



## **Why Prospects Stop Talking to You**

What is your most recent example of a decision that seems to be stalled and the prospect has stopped talking to you? Do you know why it was stalled? Did the prospect tell you why it was stalled? Probably not. If we have done a good job in the pre-sale environment, prospects end up liking us and generally don't want to hurt us. They particularly don't like to deliver "bad news" to us. If they are not ready to make a decision or are favoring a competitor, they can go "mute" or into a stall mode.

Think about your forecast. How much of your pipeline is in a "stalled" mode? If you are like most, it is easily between 30% and 50%. Wouldn't it be great if you could reduce the number of these decisions? To do this, you must understand the cause. Here are the five most common reasons a prospect stops talking to you:

1. Lack of connection to a critical business issue. If you haven't determined how your solution will help them improve profit, reduce costs or provide improved customer service, you can expect a stall. Unless your discovery process identifies, and has the prospect agree upon, major inefficiencies in their operations that your solution will be able to remove, expect a stall. Senior executives only spend/invest in areas that have the potential to positively impact their business. By asking appropriate questions you can learn why the prospect has gone "mute". Why can't you solve this issue with inside resources? What is the real value of this solution? Why are those problems important to you? Who else is affected by these issues? Why would that matter to you or any other executive?
2. Lack of perceived value. While closely related to the first reason, value is different enough to stand. Once you have found the critical business issue, you have to establish the value of improving it in the prospect's mind. Most people can really only juggle five or six critical issues at a time. We all live with problems that we don't need to solve today. It is no different in a business. Resources are only applied to the issues offering the greatest payback. Can your prospect articulate the "value" or impact of addressing the business issue? If your solution, from their perspective, doesn't have enough value to get in their top five or six, you get stalled or put on the back burner. Perception is reality. If your prospect doesn't perceive the value of your solution, you are probably in a stall and have more work to do. Ask the prospect to quantify the impact of resolving the business issue. And better yet, how will the solution impact them personally.

3. Decision authority. It is important to ask: Has the person you're in contact with made this type of decision before? When and how? Triangulate your information by asking these same questions to multiple people in the organization in order to find out who really has the decision making power in the organization.
4. Risk. Over the course of a sell cycle, risk moves up in importance in every prospect's mind. Selecting a new vendor or a new solution involves risk. The prospect's perception of risk can span issues like lost time or money, or personal ramifications like career or reputation. As a prospect gets closer to making a decision, the risk becomes greater in his/her mind. Common tools for alleviating risk include happy references, trial programs, demonstrating credibility with iron clad implementation plans, guarantees and your executive backing.