

Title:

7 Ways to Stop Chasing Decision Makers

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Summary:

As far as you're concerned, you've done everything right. Talk about being set up to believe everything was going to be smooth sailing -- now a big wave has overturned the boat and it's sinking fast!

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Article Body:

<p>You've put your heart and soul into doing what you're best at -- explaining the benefits of your solution but working hard not to come across "salesy" or pushy.</p>

<p>As far as you're concerned, you've done everything right.</p>

<p>Now you're on the phone with your contact. You're hoping this will be your last conversation before they fax the contract through.</p>

<p>Finally you ask, "So, is the agreement ready to be signed?" There's a silence, and then you hear the disheartening words: "Oh, I realize that I should really have Mike and Julie, look at it before I send it over."</p>

<p>Talk about being set up to believe everything was going to be smooth sailing -- now a big wave has overturned the boat and it's sinking fast! Why didn't he tell you he wasn't the final decision maker? Why did he lead you on?</p>

<p>Most important, what can you do to stop this from happening again?</p>

<p>Don't despair! Here are seven ways to end the chasing game with decision makers:</p>

<p>1. Understand the psychology of working in an organization.</p>

<p>No one in an organization wants to make a wrong decision and then be left

holding the bag and looking bad. What's more, in many cases even CEOs of companies can't make final decisions without the other executives on their team buying in.</p>

<p>So, even if your contact tells you that he or she is the only one making the decision, in most cases that's highly unlikely, especially in larger organizations. Once you understand that, you'll find it easier to roll with the news that others are actually involved in signing off on the decision.</p>

<p>2. Make sure your contact has the authority to sign the agreement without approval</p>
<p>from others.</p>

<p>How many times have you been told: "I'm the decision maker, and I decide if we'll purchase your solution or not"? Contacts may say this with total confidence, and we usually take them at their word, only to discover later that they didn't want us bypassing them to get to the other decision makers. Here's how you can avoid this situation: After they tell you they are the decision maker, you simply say in a relaxed, easy-going conversational manner, "Oh, okay. No problem. So, basically you're the only person who signs the agreement, and no one else needs to be involved with this decision?"</p>

<p>It's amazing what happens when you ask this question. First, there's likely to be a short silence, and then all of a sudden you learn that other decision makers are involved. Once you know this, you can rethink your approach.</p>

<p>3. Don't panic when you discover other decision makers are involved.</p>

<p>Don't get thrown off track when you suddenly learn, deep into the sales process, that other decision makers need to be involved in the decision. When this happens, gently suggest that it might make sense to come up with a way to get them involved with the proposal so they won't be caught off guard.</p>

<p>4. Suggest a conference call to connect with the decision makers.</p>

<p>Suppose you find out that two other decision makers are involved. Now you have a total of three! What can you do to avoid the delay that's inevitable when your contact tells you, "I need to get hold of Mike and Julie, but they're both traveling, so I'll get back to you after I speak with them"? This situation is often the black hole of selling, because you can wait for weeks until your contact tracks down Mike and Julie and gets back to you.</p>

<p>Here's how to avoid this: You simply say, "Okay. No problem. Sounds as if

Mike and Julie are an important part of the process...I'm wondering if it might make sense to pull together a brief conference call with you and them so that they can get an overview of what's happening. That way you can avoid chasing them down, and everyone can get up to speed at the same time. Does that make sense?" Also, the answer you get will tell you a lot about where you really stand. If your contact says, "Sure. That makes sense. Let me schedule it," things are looking good. But if you hear, "Nah, I'll just try and get hold of them when I can and then get back to you," he could be saying, "We aren't really that interested."

<p>5. Work with your main contact to set the agenda for the conference call.</p>

<p>If your contact agrees to the conference call, spend some time working together on a well-thought-out agenda. Emphasize that your main purpose is simply to inform the others about what has happened so far. It's crucial that you assure your contact that during the call you will in no way apply any type of sales pressure on the other decision makers.</p>

<p>Why is this important? Because many times contacts are reluctant to pull together a call because they're afraid that the salesperson will put the participants on the spot, and that would make things awkward for everyone. When you begin the call, simply say, "The purpose of our call today is simply to bring you up to speed on what has happened so far so you all have the information you need to think this solution through at your own pace. Here at XYZ, we don't believe in pressuring people to make decisions." Your contact will love you for this.</p>

<p>6. Ask your contact to arrange the conference call.</p>

<p>When you suggest a conference call with all the decision makers, it's important to put your contact at ease. Too often, salespeople get anxious and say, "I'd be happy to contact the other folks and schedule the call for a time that works for all of us," but that may make your contact think you're going to try to influence the others before the call.</p>

<p>To avoid accidentally triggering any "sales alarms," simply ask your contact if he or she would be open to coordinating the call: "It might make sense if you could e-mail them to coordinate a time for all of us to connect, since you're closer to them than I would be."</p>

<p>7. Get to the truth about where the deal stands.</p>

<p>So you have the conference call and you feel it went well, with lots of good

discussion. Your intuition is telling you that everyone seemed positive about your solution. Now you want to find out the truth about where the deal stands, but you need to be careful not to call your contact and put subtle pressure on him or her to give you a final answer.</p>

<p>You want to get that answer without asking outright, but you can't until you've uncovered the truth about where everyone stands. When you call your contact back, don't use the tired phrase, "I'm just calling to follow up." That just kicks off sales pressure. Instead, say, "I'm just giving you a call to see what kinds of questions the others on the call might have, since those types of calls don't always address everyone's issues or concerns." This will allow your contact to talk about where he or she stands, and you can then ask, "Where do you think we should go from here?"</p>

<p>These seven tips will help you put an end to the dreaded game of chasing decision makers.</p>