



## Do You Know Why Someone Will Buy from You?

by

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**A** while back I was sitting in on a simulated loss review for a large strategic sales opportunity. For those of you who may not be familiar with this process, a simulated loss review is conducted towards the end of the sales process – usually immediately prior to the submission of the proposal or presentation of the offering. Essentially, the selling team gets together and projects themselves into the future to a specific date immediately after the prospect has made their decision to either buy from us or take an alternate route – perhaps to go with a competitive offering, to delay, to do nothing, or do something internally within their organization.

**T**he objective of this process is to pretend that you have lost the business, and then try to understand the most likely reasons for such a loss and carefully examine all the aspects of the sale that could have been done differently. Hopefully, and most importantly, it is then not too late to change the selling approach to prevent the envisioned loss. This is much easier of course if you're pals with Michael J. Fox, own a heavily modified DeLorean sports car, and hang out with a wacko professor who is into flux capacitors and cold fusion. However in your real world - assuming that your parents were able to meet without your help – a good way to insure that your prospect will indeed buy from you is to run this exercise.

**I**n this particular instance we were competing once again with IBM. The session had been going well for several hours but then a startling and unsettling discovery was made when we simulated a phone call from Bill, the prospective client, to Jessica, the account manager for our team and it went something like this.

“Hi Jessica, it’s Bill. As you know we met with our steering committee yesterday to look at your proposal and make a decision on which way to go. Unfortunately I don’t have good news for you but I wanted to share this with you personally. We have decided to go with IBM and I will be informing them of our decision over lunch today. I wanted to thank you and your team for all the work putting your proposal together for us and we really appreciate the time you took to understand our needs. I would look forward to getting together with you in the future and wish you continued success in your career.”



**O**uch! This won't work - this is not what Jessica wanted to hear. She's thinking, "Bill, if you're really concerned about my successful career, you'll give us this business!" Panic strikes, but it's not lunchtime yet – maybe there is still a chance. He'll listen – we've both invested significantly in this relationship over the past six months. But we also know we'll only have a few minutes to make our point. What do we say?

**A**t this point we stumbled. We had lots of detail, lots of information, and were confident that we were presenting a better solution for the business. But how do you nail all that down in 60 seconds? We realized that we had become so caught up in the details, dealing with so many trees that we lost sight of the big (blue?) forest right in front of our eyes. We could not say – in simple and straightforward language – why they should buy from us.

**W**ell, we sent out for pizza and lots of midnight oil and stayed in that meeting room until late that evening. We went back through all of our research and information to formulate a clear and compelling reason why they should buy from us over any alternative. We then condensed, edited and polished that information so that we could express it in not only a few words, but just as importantly, in *their* words. From that point forward, we ensured that all of our proposals and presentations included this compelling "reason to buy" - our *value proposition* - in a very clear and concise manner.

**J**essica never did get that phone call and we did win the business.

**Remember...**

**If you don't know why the prospect would buy from you,  
don't expect them to know.**

From Martyn Lewis' upcoming book "Sales Wise - an anthology of selling stories, follies, and fables", each with a *relevant* and *timely* sales message. To be published later in 2003. If you wish to be notified of publication date please email us at [saleswise@market-partners.com](mailto:saleswise@market-partners.com)