

The Buyer's Playbook



Commoditization, Compressed Selling Time and Consensus Decision Making. They are the Three Deadly Cs. And they've completely killed selling as you've known it. Understanding the buyer's playbook can make all of the difference now.

[Click the first lesson below or Start above to begin.](#)



INTRODUCTION



THE 3 DEADLY Cs



THE THREE PHASES OF THE BUYER'S JOURNEY



MOMENTS OF TRUTH



THE PRIORITY PHASE



THE PLANNING PHASE



THE PROCUREMENT PHASE

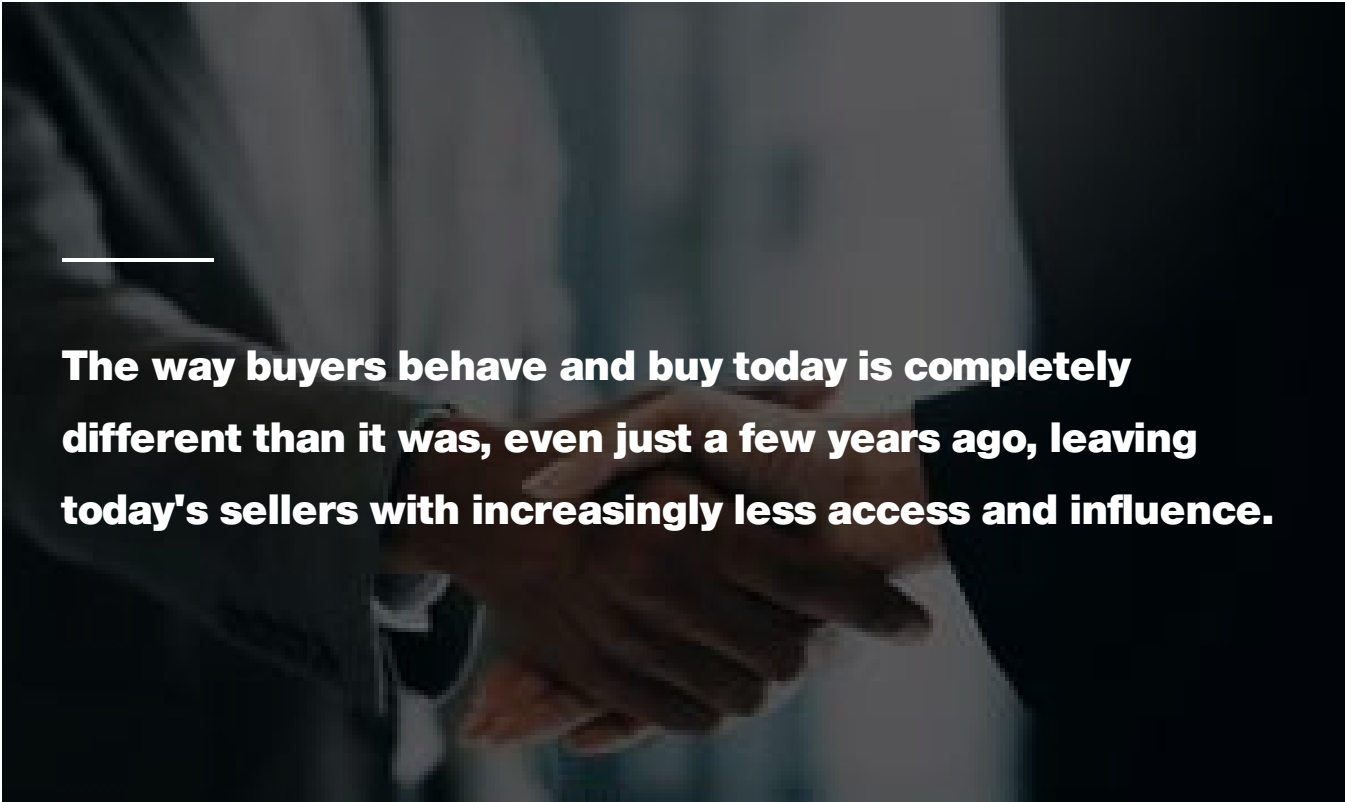


KNOWLEDGE CHECK



SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION



The way buyers behave and buy today is completely different than it was, even just a few years ago, leaving today's sellers with increasingly less access and influence.

You'd think that sellers would have changed the way they sold, to keep up. They haven't. How you sell, who you sell to and who you staff, it's all been upended by the **Three Deadly Cs**: Commoditization, Compressed Selling Time, and Consensus Decision Making.

In this course, you'll learn:

- **The Three Deadly Cs** of modern sales and why they're harmful to your success
- The phases of the buyer's journey from unaware to convinced and closed
- How moments of truth live within different phases in the buyer's journey
- How to optimize your success at each stage of that journey



CONTINUE

THE 3 DEADLY Cs

A hand is shown reaching out of a body of dark water. The background is a solid dark red color. The hand is positioned in the center-right of the frame, with fingers spread. The water surface is visible with some ripples.

Since the advent of the internet, three new pressures have been put on sellers ...



... the **Three Deadly Cs**:

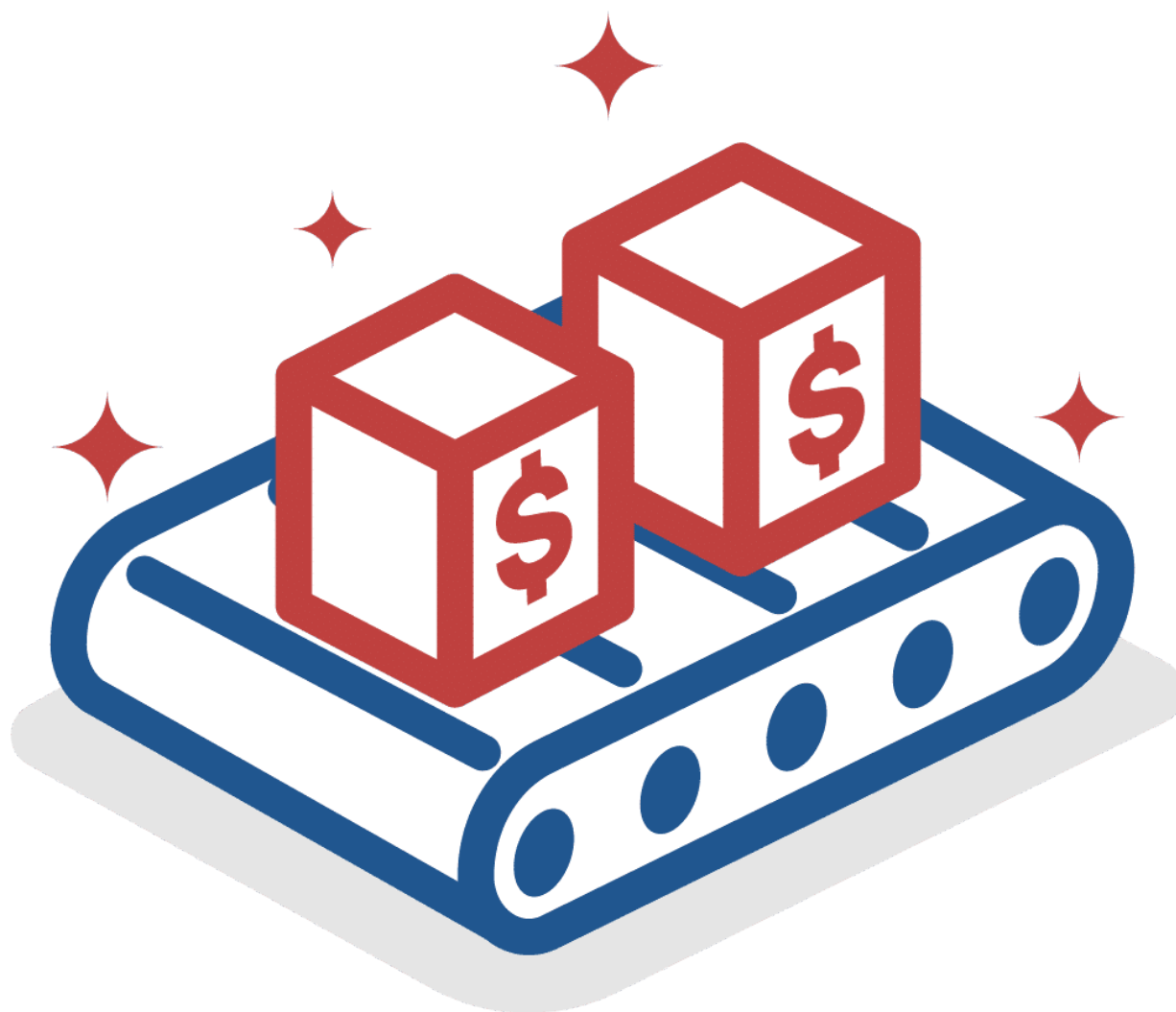
- **Commoditization**
- **Compressed Selling Time**
- **Consensus Decision Making**

LET'S EXPLORE EACH ONE

What is Commoditization?

Now that your prospect can search for you, they can also find every last one of your competitors. Most of the time, competitors are hard to tell apart because of the way they talk about themselves.

It doesn't help that search engines use their own language to find their results, so prospects tend to get exactly what they ask for. The more prospects read, the more difficult it is to tell you apart from your competition. *Suddenly, you're one in a bunch of very similar options--whether you actually are or not.*



Why is Commoditization deadly to sales?

If your prospects think they have many options, yet perceive that all of these options can solve their problem, then all of them are the same. If they're all the same, choosing on price seems like the best bet because it allows the brain to make the decision simple and keep it in the Primitive Brain (something we'll talk more about later this week).

CONTINUE

What is Compressed Selling Time?

Before the internet, the primary and best way for prospects to gather information was through sellers. This allowed sellers to have many touchpoints with their prospects and to know early on that their prospects were “in the market” for what they sold. The internet changed this--making human sellers “unnecessary” in the eyes of shopping prospects, or at least not until the very end of the journey, when prospects want to make a purchase.

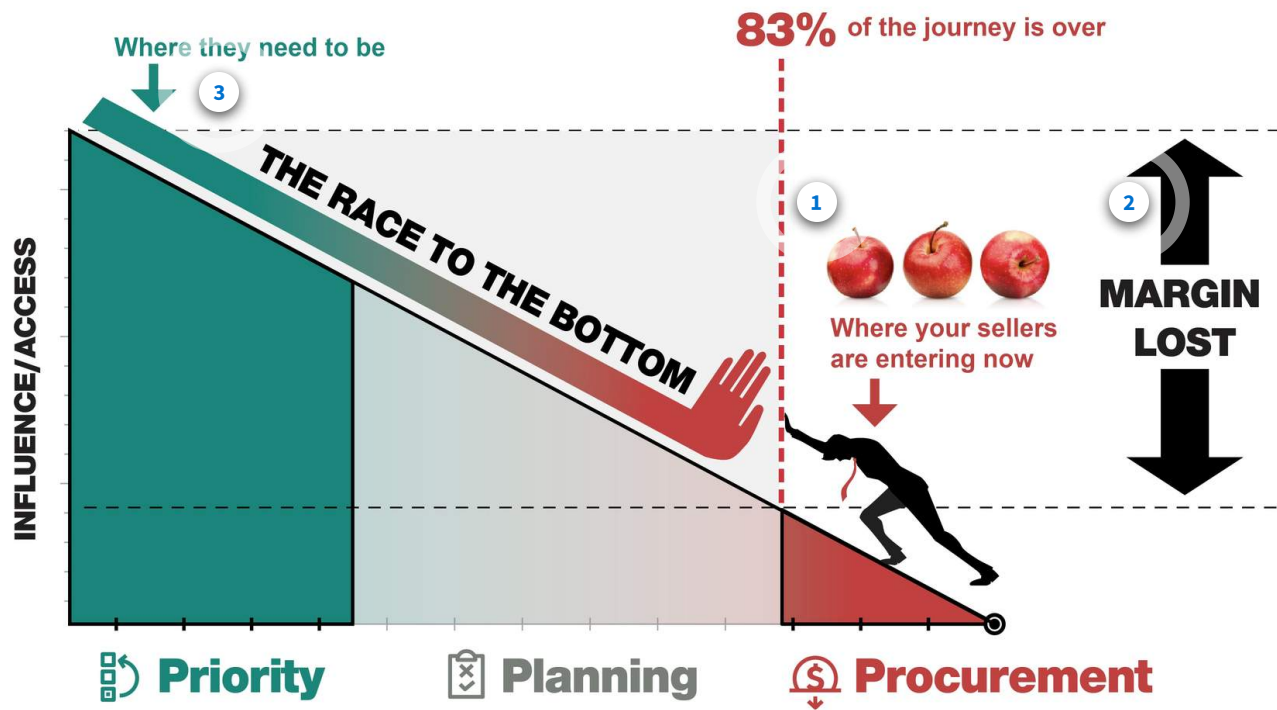
Today's buyer travels the majority of the sale without involving sellers, up to 83% of the journey in many B2B sales.

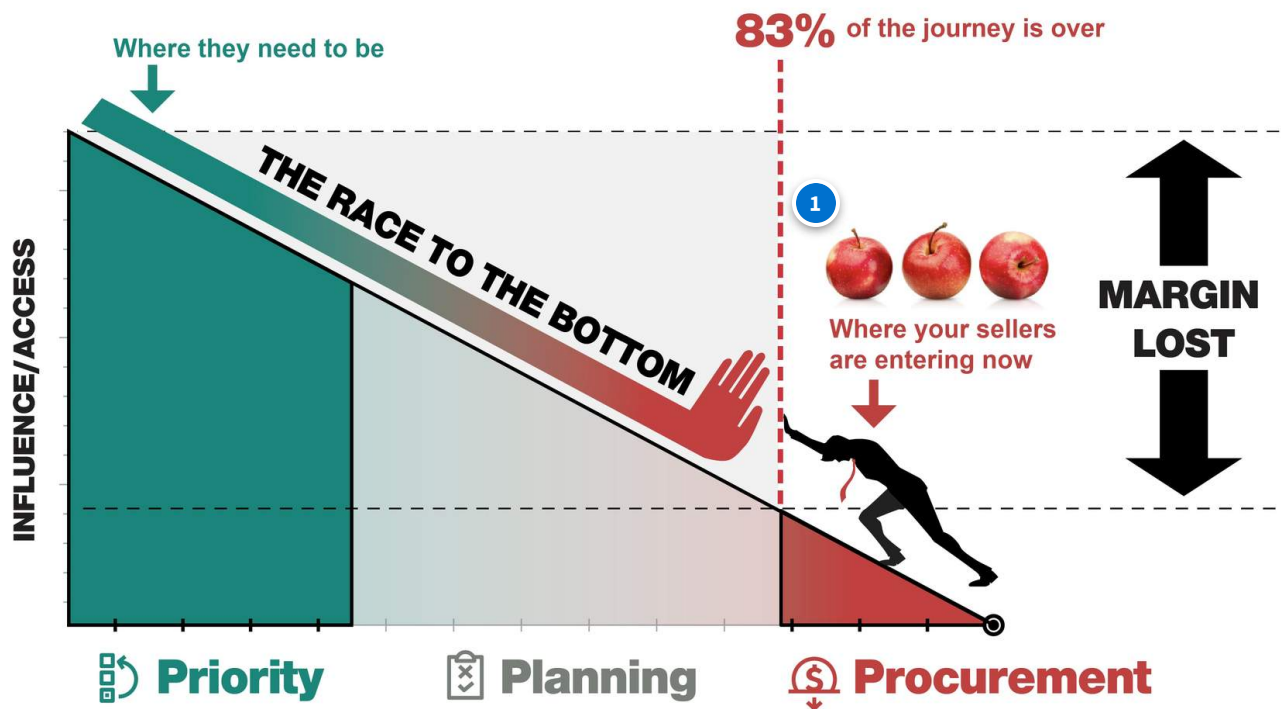


Time Out: The Race to the Bottom and What Sellers Need to Understand

This is what selling looks like right now: sellers entering low and late, when prospects are already shopping for solutions. You've experienced this in many ways: RFPs, web form submissions, etc.—all indicators that your prospect has thought about what they want and is looking for something to buy. When you're low and late, you are an apples-to-apples, same-to-same commodity to your prospects—unless you do something differently. (What should you do? Pursue the Priority Sale--but we'll get into the details of that later.)

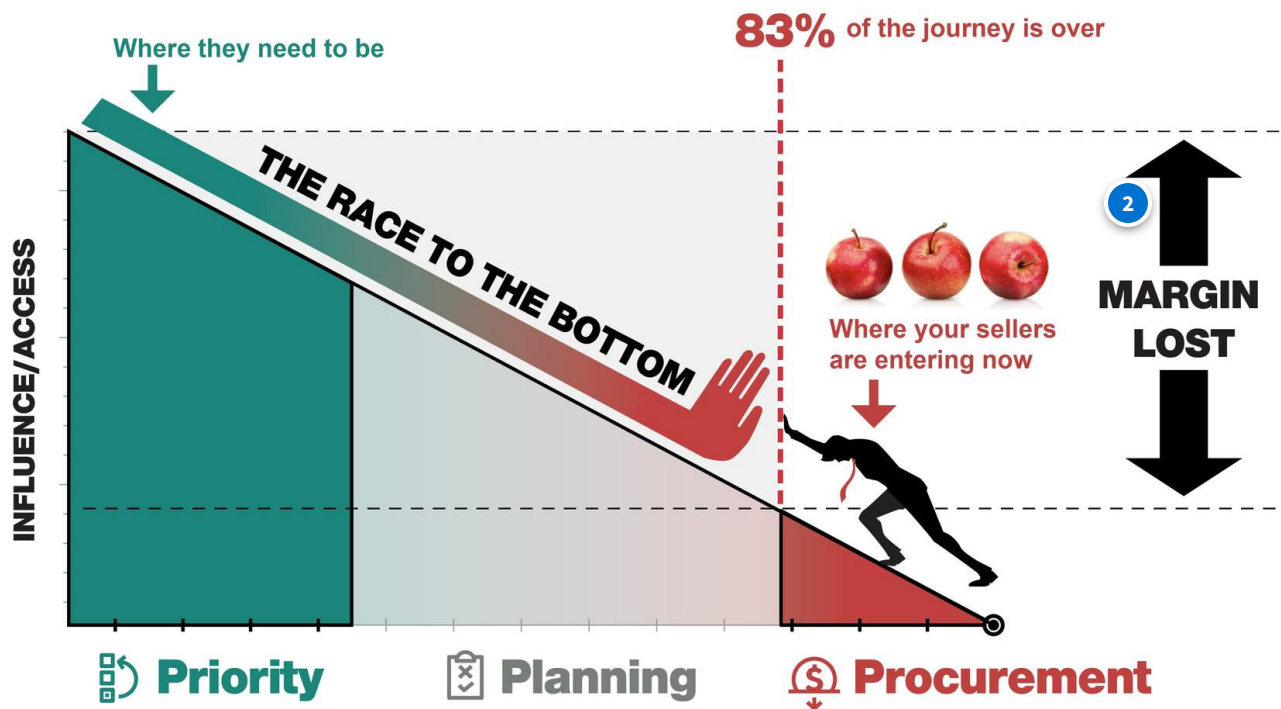
While the race to the bottom concept is not unique to The Priority Sale, how we use the reality of it to frame up what must be done in selling to counteract its effects, is. Starting with hotspot 1, [click each hotspot on the image below](#) to learn more about The Priority Sale take on the race to the bottom.





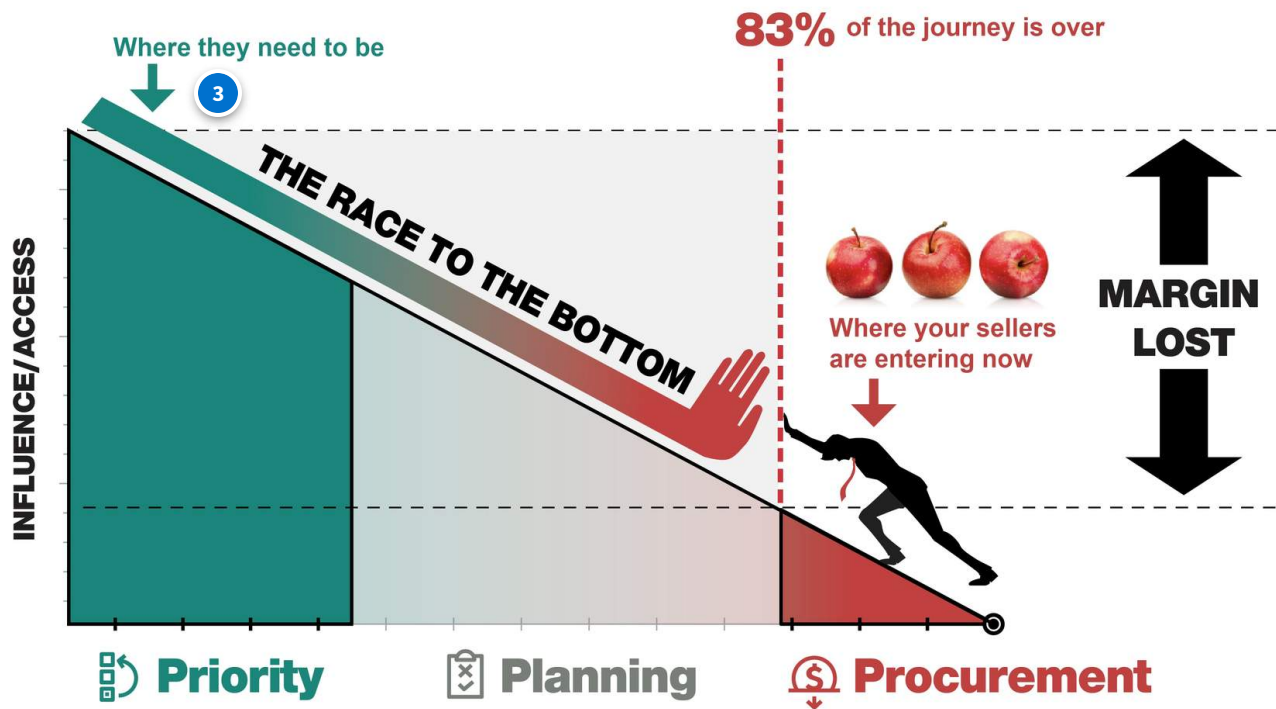
Low, Late, and Fully Commoditized

If buyers travel up to 83% of the buying journey WITHOUT SELLERS, that means you're entering late in the sale, when buyers are trying to make an apples-to-apples purchase. In other words: this late in the buying journey, buyers believe they know what they want, and they want to see the various options they've found--probably via internet search--as THE SAME so they can buy based on price ALONE.



Low and Late Means Lost Margin

If you're entering a sale low and late, all of your opportunity to create margin in your sale is GONE. This is because you're trying to beat competitors that your prospect has determined are the same--regardless of whether that's actually true. AND, it's because you have virtually NO power to influence what your prospect wants to buy at this point--they have already decided what they want and how much they want to pay.



A New Sale: The Priority Sale

When you're low and late in the Procurement Sale, there are a few things you can do to improve your chances of winning that sale--but that win can't reclaim the margin that is lost due to selling in the Procurement stage. That's why we believe the ultimate path to success is by creating a NEW sale, earlier in the buying journey and much higher in the organization, where a seller's potential for influence and margin is at its highest.

We're going to explore Procurement, Planning, and Priority much further in a moment. For now, we want to be clear that there is a threatening reality for sellers that comes from the race to the bottom, and the Three Deadly Cs are evidence of that threat.



Please review the hotspots above.

Why is Compressed Selling Time deadly to sales?

What does that mean to sellers? **That means you have less time than ever before to accomplish the same amount of work. In other words, you have dramatically Compressed Selling Time--and probably the exact same ambitious selling goals.**

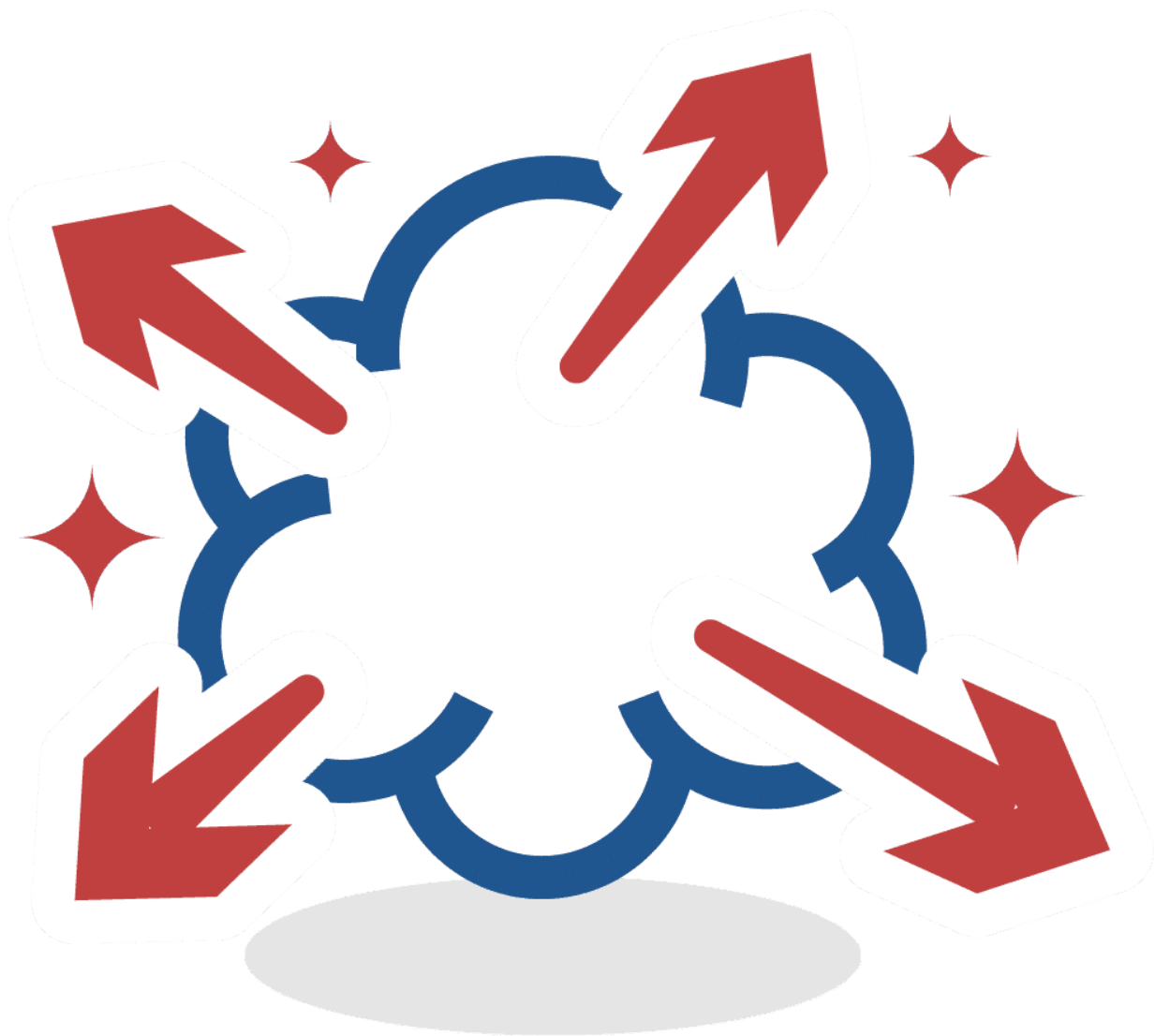
Compression ramps up the pressure to achieve while giving the seller fewer opportunities to connect, correct misconceptions, and drive the sale forward.

CONTINUE

What is Consensus Decision Making?

Today's prospect isn't just one buyer, it's several people. Whether they're formally assigned to make a purchase decision or only loosely responsible, every purchase these days seems to involve a committee of buyers, each with competing agendas and requirements that sellers have to contend with in one way or another.

On average, there are at least 6.8 people responsible for today's B2B sale. What does that mean for sellers? Many things--but one of them is that sellers can expect to "have to make each sale" more than once--essentially, once for each person formally or loosely associated with the purchase.



Why is Consensus Decision Making deadly to sales?

Given the fact that there are multiple people (and viewpoints, and senses of priority) to navigate in the modern sale, it doesn't take much imagination to see the risk to seller success this creates. But there's another deadly consequence to sales of the consensus decision: It's the buying committee NOT coming to consensus and deciding not to make any decision at all-- other than, "Let's defer this for now until we're all aligned."

CONTINUE

These **Three Deadly Cs** have been putting pressure on sales organizations for many years now, and things are only getting harder, faster. Understanding how your buyer is buying can start to unlock positive responses and proactive behaviors to help overcome them.

Let's take a minute to make sure we're all on the same page about what these terms mean.

[Sort the examples below](#) into the correct Three Deadly Cs categories.

Commoditization

"Which one costs less?"

"The solutions are basically the same."

"I'm putting this out to bid.
Sharpen your pencil."

Compressed Selling Time

**"I've researched it online and
am ready to pick."**

**"I've done all the research
before I called you. I just need
to order it now."**

Consensus Decision Making

**"I have to take this to the
committee."**

"Let me ask my bosses first."

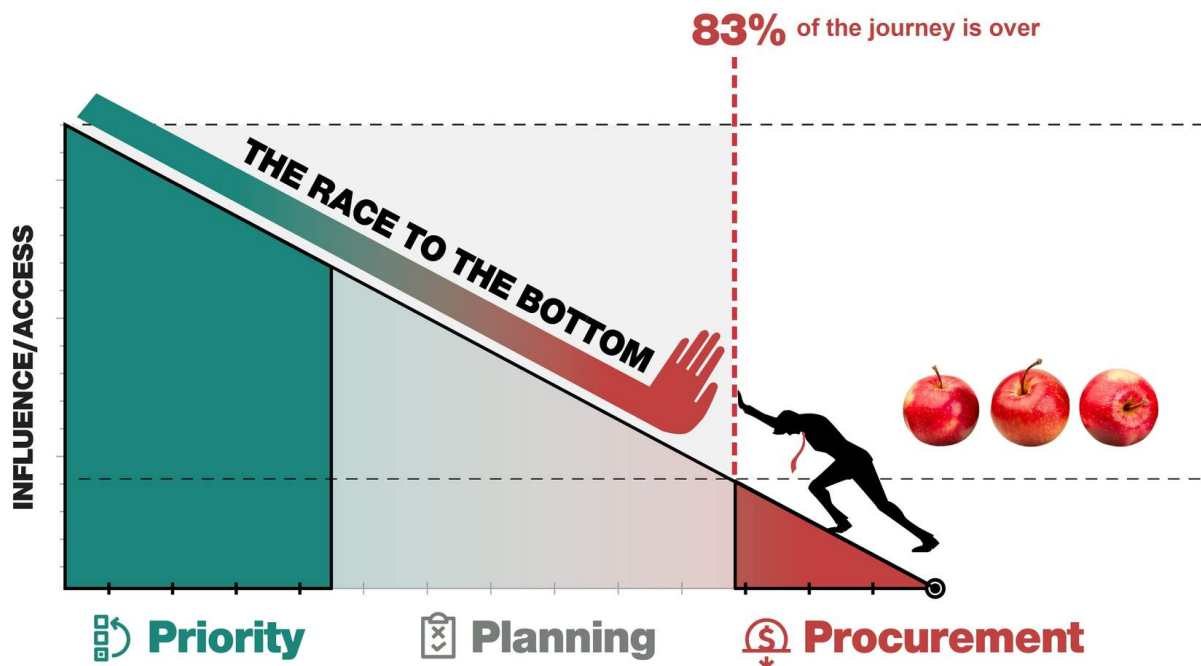
I have to pass you to
purchasing. You'll need to
convince them too."



Please complete the sorting exercise above.

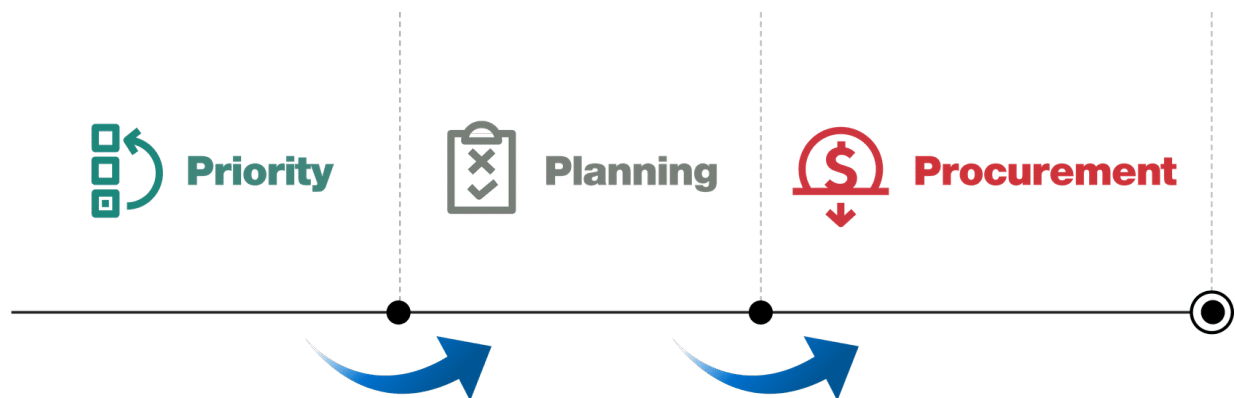
THE THREE PHASES OF THE BUYER'S JOURNEY

As buyers traverse the buying journey (racing toward the bottom), they traverse three distinct stages: Priority, Planning, and Procurement, in that order.



Sometimes, they accomplish these almost entirely on their own. This is the case in most Procurement Phase sales, evidenced in situations where an organization calls sellers in to bid on an RFP, for example. Other times, a seller is with them the whole way. This can only be the case when the seller enters high and early, in Priority, and works with the prospect the entire way through to purchase.

Sometimes, prospects will travel them quickly, in a matter of days, or even hours. Other times, the phases take months, and the prospect may even move backward more than once.



The point is that even though buying journeys can be different, there are still, always, three distinct stages within those journeys, and sellers must be able to identify, assist with, and help **win moments of truth** within, in order to win a sale.

But what are "moments of truth," exactly?

CONTINUE

MOMENTS OF TRUTH



Every interaction with a prospect is
a **moment of truth (MOT)**.

Interactions with a prospect either **advance or set back your sale**--and by this we mean,
increase or decrease the likelihood it will occur. Sales that are set back even once, no matter

how minor, rarely, if ever become deals. That's why we want you to see each interaction as a powerful opportunity.

If this seems like it puts a lot of importance on every single interaction, it does. The sooner you can think of every email, every meeting, every interaction as a MOT, the sooner you'll be more effective at advancing your sales.

When Moments of Truth Advance a Sale

They get the prospect to take action that makes the end of the sale more likely, and closer.

This could be actions like such as:

- Providing more information
- Doing more research to find answers for you
- Providing access to other members of the buying committee
- Scheduling new meetings
- Signing the deal

When Moments of Truth Set Back a Sale

They don't connect to a pain or threat (something we'll focus on in future lessons), and get no promise of future effort. In the worst cases, they provide reasons for the prospect to say no. At best, they make winning the deal far less likely.

What you need to win every MOT depends in large part on when you enter the sale, what stage the buyer is at in their journey and how long you've been with them. When we talk

about this, we use the language "Where, When, and How you enter a sale."

There are, however, some universal things that apply to winning every moment of truth. [Review each strategy below.](#)

Mentally Prepare —

Know your preferred outcome before you go in, and have a plan to get there.

Control Your Emotions —

Understand and correct your emotional response to the unexpected. Remain in control.

Be Consultative —

Listen. Ask hard questions. Help the buyer understand what will happen next.

Sell Value —

Focus on how your solution eliminates their pains and threats, how it connects to their priority.

Qualify the Lead

Plan the next steps. Where will the budget be found? Who will get in the way?

We'll continue to unpack these concepts as you proceed through The Priority Sale Program.



Please review the strategies above.

Now that we've established the concept of the moment of truth and shared why it matters to think this way, let's get acquainted with the moments of truth associated with each phase of the buying journey.

PRIORITY PHASE

PLANNING PHASE

PROCUREMENT PHASE

This is when a prospect is trying to identify whether the problem they're attempting to solve is a priority or not. This will help them decide whether pursuing a solution of any kind is worth their time and effort.

The Priority Phase is so important that we refer to it as the **Priority Moment of Truth**. Your objective is to define your value by getting in when your prospect is seeking solutions. Sellers can create and win greater margin than anywhere else when they maximize the Priority MOT.



PRIORITY PHASE

PLANNING PHASE

PROCUREMENT PHASE

During this phase, the prospect is deciding between competing priorities and competing offers in an attempt to understand what life will be like during and after the purchase.

While sellers who enter in Planning can still guide the WAY that a prospect's idea takes form, it's important to recognize that you're in a space where the prospect has an idea, and that creates a tension you need to work within.



PRIORITY PHASE

PLANNING PHASE

PROCUREMENT PHASE

This is when the prospect has named the solution they prefer and is attempting to find suitable arrangements on scope and price.

While Procurement is the lowest, latest place sellers can enter sales, where margin is least available, we **still characterize Procurement as a moment of truth**. That's because sellers can impact HOW they enter this sale and take steps to protect margin by driving separation from similar competitors.



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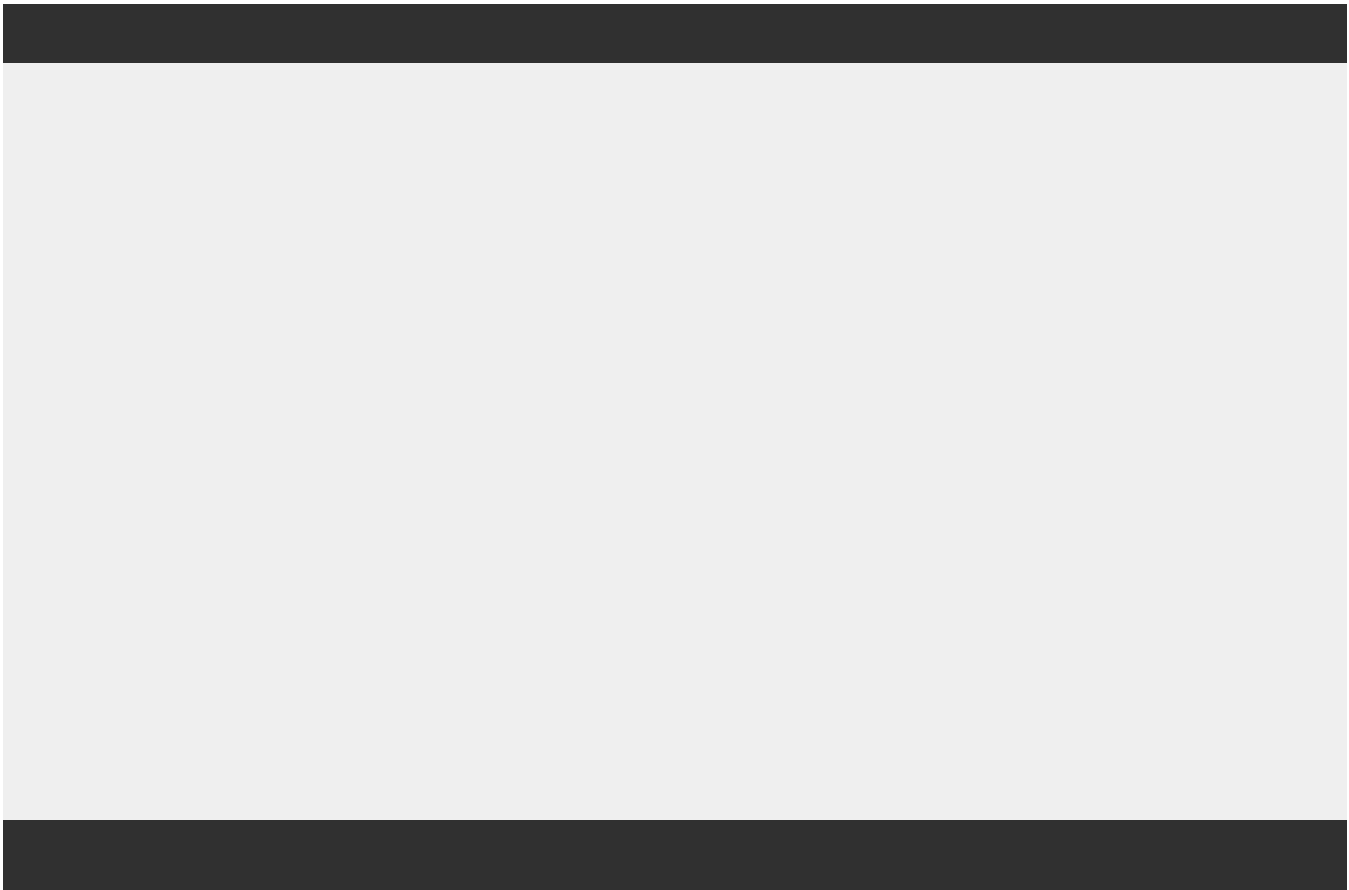
THE PRIORITY PHASE



Entering at the [Priority Phase](#) represents your best chance to win the deal.

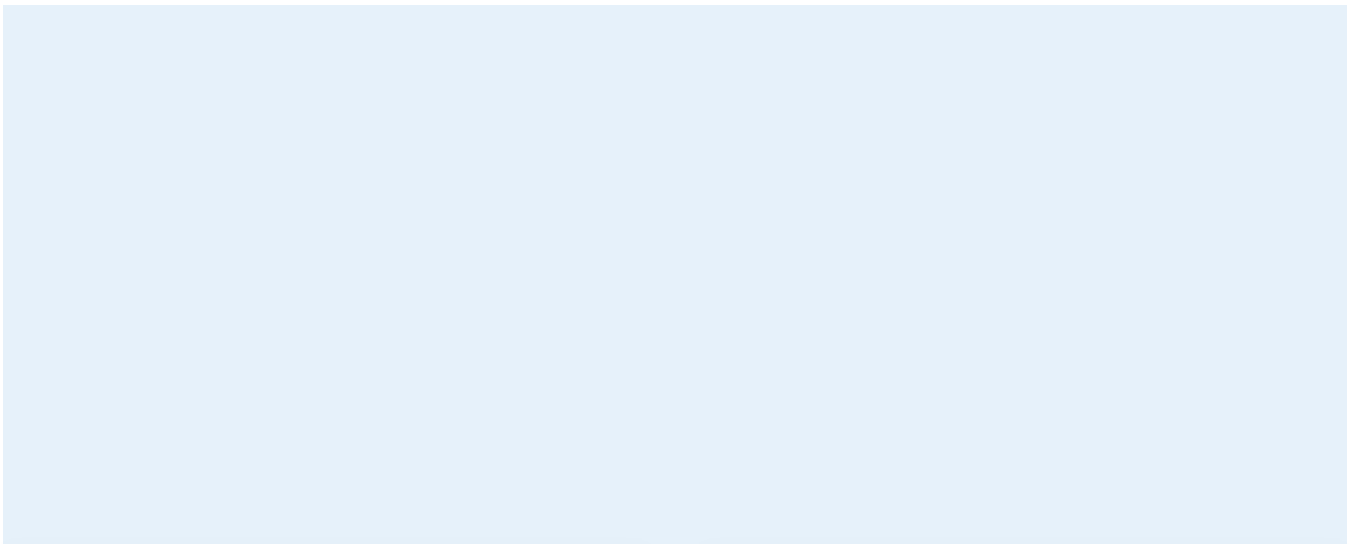
But it's also the hardest place to gain access.

[Watch the video below](#) to learn more about the [Priority Phase](#).



Entry and Exit Criteria for the Priority Phase

[Click each card below.](#)






Entrance: Your prospect enters this phase when they realize a pain or threat that they'd like to eliminate.



Exit: Your prospect exits this phase when they have decided to take action to solve it.

Watch the video below to see what it looks and feels like to engage with your prospect correctly in the [Priority Phase](#). [Click Play to start the animation.](#)

 Thumbnail



Please review the animation above.

THE PLANNING PHASE

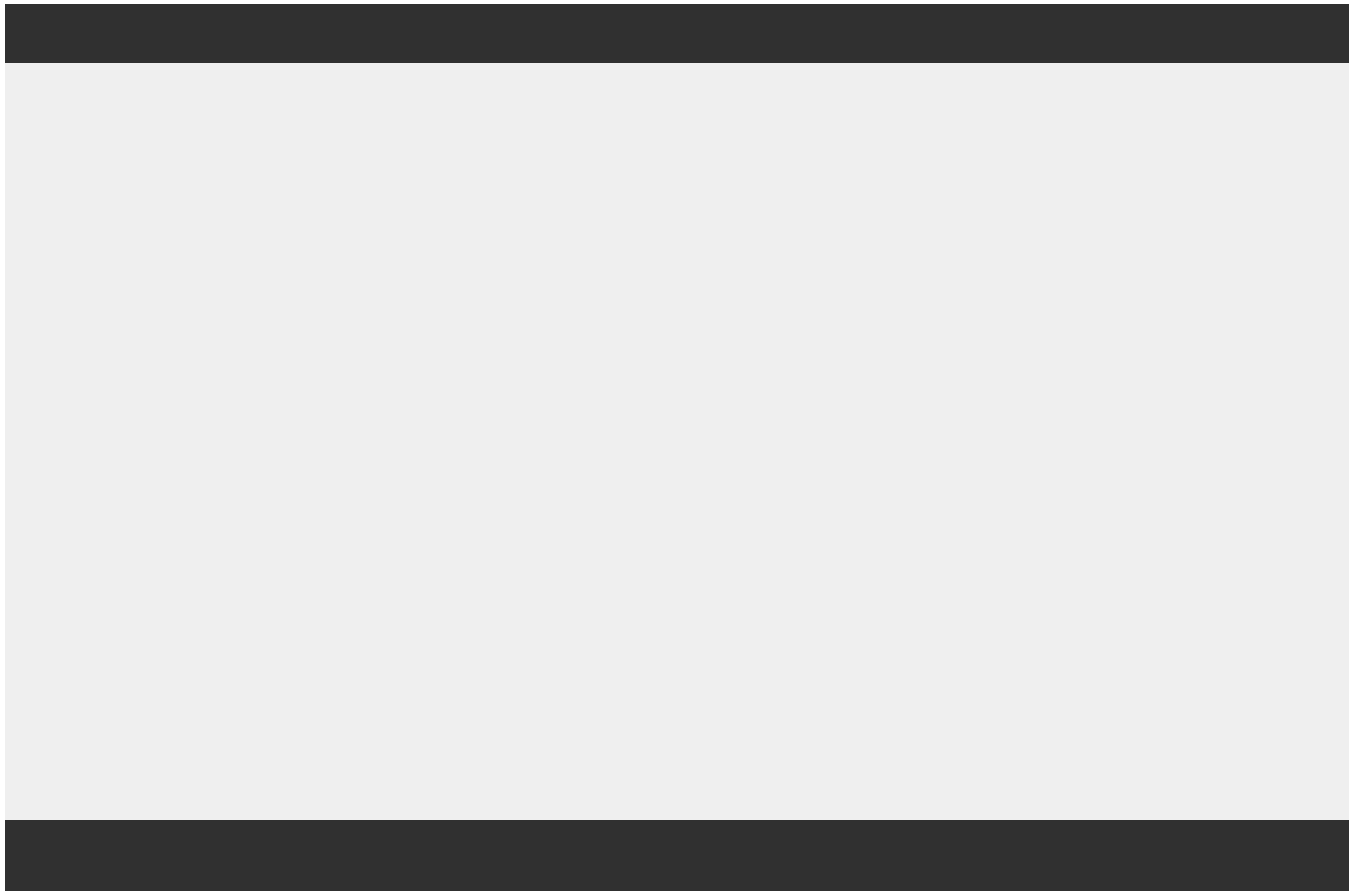
There are still wins to be had when you enter in the middle of the sale.

But you'll have to work hard to stand out from the crowd.



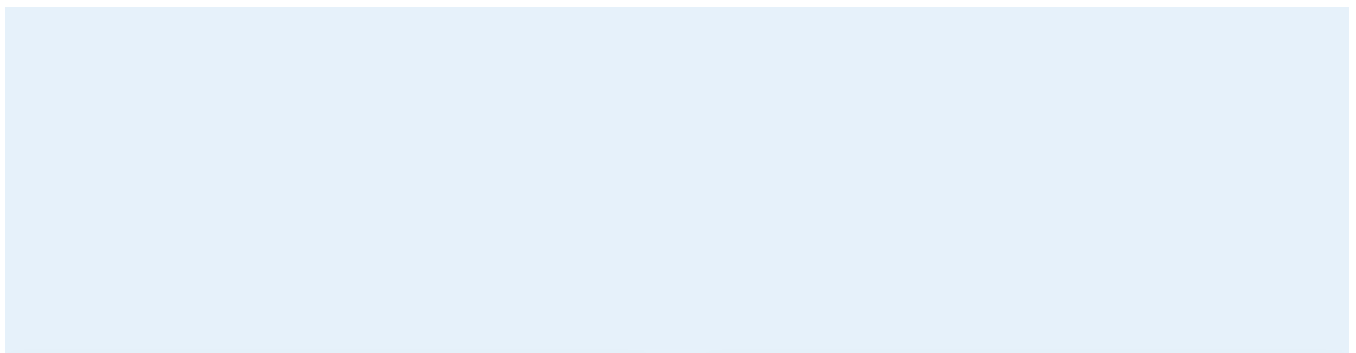
Planning

[Watch the video below](#) to learn more about the Planning Phase.



Entry and Exit Criteria in the Planning Phase

[Click each card below.](#)






Entrance: Prospects enter the planning phase when they've decided to work on finding a solution to a problem they've fully identified.



Exit: Prospects exit this stage when they've made a commitment to a plan of action.

Watch the video below to see what it looks and feels like to engage with your prospect correctly in the Planning Phase. [Click Play to start the animation.](#)

 Thumbnail



Please review the animation above.

THE PROCUREMENT PHASE

When you enter at the **Procurement Phase**, you've got to play perfectly to get a real win.

And by "real" win, we mean at the margin you wanted, on the timeline you wanted. They're tricky, and you've got your work cut out for you. But these deals can be worth working on.



[Watch the video below](#) to learn more about the **Procurement Phase**.

You can consider one of three strategies to compete for these late-stage deals:

Strategy 1

Cut out your margins to compete on price ...

... hoping for greater future engagement. This is dangerous because you won't often be able to charge more for the same scope in the future, so this strategy usually only works when you have additional future sales that you're confident you can make.

Strategy 2

Attempt to reconfigure the scope entirely ...

... by showing them something they missed in the **Planning Phase**. When successful, this helps you unlock new priorities that you can position your solution toward. When unsuccessful, the prospect decides to abandon the priority altogether.

Strategy 3

Position your sale as the true low-cost solution.

This is dangerous because while it may win the deal today, you're subject to ever-lower offers from competitors in the future that will take away your business. This usually only works in the few industries in which repeat business is a non-factor.

You can tell you've entered the sale in this phase when:

- The prospect can hand you a list of requirements or a scope.
 - The prospect asks for pricing in the first contact.
 - The prospect can tell you who else has been invited to the table.
 - They ask the Three Ugly Questions: Can you do it? Do you want it? How much?
-

Entry and Exit Criteria in the Procurement Phase

[Click each card below.](#)




Entrance: Prospects enter this phase when they have named a solution to solve their problem.



Exit: Prospects exit this phase by choosing a solution or choosing not to address it at all.

Watch the video below to see what it looks and feels like to engage with your prospect correctly in the **Procurement Phase**.

 Thumbnail



Please review the animation above.

KNOWLEDGE CHECK

Based on each of the following first contacts from a prospect, **identify which stage of the sale you've entered.**

Question

01/09

“We’re having this really specific problem that we’re trying to solve. Do you guys help with that?”

☐

Priority

☐

Planning

☐

Procurement

Question

02/09

"I never thought of it that way. What do you think might be happening?"

- ☐ Priority
- ☐ Planning
- ☐ Procurement

Question

03/09

“Here’s the scope. Can you do it?”

- ☐ Priority
- ☐ Planning
- ☐ Procurement

Question

04/09

“Here’s the scope. Do you want to bid on it?”

☐

Priority

☐

Planning

☐

Procurement

Question

05/09

“Here’s the scope. How much would you charge for it?”

- ☐ Priority
- ☐ Planning
- ☐ Procurement

Question

06/09

"I saw something on your website about why we're not more successful. Can you tell me more?"

- ☐ Priority
- ☐ Planning
- ☐ Procurement

Question

07/09

“How have other companies like us solved this problem?”

- ☐ Priority
- ☐ Planning
- ☐ Procurement

Question

08/09

“If we add this to the scope, how does that change implementation?”

- ☐ Priority
- ☐ Planning
- ☐ Procurement

Question

09/09

“Something you said described us perfectly. Can we talk?”

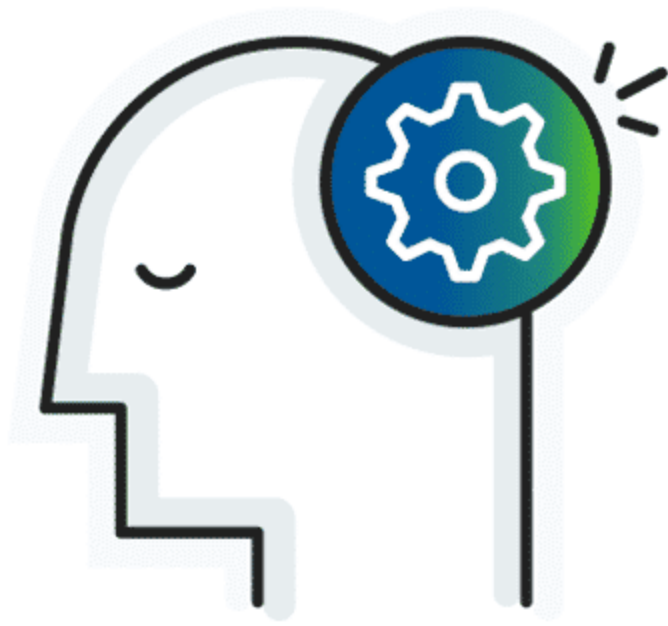
- ☐ Priority
- ☐ Planning
- ☐ Procurement

SUMMARY

Stop and reflect:

- As you think about the buyer's journey (Priority, Planning, and Procurement), which phase do you most often find yourself in, in your current sales? Why do you think that is?
- How does having a moments of truth mentality impact how you approach your prospects in the buyer's journey?

When you're ready, click [Continue](#).



CONTINUE

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Next Steps

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- Close your browser tab to exit the course.

