

Winning the Big Deal.

It's a big deal. You've been working on it for months. There were plenty of meetings, presentations, demonstrations, proposals negotiations. You are absolutely convinced that your company's solution is the best of the bunch. Indeed you were informed that you made the short list of two and a final decision is imminent. In fact the decision making team met this week to select the winner. It's Friday afternoon around 3:45 PM. The phone rings. This is it. On the other end is the self-proclaimed "Decision Maker". Strangely enough it is not your "champion" with whom you were conversing almost daily for weeks now. Your heart is pumping. It's a big deal. You can hardly wait for the "Thank-you" and "We appreciate your efforts" to subside. Your fist is clenched ready to hit the air in triumph. Then you hear the dreaded word: "However". "However, as high as your company scored on our evaluation matrix it was still just a hair short. For us it was a hard decision but we selected your competitor." Thanks again and hopefully we can do business in the future." Your office went dark all of a sudden and it is spinning. There goes the weekend and months of relentless work. At 3:55 PM your competitor received a call from the same destination. They are now celebrating having won the big deal. What went wrong?

If you are a B2B sales professional and you never encountered this scenario during your sales career, you must either be "superman" or your career has just begun. We've all been there once or more in our career. A rotten weekend later you dust yourself off. You are a professional, you want to understand and learn what went wrong? What you could or should have done differently and how to avoid this nightmarish scenario in future sales campaigns. It's hard to be objective and it's hard not to take it personally but both must be done. A little time goes by and it is time for a detailed loss review. You replay the entire sales cycle, you debrief your "champion" if in fact he or she are not too embarrassed to talk to you, you may even ask for a formal interview with the decision maker, he or she who called you on this dreaded Friday afternoon. Your gut tells you that the decision was not taken on the merit of the proposed solution which you are still convinced yours was superior both functionally and economically. It must have been a "political" decision, you are tempted to conclude. Well here is the bad news: most if not all decisions to award a competitive big deal are almost by definition – "political" and by political we don't infer any shenanigans, legally, morally or ethically. B2B sales, has forever and remains a people-to-people business where intuition, empathy, a strategic mind set and keen observation of human behaviour are the most important factors. Yes, features, benefits, solutions, ROIs are important, but at the end of the day it is people who score the evaluation matrix influenced by their own objective, subjective, personal and sometime emotional biases. Decision making processes are no longer top-down or bottoms-up but rather a collaborative multi-functional, multi-level effort involving multiple people of varying organizational ranks and disciplines with almost equal influence over the ultimate decision. Harmonizing the selling process with the buying process has proven to be the key success factor in winning big deals. However the key to that is the understanding that today's complex solutions require sellers to help buyers understand how to buy more than what to buy as new solutions at times render traditional buying experience irrelevant.

So what may have possibly gone wrong assuming all else in your solution was objectively equal to or better than that of your competitor?

Most win/loss reports aimed at digging into the real reasons (rather than the ones officially stated by the buyer) for the loss invariably come up with one or more of the following and unfortunately common mistakes:

- Failure to identify all of the key Issues and concerns of the entire decision making team;
- Neglecting to accurately and objectively assess your positioning relative to other competitors;
- Reluctance to influence the buying criteria so as to value strengths and neutralize weaknesses;
- Over reliance on an inside “champions” ability to influence the buying decision in your favour;
- Failure to garner wide organizational support for the solution outside the decision making team;
- Failure to integrate the solution with the organization’s workflow so as to minimize disruption;

“Winning the Big Deal” is a consulting product created to empower sales professionals to eliminate these common errors as early as possible in the sales cycle and focusing on sales activities that would result in influencing the decision making process in their favour. The methodology utilized involves a series of facilitated analysis sessions with the entire sales team led by a Sales Effectiveness expert resulting in an accurate mapping, in graphic representation, of the decision making process, the competitive positioning and the ultimate win scenario.

The sessions are focused on current and actual sales campaigns in the post qualification phases of the sales cycle. Each session results in specific sales related activities that are designed to improve and advance the seller’s odds of “Winning the Big Deal” while the decision making process is still in play.