



Tidal Patterns

In my early days of sales management, I remember that my office was quite close to the main entrance of the sales department. And, if I was in my office, most of my sales people would stick their head around the door on the way in or out of the office. So, whether I wanted them or not, I would get the latest headlines from their current selling escapades.

Monday:

- ❖ *“Great news on the TekSnarf contract - looks like it’s going to be signed later this week”.*
- ❖ *“The RFP for AlphaB is due out next week”.*

Tuesday:

- ❖ *“Bad news, boss – remember that opportunity at BuyMor? Looks like there’s a big re-org and the project is toast”.*

Wednesday:

- ❖ *“The PO for ABC needs the board’s approval and is going to be delayed six weeks”.*
- ❖ *“TekSnarf next week, for sure, now”.*

Thursday:

- ❖ *“Great news, the BuyMor project is going to be twice the size we thought it was”.*
- ❖ *“Hey wait a minute”, I say – “wasn’t that the project that you said was going to be cancelled on Tuesday”?*
- ❖ *“Oh”, says the Rep, somewhat sheepishly, “that re-org didn’t impact the group we are working with”.*



I call this syndrome “tidal patterns”. Much like the tide coming in and going out; most sales situations move in and out, go up and down. On a tactical level there are always changes and new information regarding any situation. And, if you react to each fluctuation in isolation, you could be in for a roller-coaster ride.

It would be all too easy to hear about a re-organization and adopt a “sky is falling” approach. Often those re-organizations are delayed, or have far less impact than originally thought. Conversely, it is easy to get blind-sided if you haven’t done your homework and get nailed with an “out-of-the-blue” major shift in your prospect’s internal setup.

PO’s, RFP’s, contracts, and other “heavy paper” needing high-up decision-making and approvals are often delayed. It also never fails to amaze how these decisions rarely run to *our* timeframes.

Indeed, we could get major whiplash if we reacted in knee-jerk fashion to all the information we hear - and should be listening out for - especially in today’s business world. We need to smooth out the tidal patterns; we need to resist reacting to each wave. We have to take a more strategic approach.

Key in the sales role is gaining and evaluating new information. Each new tidbit of information could be a gold nugget or just as easily a red herring. In order to determine what’s gold, we need to verify the information we receive and put everything into the wider context of our selling strategy. Once we have verified new information we can then ask the following questions.

- Does this significantly change our understanding of the prospects/customers requirements?
- Does this change the value of our offering to the organization?
- Does this change how we should be developing our sales campaign?

If the answer to any of these three questions is yes, we need to re-evaluate our overall approach, re-qualify the opportunity, and modify our sales strategy accordingly.

Resist the temptation to react to new information – don’t get caught in the tidal patterns. Verify and evaluate each new development, and revise the sales strategy as required.

From Martyn Lewis' upcoming book “Sales Wise - an anthology of selling stories, follies, and fables”, each with a *relevant* and *timely* sales message.

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