

Sales Management: How to Stop Wasting Expensive Technical Resources

by Alan Rigg

Do your salespeople have unlimited access to your company's technical resources? Do they take technical experts with them to first meetings with prospects? Does your management team make **conscious decisions** to allocate technical resources to opportunities, or do salespeople make those decisions on their own?

How often does this happen?

An excited salesperson contacts his or her sales manager and alerts them to a new opportunity. The sales manager assigns a technical expert to visit the prospect with the salesperson. The salesperson and the technical expert drive (or fly) to the prospect's location and spend days or weeks analyzing the prospect's situation. They perform product demonstrations and evaluations. Eventually they prepare a detailed proposal and deliver it to the prospect.

Unfortunately, the deal never closes...

The opportunity languishes in the salesperson's pipeline for many months and is eventually deleted. Even more unfortunate, **all of the time and money** your company invested to pursue the opportunity (salesperson and technical expert salaries, travel and entertainment expenses, product demonstration and evaluation costs, proposal preparation costs, etc.) **was completely wasted**.

If you want to minimize wasted technical resources, hold your salespeople **accountable** for collecting specific information **prior** to allocating expensive technical experts to assist them with their opportunities. At minimum this should include requiring your salespeople to provide reasonably detailed answers to the following questions:

- What **business problems** does the prospect have?
- What is the **impact** of these business problems on the prospect's business?
- Can the impact of the business problems be **quantified**?
- How does the quantified impact **compare** to the (estimated) cost of solving the business problems?
- Is this quantified impact substantial enough to justify the **prospect** investing time and resources to pursue a sales cycle?
- Is the prospect **worthy** of time and resource investments by your company to pursue a sales cycle? For example:
 - Are they **credit worthy**?
 - Do they have a **budget** they can allocate to solving the business problems?
 - Have all key **decision makers and influencers** been identified?
 - Has the **information** the decision makers need to have to enable them to make a buying decision been identified?
 - Does the prospect **take proposals out to bid**? If they do, what benefit will your company receive for designing a solution?

Armed with this information, you will be prepared to make **CONSCIOUS** resource allocation decisions

This will enable you to focus your expensive technical resources on **qualified** opportunities, maximizing your company's return on time and resources invested. Plus, rather than acting as a crutch to help your salespeople perform initial opportunity qualification, your technical experts will be able to focus on working with prospect companies' technical experts to troubleshoot business problems, determine root causes, and identify potential solutions.

Other benefits can include reduced product and service training costs and increased size and quality of your company's sales opportunity pipeline

How? If your salespeople become experts in **finding** and **qualifying** opportunities, as well as **leveraging expert resources** to help them convert opportunities into sales, it will take less time for them to learn what they need to know to prospect effectively. Plus, if they focus the bulk of their time on finding and qualifying opportunities, they will source more qualified opportunities!

In summary, if you want to maximize your company's return on technical resource investments, hold your salespeople **accountable** for collecting specific information prior to allocating expensive technical experts to assist them with opportunities. Then, make **conscious** technical resource allocation decisions. You should see immediate and significant improvements in your sales expense and sales opportunity close rates!