**What Are the Three Magic Questions a Sales Manager Must Know?**

In the 20 + years we have been working with sales managers and salespeople, a constant need is sales opportunity strategy advice. One of the main roles of a Sales Manager is to help train your salespeople how to stay on track during a sales cycle and execute the chosen strategy.

During any sales opportunity coaching sessions consider asking these three questions with any sales opportunity:

* Why do anything?
* Why now?
* Why with us?

Let’s explore these questions. The answers can’t all be known at the beginning of a sales opportunity, but keeping them in mind is critical to maintain focus and winning the sale.

**Why do anything?**

Any person or organization has myriad priorities. Going through a buying decision whether for marketing services, new equipment or office space is a major commitment that may include multiple people and often competing priorities. So how will your prospect justify the effort and invest the time with you? Often, the buyer has latent pain – they know they need to do something but they may not know what they need to know or how to decide. They almost certainly don’t want to speak with a salesperson without a strong sense of what they need and whether it is affordable. This presents your first challenge – how to help the potential buyer to answer the question – *Why do anything?*

It is vital that marketing and sales campaigns provide the prospect with honest content where the buyer can educate themselves. Your sales team’s prospecting activities (emails, phone calls) should leverage this content and assist in identifying their issues and required capabilities. Blogs, webinars, and case studies are all examples of content that may be beneficial to the prospect as long as it is not overtly self-serving.

Top sales professionals know they can both help the prospect and increase their company’s potential sales success through a deeper discovery phase. Exploring unexpressed potential needs, linking the implications of the current issues with other functions within the enterprise and tying the project to corporate objectives will help the prospect build momentum internally and differentiate your offering. This is a critical first step to build the “business case” for taking action.

**Why now?**

Consider again the many priorities within the prospect’s company and the limited availability for executive support and investment dollars. To win the business requires more than beating your competition – you need to help your prospect communicate the importance of this initiative and gain internal approval. Perhaps this project is critical to retaining a key customer, or comply with upcoming regulations. It may require a formal cost justification and follow a capital approval procedure. If the prospect does not have experience or insight to elevating the importance of your sale within the company and how to navigate the approval cycle, your sales team can earn favor by helping them anticipate and plan for the review process. Tools to assist your prospect such as payback models, use cases and template presentations can be both valuable and appreciated.

Timing is important, so knowing when the solution to fix the “pain” must be implemented can drive the prospect’s sense of urgency to purchase and – *Why to Do It Now*.

**Why with us?**

Successful salespeople develop a competitive sales strategy beginning at prospect qualification, and then refining and adjusting through the Discovery stage. What are the issues and capabilities that your company has helped the prospect uncover and how do you prove the ability to deliver? Are they unique and important to the prospect? Can or how will the competition respond?

Often the evaluation team will meet many days or weeks after all the vendor presentations. Summarizing the issues, the capabilities you offered and how these were received by the team is key. Communicating to all of the committee members could be your last opportunity to stand apart. Whenever possible, these messages should be personalized.

As a Sales Manager, is it important to have your team act professionally, staying aligned throughout with the prospect’s buying process and possibly added value as it has progressed? Remember, as the point of vendor selection nears, the buyer’s sense of risk rises. How you understand and respond to this state through direct communication may be the deciding factor amongst the prospects choices.

**Summary**

During the life cycle of any complex sales opportunity it is sometimes difficult for a salesperson to effectively manage the abundance of information, questions, insights and tactics. Regularly review each opportunity with these three questions as a guide and honestly explore the answers. This disciplined approach will provide the salesperson and sales manager the insights to adjust the strategy in a timely way and make the win more likely. In addition, training your sales team to crisply communicate opportunity status to executives within your company via these three questions will both be appreciated and demonstrate your team’s competence and professionalism.

John Moroney is an energetic operations and sales management consultant with over 30 years of experience in high technology products and services with a particular passion for sales process design, deployment and improvement. Increasing productivity, driving revenues with a focus on execution, John brings his clients practical and creative solutions that provide both short and long term value. He is a principal with Sales Science and an Associate Partner with Acumen Management Group, a business and strategic sales management consulting firm .

You can reach him at [johnjmoroney@salesscience.biz](mailto:JohnM@AcumenMgmt.com) or LinkedIn: [John J Moroney](https://www.linkedin.com/in/john-j-moroney-3420b63?trk=hp-identity-name)     651-402-4342