individuals Making Buying Decisions"](#)