# Why Study “Technical Sales”?

Small opportunities are often the beginning of great enterprises. – Demosthenes.

*product/market gap:* This gap refers to the fact that by the time a high-tech product gets to market, it is fundamentally dated. This may mean that the product is too slow or doesn’t have the full suite of features currently demanded by the market. It is your job to sell these products that poorly match the market need to the customers who constitute that market. In some cases, your products will perfectly reflect the current needs of the market, but usually only for a short period.

This product/market gap is driven, on the one hand, by media and analysts who are always demanding more of vendors and, on the other, by the executives in your company who want to expand the use of your product beyond your traditional customers.

# An Overview of the Sales Process

If everything’s under control, you’re going too slow. -- *Mario Andretti*

Sales Life Cycle:

## Definition of the Market

The marketing department will have one or more target customer profiles that will define the initial set of customers on which the sales force will call.

## Marketing Campaigns

Now someone responsible for demand generation builds a campaign to reach potential purchasers of your product and make them aware of what you have to offer.  
  
The marketing team will likely employ a variety of approaches to reach these customers:  
- Customer Events  
New products are often previewed at international, national, or regional customer events.  
- Trade Shows and Seminars  
Based on our experience, usually a handful of very well-qualified leads may result (perhaps 5% of the total).  
As you may know, attending a trade show is often an excuse for training or a “junket” on the part of junior customer attendees.  
Trade shows can be particularly helpful for new product introductions, enabling marketers to receive immediate feedback regarding forthcoming product releases directly from potential customers.  
- Mailing Lists and Outbound Calling Campaigns  
The ratio of useless names and numbers to real leads is probably on the order of 100 to 1.  
Usually,a customer is sent materials describing your solution. If they respond, a telemarketer will then follow up to begin the sales cycle.  
- Partners  
A partner (system integrator, distributor, or value-added reseller) may bring you into a deal.  
One positive aspect is that there is probably a qualified deal to be pursued; otherwise, the partner would not be taking the time to engage with you.

One negative aspect is that you will usually not have direct access to the customer, and you will probably be brought in at the last moment possible for any customer deliverable.

## Lead Qualification

performed by your telemarketing support person.  
This type of qualification is usually intended to validate the prospect’s budget and probability of purchase and to identify the key people your sales team should contact.  
If the prospect looks like it has a budget, is likely to buy, and has a technical environment compatible with your product’s requirements, then you progress to the next phase of the sales cycle.

## Request for Proposal

the prospect is going to request details surrounding your company, products, and whatever other criteria are important so that a decision can be made.  
A very thin request for proposal (RFP) is a good indicator that you are dealing with a project team that has not gone through this process previously.

A very thick RFP usually means that the customer has hired a consultant who is trying to prove his value by adding additional detail and complexity to the process.  
If your company is a major player in your market, you will also frequently receive unsolicited RFPs. This usually means that either a competitor or a systems integrator has already sold the concept of the product to the prospect, and the prospect is trying to ensure that they have a look at the best products on the market. This situation is a very difficult one in which to compete because this unknowing third-party competitor will already have had access to the prospect’s key contact personnel and will have set expectations that may exceed your capabilities.

## Needs Analysis, Discovery, and First Customer Engagement

Frequently, a prospect will issue an RFP to a large number of vendors (five or more) and then put together a “short list” of the vendors whose products they wish to pursue. If your company is on this list, you will be permitted to ask questions of the prospect. This phase is usually called discovery or needs analysis. This is a critical phase because it is during your discovery that you will learn enough about your customer to put together a personalized solution.

This is also your first real opportunity to interact with the customer. Your ability to identify pain points and respond with a compelling value proposition is a true measure of your skill as an SE.

## Presentation, Demonstration, and Proposal

These presentations will typically be in response to your customer’s request to detail different aspects of your solution. You should also certainly take the initiative and be sure that you present any additional selling points you identified during discovery.  
  
The truth is that giving a demonstration is easy. Giving a good demonstration that meaningfully communicates the value of your solution is very, very difficult.  
a presentation that uses product demonstrations as the proof points for your key messages.  
  
The proposal is meant to reflect the solution that you are recommending based on your interaction with the customer. The proposal will also usually include pricing and different legal terminology describing the way your company does business.  
You will still usually be required to put together a document describing the products you are recommending as well as any details describing other dependencies on the customer, such as other products they may need to have in place.

## Evaluation (Optional)

Some customers will insist on being able to “pilot” or evaluate your product in advance of a purchase.  
Many companies have advanced, self-administering pilot kits. Increasingly, evaluation materials are available directly for download from a company’s Web site.   
Most complex hardware and software products will require some level of human support to make sure that the customer is able to make the best use of your software.

## Negotiations: Close or Lose—Getting the Deal

At this point, your job is done, and it is up to the salesperson to earn her money. You may be brought in for last minute clarification of technical points, but most of the focus is on the financial and legal terms of the contract.

So, cross your fingers and try to relax.

## Post-sales Support and Ongoing Account Management

You will personally benefit from developing the relationship and the opportunity to use the customer as a reference.  
have the opportunity to sell add-on products to the customer.  
improve the probability that these sales will continue.

New SE:   
Focus on understanding how the sales process works in your company so you can better balance your time across different sales

efforts. As you will discover, certain steps in every sales process tend to be very effort intensive. By recognizing when these steps are

likely to occur, you can better balance your schedule and stagger meetings or deliverables.

# Lead Qualifications

*Lead qualification* is the process by which the salesteam will try to make the initial evaluation todetermine whether or not you are likely to closea sale.  
*An irony of the sales process is that the least experienced member of the sales team, the telemarketer, usually handles lead qualification.*

*The telemarketer will evaluate the lead and give it a ranking based on the customer’s likelihood of purchasing the product, but not necessarily from your company.*

*Unless you already have the support of experienced sales staff, this inattentiveness will result in wasted time and a poor win rate.*

*Once the customer’s expectations are set, you will have a much more difficult time convincing them that your solution meets their requirements.*Customer consultants set the expectation independently of any particular offering. If another vendor was responsible for setting the expectations, there’s little hope you will be able to win the deal.  
On the other hand, if you get involved with every lead that crosses your telemarketers’ desks, you will have no time to focus on real opportunities.

## Lead Rating

All leads can be categorized based on their characteristics. *Lead Value* usually refers to the probability of purchase and to the total value of thepurchase.  
  
Different marketing organizations use different methods of ranking leads, but they are usually based on a set of letters or numbers with some inherent order. Common examples are *A*, *B*, *C*, or 30/60/90/120, or perhaps initials that represent a qualitative commentary: *L* for “likely,” *U* for “unlikely,” and so on.

## Qualification Criteria

We now look at the budget, time frame, and need in greater detail.  
Need:  
Do you have a corporate standard in the following areas?  
Database platform  
Server operating system  
Client operating system  
Are there any consulting firms assisting you with your evaluation or with other related projects?  
Do you have anyone in your company who has worked with our products previously?  
What other products are you considering?  
Are there any existing solutions we will have to factor into our solution?  
Do you plan to implement this yourself or will you be using external resources?

### Budget

The issue is knowing whether your prospect is “just looking” or really performing research as the initial step in a project.  
your sales rep will use this question as an opportunity to meet the customer’s senior management to confirm that there really is a project and that there really will be a budget.  
Some prospects feel that if they tell you what their budget is, your price will be equivalent to the number they give you.  
In practice, you may be able to get access to budget information when the rep cannot.  
the budget question is valid. You will need to know that information to help structure the proposal.

### Time Frame

Usually, the farther out the purchase time frame is, the lower the rating of the lead.

# The Dash to Demo

# Getting Started

# Evaluation Strategies