

What's stopping you from closing all of the sales you should be closing?

How do you know that your buyers are ready, willing, and able to make a change now?

Being a professional seller with a great, fairly priced product, doesn't cause clients to buy, or you would have closed all of the prospects you've tried to sell.

HOW BUYERS BUY

CONCEPT:

A closed sale is comprised of two equally important sets of decisions: the buying decision, and the product- or solution-placement decision. Until now, sales has only addressed the needs-assessment and product- or solution-placement end. But until a buyer recognizes all of the unique internal decisions – both obvious and concealed, and certainly concealed from an outsider – that must be made for buy-in to occur, no sale will happen.

Unfortunately, buyers don't complete their process of managing their stakeholder's unique decision criteria until they have already begun searching for a solution. The length of time it takes buyers to manage this decision process is the length of the sales cycle.

It's now possible to have the buyer start the process of recognizing and managing their stakeholder's buy-in requirements before spending time and effort assessing needs or introducing product. Buying Facilitation, used at the front end of the sales cycle, will thereby shorten your sales cycle, help buyers manage hidden or difficult internal issues that have created the problems they now face, and put you on their decision team as a result of the high level help you've offered.

EXAMPLE:

A global bank agreed to a multi million dollar software solution from my client, a well-branded consulting company. The implementation hadn't move forward for two years, costing the bank one billion dollars in lost revenue. My client had been doing small projects peripheral to the large implementation and met regularly with many of the "C" level execs. They knew the project scope, outcomes, necessary technology, user requirements, and were buddies with the management,

user groups, etc. But nothing was happening.

I was hired to call the bank's CEO. It became apparent, within 15 minutes, that the bank had a 4 year history of problematic relationships with one of the union reps left over from the previous CEO and until that was resolved, nothing would happen. My client had only needed to ask two Facilitative Questions – before submitting a bid, before understanding the specific needs - to have uncovered the problem:

Facilitative Questions: What has stopped you from managing this problem years ago? And what would need to happen now for you to be able to factor in a solution and move forward?

The decision team met with the union reps two weeks later, and my client started the project within two months.

TAKE AWAY:

1. The buyer (all 'C' execs) didn't do a 360 assessment and took the lead of the CEO around the delays, which all seemed reasonable (initiatives, budgets, etc).
2. Although the seller understood the client's Identified Problem, and had the relationships, solution, and agreement, they couldn't move forward until an historic, hidden issue was managed.
3. There was no way for the sales model to get to this hidden problem, as it lay well outside the purview of the Identified Problem. The questioning sequence in Buying Facilitation would have unearthed this issue on the first call, saving both groups money and time.



WHAT IS BUYING FACILITATION?

- a sequenced questioning system, using Facilitative Questions, that sellers use to lead buyers through their internal, unique system of policies, people, and politics to enlist stakeholders in making efficient purchasing decisions.

How does it work? Facilitative Questions lead buyers through sequential decision points to help them manage the hidden issues necessary for buy-in to occur to resolve their Identified Problem: includes historic problems and decisions, current vendor and internal relationship issues, strategic initiatives and alliances, decision team member's criteria, and historic choice points.

Not product- or solution-based, but works with sales to manage the parts of the sales cycle – the buyer's decisioning – that have been hidden until now. Works

in conjunction with product- and solution-based selling models to shorten the buying cycle.

Where can it be used? As a decision support tool rather than a problem-solving/product placement method, it is used from the first call through the entire sales cycle, for any size product, in any industry, for B2B sales as well as retail. Used iteratively throughout length of sale.

Who has used Buying Facilitation successfully? KPMG (Tax Minimization Team), Morgan Stanley (Retail Brokers), Clinique (Counter Sales), Intuit (Call Center), Wachovia Bank (Small Business Bankers), IBM (Software Sales, Account Management), HP (Meeting Management), BOSE (Customer Care), Pioneer HiBred (Direct Seed Sales in Field), California Closets (Designers Worldwide), Kaiser (Insurance Brokers).

HOW DOES BUYING FACILITATION DIFFER FROM CONVENTIONAL SALES?

PROBLEM 1: Buyers must manage the obligatory internal political, policy, and people decisions. With conventional or consultative sales, sellers remain outside of the unique decision making processes which buyers must manage to get buy-in for a purchase.

Sales: a needs-assessment, problem-solving, product placement model, biased toward matching perceived needs to product capability.

Buying Facilitation: a decision facilitation tool used in conjunction with sales to guide the buyer through all of the internal elements that must be addressed for consensus to occur among stakeholders.

FACILITATIVE QUESTION: **How would you and your decision team know when it was time to add a new vendor to the one you're currently using?**

PROBLEM 2: Buyers have a much larger problem than solving the tip of the iceberg that shows up as the Identified Problem: they must get agreement from the elements that have created this problem through time. Until they do, they will delay the sales cycle.

Sales: based on buyers choosing their best solution to

solve their Identified Problem.

Buying Facilitation: based on systems thinking and the structure of how decisions get made; manages the fear of disruption and change.

FACILITATIVE QUESTION: **What has stopped you from fixing that until now?**

PROBLEM 3: Sellers are outsiders and have not been able to enter the buyer's unique system to effect change, relegated merely to helping manage the problem resolution from the product/solution/service end.

Sales: manages problem-solving, needs assessment, and solution choice.

Buying Facilitation: facilitates buyers in recognizing, managing, and reconfiguring the historic internal decisions so change can happen.

FACILITATIVE QUESTION: **What would you and your decision team need to consider to ensure that the stakeholders and policies that created the Identified Problem would be willing to get on board with new choices you might make?**



VALUE PROPOSITION OF BUYING FACILITATION

LIMITATIONS OF CONVENTIONAL SELLING:

- Buyers can't buy until they get buy-in from internal systems elements (people, policies, politics). A seller can never comprehend the full range of hidden issues - separate from actual problem resolution - that buyers must manage before they can buy.
- The length of time it takes buyers to come up with their own answers is the length of the sales cycle. Assessing needs and introducing product at the wrong time delays, and threatens, the sale.
- The sales model manages the product sale. The actual unique progression of buying decision factors has been hidden, often from buyers, until they begin to move through the process of change.
- Understanding needs does not close a sale.
- The Identified Problem would have been resolved already if the buyer knew how to make the necessary decisions and enlist the necessary stakeholders.
- Buyers want to resolve a business problem, not purchase a product.

FUNCTIONS OF BUYING FACILITATION:

- Sellers become Neutral Navigators to guide buyers through their buy-in issues toward internal consent, enabling sales to close in a fraction of the time.
- Directs a path through potential disruption issues, clearing the path for a purchase and including seller on decision team from the first call.
- Stops wasting time on: buyers who won't buy; long sales cycles; unnecessary travel; superfluous proposals, costly presentations.
- Useful in negotiating contracts; implementation; differentiating from competitors; cold calls; prospecting/qualifying; customer service; needs assessment/analysis; all buyer communication; closing; stimulating needs; involving stakeholders early.

RESULTS:

- 200-600% PROVEN INCREASE over conventional results due to:
 - * sales close in half the time as buyers recognize and manage decision issues quickly.
 - * time recovery when viable buyers and tirekickers discovered on first call;
 - * expensive presentations no longer necessary;
 - * only visit prospects when they invite you and entire decision team present on first contact;
 - * respond only to winnable RFPs (or get invitation to design RFP);
 - * collaboratively decide how to remain connected and help at each stage of buying decision.
 - * discovery of stakeholders and their unique criteria issues early in process;
 - * save money and time on unnecessary travel;
 - * teach distributors to choose your solution over other similar solution providers;
 - * diminish price criteria when stakeholders select you as Relationship Manager prior to price discussions.
- PRODUCT DIFFERENTIATION: Facilitative Questions indicate a true Relationship Manager and Trusted Advisor. **Facilitative Questions such as: How would you know how to choose my product over the competition when they all look so similar? What has stopped you from solving this until now?**
- FINDS PROSPECTS WITHOUT AWARENESS OF NEED: **Facilitative Questions such as: How would you know when it was time to add a new X to the one you are currently using? Or At what point would you know it was time to reconsider X and possibly add new capability to what you're already doing?**

Sharon Drew Morgen is the visionary author of New York Times Best-seller Selling with Integrity, five other books and over 600 articles on The Morgen Buying Facilitation Method®, a wholly original decision facilitation model that works with sales to support the buyer's decisions. Morgen is a consultant, speaker, and trainer. She can be reached at: sdm@austin.rr.com

