

## **Creating Urgency in the Sales Cycle**

*By Brian Geery and Sally Sweeney*

Urgency – what does this word mean? Has it been removed from the dictionary? It seems like every sale requires more time to close, every prospect’s budget is diminished or gone, every forecast slips and everyone is saying the same thing... ‘This economy is tough!’

So what can we do to close more sales today? What follows are strategies for helping your prospective customers to develop a sense of urgency to buy your products or services, *even in a sluggish economy.*

Let’s explore two types of urgency:

1. Company based
2. Customer based

### *Developing Company Based Urgency*

Company based urgency is the more commonly used urgency creating strategy. In order to get a sale to close this month instead of next month, salespeople will ask their prospective customers to, “*Buy now...*

...because the price is going up

...you will get a discount

...we’ll include training at no additional charge

...because, in order to meet the go-live date, we have to begin the installation.”

Sometimes developing company based urgency helps close the sale. However, by combining company based urgency *and* customer based urgency and your sales will close even faster.

### *Developing Customer Based Urgency*

Customer based urgency is found in the *reason* a prospective customer is interested in your products or services. During the first interaction with your prospect you must ask:

“What causes you to have an interest in our product or service?”

Top performing salespeople listen carefully to the answer. Clarification is often necessary. A common follow-up question may sound like, “Why now, verses, say, six months ago or six months from now?” This is when you begin to understand your customer’s sense of urgency.

### *The Importance of Customer Based Urgency*

Ideally, you want to create both customer based *and* company based urgency. Too often salespeople only focus on creating a company based sense of urgency. Developing

customer based urgency will help you close more sales, faster, because prospective customers are more likely to buy when there is significant negative consequence to them, personally, if they do not buy. The answers you hear from your questions about why a prospective customer is interested *at this point in time* will be your clues for creating a customer based sense of urgency

Sometimes a prospective customer will have a critical reason for buying now. The consequence of not solving their business problem within a specific timeframe will be evident and the sale tends to close faster. Examples of this 'customer based urgency' include:

- They have to move to another location by a certain date
- An existing contract expires
- Additional employees have been hired

Other times you will have to help 'develop' the consequence of not solving whatever business problem caused them to have an interest in the first place.

- A technical services company may have to help Technology Officers develop the consequence of not having a maintenance agreement.
- A molecular modeling software company may have to help Scientists develop their understanding of the consequence of missing a new development initiative.
- A disk drive company may have to help Systems Engineers develop the consequence of keeping their inferior disk drives.
- A software tools company may have to help Project Managers develop the consequence that protracted programming has on budget and completion dates.

The 'consequence' is the negative impact their problems (reasons for interest) have on time, money, personal aggravation or business growth if they do not own your products or services. The more you help your prospective customer understand these consequences, the more likely they will buy sooner than later!

### *Maintaining Momentum in the Buying Process*

Help your prospective customer articulate their customer based sense of urgency by asking questions about the negative consequence on time, money, personal aggravation or business growth if they do not buy *within a specific timeframe*. Then, close every interaction with your prospective customer by gaining agreement on the physical action they will take to continue through their buying process as well as the date on which this action will be taken.

Company based urgency + customer based urgency = close more sales, faster!

## **About the Authors**

### **Sally Sweeney, Managing Partner, Quota, Inc.**

A proven top performing sales professional, Sally knows what it takes to build a solid team of top performing technology sales professionals. As a sales professional, before founding Quota, Inc., Sally earned numerous top performer awards, consecutive President's club trips and regularly brought in sales above quota.

During her more than ten years in sales and sales management positions, Sally developed a successful track record in driving the sales of intangible services and enterprise wide software.

In the recruiting field, contract, contingency and executive search work all fall under Sally's repertoire. She has helped fill positions that included administrators, technologists, service representatives and executives. Through this experience, Sally found her passion – building technology sales teams. Sally has followed her passion and placed innumerable quota achieving sales professionals.

Sally is an avid student of sales strategies. In addition to being trained in the most popular sales methodologies, Sally stays current on new literature and trends in the profession of selling.

An enthusiast for matching people to companies, Sally is the coauthor of *Buy Me, I'm Worth It*, a book that enables job seekers to apply sales and marketing principles to their job search.

As the leader of the recruiting team at Quota, Inc., Sally ensures clients and candidates receive unparalleled service. Her team goal is to enable clients to expeditiously hire technology sales professionals who will achieve or exceed their quota, quarter after quarter *and* help create a dynamic and cohesive corporate culture.

### **Brian Geery, Senior Partner, Quota, Inc.**

Brian knows what it takes to build world-class sales organizations. He began consulting with technology companies in 1991 and has since worked with some of the most explosive growth technology companies to structure and develop their sales organizations.

Brian consulted with Cambridge Technology Partners when their annual revenues were \$20 million with 125 employees – when revenues topped \$580 million and with 3,500+ employees, CTP was acquired by Novell in 2001. He has consulted on sales strategy with CEOs or Sales Executives at Intel, HP Invent, Nortel Networks, Thomson Investment Software and over 100 other companies.

Before joining Quota, Inc., Brian was hitting his numbers for 15 years as a salesperson, sales manager and branch manager at three 'underdog' technology companies – now they are top dogs.

Brian's strategies for sales success have appeared in numerous publications, including the Wall Street Journal and regular appearances in Sales and Marketing Management Magazine. Brian has appeared on radio and television and has been a featured speaker at business conferences throughout the country including Inc. World, The International Quality and Productivity Conference and MIT.

Brian is former founder and president of the Sales and Marketing Toastmasters Association and former vice president of the Sales and Marketing Executives Association.