

A Clear Plan

This article is a simple piece of advice to add clarity and confidence to your sales and stop you working hard for a sale; doing well and seeing the opportunity peter out.

The reason this situation occurs is because you can have a very good conversation with a prospective customer, be that over the telephone or face-to-face, get along well with them having built rapport, introduced your company fully and piqued their interest, only to leave the next step as a bit of an uncertainty. All too often sales people are 'waiting to hear back' from those customers as they might have a requirement, 'sometime soon'.

If a sale cannot be achieved at a particular point, you need to lay out a clear plan with the customer as to what will happen next. You both need to be fully aware of the next step and likely requirements in order for you, the sales person, to achieve your goal without simply putting the customer down for a follow up call every month to get a 'yes or no' answer. If there is a level of interest but the requirement is not immediate, detail the following and you will be able to follow up much more effectively, by annoying your customer less and increasing the likelihood of closing that deal:

What will happen next – sales person to send a quote, wait for a call, another meeting involved other decision makers...

How – by phone, letter email, where for meeting?

When – diarise the next phase when you have your customer in front of you or on the phone, getting that commitment is key.

When is the requirement likely to be - as specifically as possible (if it's in six months time you don't need to call every month!)

What are the customer's other options – who else are they getting quotes from, how likely are you to be chosen for that piece of work?

Your customer is able to express their preference to each of these, don't just decide for them but encourage them to make a decision on each aspect so that you are both singing from the same hymn sheet. Smile and shake hands, they might not have *bought* just yet but they have agreed with you as to what will happen.

The very best sales people are those who can *make things happen*. By following these steps you are ensuring that you are doing your utmost to move things in the right direction and secure the business ahead of the signing of any contracts. Months of waiting around only to miss out can now be avoided!