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SNAP SELLING

Speed Up Sales and Win More Business with Today's Frazzled Customers

JILL KONRATH

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MAIN IDEA

Most people you try and sell to today will be crazy-busy – frazzled and run off their feet with too much to do. You’ve got to allow for this and change the way you sell to align more with how people today make decisions.

Whenever anyone comes into contact with you, there will be three questions in their minds:

1. Is it worth my time to meet with this person and look at what they have to offer?
2. Is the change that is being suggested worth all the disruption it will generate?
3. Is going with this offer the very best option for my company?

The SNAP approach to sales is designed to help your prospect focus on these decisions and then agree to what you’re proposing as solutions. Specifically, the SNAP system highlights the four factors which need to be at the forefront of your mind when you work with crazy-busy people:

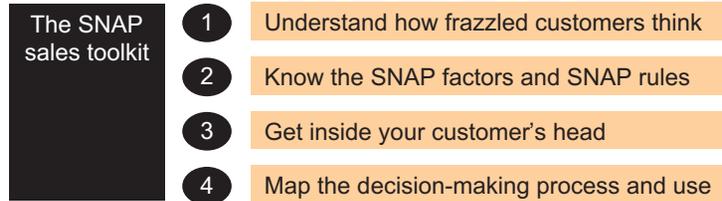
- S** *Keep it simple*
The more complexity and effort you eliminate from the decision-making process, the greater your chances of success become.
- N** *Be invaluable*
There is a world of copycat products and services so the value you bring to the relationship is vital.
- A** *Always align*
You have to stay relevant to the prospect at all times. If you’re not tightly aligned with what they’re doing, they won’t have time for you.
- P** *Raise priorities*
You have to keep working to have your prospect see your product or service as urgent – otherwise they won’t act.

“Sales is an outcome, not a goal. It’s a function of doing numerous things right, starting from the moment you target a potential prospect until you finalize the deal. Consciously or not, today’s prospects evaluate you on these four criteria in every single sales transaction you have with them.”

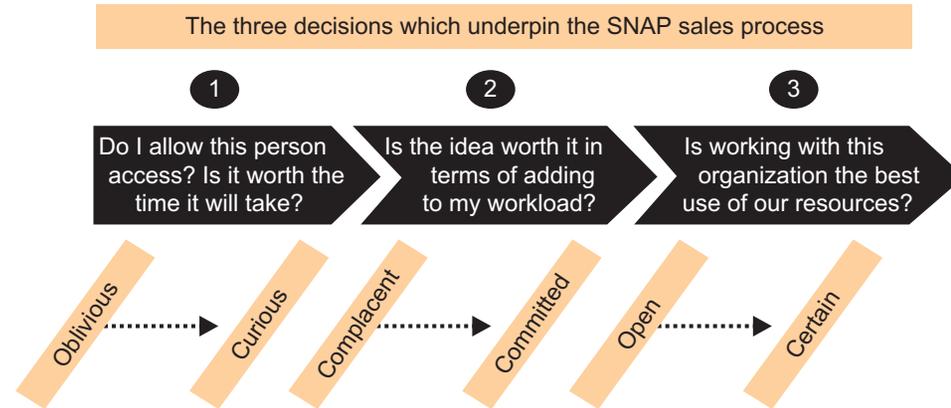
– Jill Konrath

1. The SNAP sales toolkit Pages 2 - 3

To sell successfully to today’s crazy-busy people, you’ll need a professional sales toolkit which has four essential components:



2. The SNAP sales blueprint. Pages 4 - 8



Decision #1 – Do I allow this person access?

When you first start out, the prospect will be thinking everything is going okay. As you communicate with them, they will be trying to figure out whether it’s worth having an in-depth conversation with you. To get them to agree to this, you have to move them from being oblivious to curious.

Decision #2 – Should I initiate change?

This is all about whether or not it’s worth disturbing the status quo which now exists in their organizations. People will be loath to add to their workloads unless the value of the change is clear and obvious. With this decision, you’re trying to move the prospect from being complacent to becoming committed to change.

Decision #3 – How do I select the best use of our own resources?

To make the sale, you now have to convince the prospect to work with you and your company rather than any other option. There will still be a strong pull for the status quo so to get people to make this decision, you have to move them from being open to a variety of options to becoming certain you are the right resource to utilize.

1. The SNAP sales toolkit

To sell successfully to today’s crazy-busy people, you’ll need a professional sales toolkit which has four essential components:

- 1 Understand how frazzled customers think
- 2 Know the SNAP factors and SNAP rules
- 3 Get inside your customer’s head
- 4 Map the decision-making process and use

1 Understand how frazzled customers think

Most workers today are frazzled – they’re trying to fit more and more activities into the limited time which is available. This means they become:

- Anxious to get to the bottom line of everything immediately in order to figure out whether it’s worth their time or not.
- Easily distracted – they will be typing away at their keyboard while chatting to you on the phone.
- Wary of anything which seems too complex to understand or too risky to decide on quickly.
- Overwhelmed by all the options the marketplace offers in every field imaginable, with most of the options seeming to be clones of each other.
- Highly demanding and intolerant of incompetence or foolish behaviors on the part of sellers.

To succeed in sales at present, you have to see your prospect’s struggles as learning opportunities. You have to figure out what works when people are frazzled and under pressure. You also have to make it easy for your customers to make quick decisions and move forward or else you’ll find you get allocated to the “D-Zone” where they delay or postpone making a decision indefinitely and permanently. If you do get allocated to the D-Zone, you are dismissed, deleted and completely disappear from their radar screen.

2 Know the SNAP factors and SNAP rules

Whenever you interact with a frazzled prospective customer, they will be asking themselves four questions about what you tell them:

- Is this simple – will it takes lots of time and effort?
- Does this person or company add value?
- Is this aligned with what we’re trying to accomplish?
- How urgent is this – what is its priority?

Accordingly, the four SNAP factors are:

S = Simple



Unless what you’re suggesting is simple to decipher, easy to decide on and straightforward to implement, prospects will be happy to defer a decision indefinitely.

N = iNvaluable



Frazzled customers have no time for one-size-fits-all products any more. They want something customized which will deliver the value they need to realize.

A = Aligned



Either your product/service is aligned with what the prospect’s organization is trying to accomplish or it is irrelevant and gets categorized as being extraneous. Lack of alignment can mean you get culled from consideration even before you have a chance to demonstrate the value you provide.

P = Priority

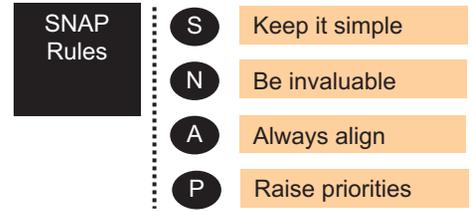


Everyone today has limited time and more things on their personal To-Do lists than they can handle. Priorities change constantly and things can get shuffled at a moment’s notice. If your product/service is not a high-priority item, it will get tabled as something that would be nice to have if there was more time available, more funding in place, etc.

“When you do figure out how to deal with frazzled customers, everything changes. They want to work with you. Sales cycles speed up. You have less competition. You’ll be enjoying rich and rewarding collegial relationships, earning a good living and making a difference – all at the same time.”

– Jill Konrath

To get to this happy state, there are four SNAP Rules you need to follow:



S *Keep it Simple* – your goal should always be to inject maximum simplicity into everything you do from the message you put across to the way it’s presented. The more simplified you make everything, the easier it becomes for people to buy.

N *Be iNvaluable* – customers want to work with specialists who know what they’re talking about and who can inject fresh ideas and new thinking on an ongoing basis. If you know so much you become a resource they can call on, you become invaluable to them and customers will choose you over your competition.

A *Always Align* – frazzled prospects need to see an immediate and obvious connection between what you offer and what they’re trying to achieve. You have to ensure your product/service impacts on their ability to achieve their objectives.

P *Raise Priorities* – you have to be alert to all the different projects they are attempting to juggle and ensure your offering is a high priority item. Customer priorities will change frequently so this will require ongoing fine-tuning and attention.

“When you start focusing on simplicity and personally bringing value, your business will really take off. Best of all, you won’t have to work as hard as you do today to achieve significantly better results.”

– Jill Konrath

3

Get inside your customer's head

To sell successfully, you need to get inside your customer's head and think like they do. In other words, you need to learn to look at your product/service from their perspective rather than from your own. The steps involved in doing this are:

1. *Identify the key decision makers* – either individuals who have the final say or a team who are collectively responsible for decision making.
2. *Complete a Buyer's Matrix* – be able to answer all the questions given. Once you can do this, you will have all kinds of insights into the pressures and challenges your customer is facing as they make a decision about what you offer.
3. *Create several customer personas* – profiles of typical decision makers you interact with on a regular basis. Personas will give you hints about the optimum way to deal with your prospects.
4. *Conduct a "mind meld"* – where you step into each customer persona and test the ideas you're planning on using before you implement them. Try and forecast what each persona's reactions will be to the approach you're taking. Use the SNAP criteria to evaluate the complexity, the business value you are providing, your alignment and priorities.

Completing the Buyer's Matrix will be challenging. If feasible, try and make this a group exercise within your organization. Pool what you've learned about the prospect over multiple interactions. More than likely, some parts of the Buyer's Matrix will remain blank at first and that's okay. The blank areas will serve as flags for the information you're missing and what you need to find out in the future.

As you continue to meet with prospects, ask questions which will enable you to fill in the blanks on your Buyer's Matrix. There are no absolute right and wrong answers for any of the questions – it all starts and ends with your prospective customers and what they think and believe. It's your job to get to know them so well you can then develop marketing message which will entice them and hit all the right buttons. This is a smart and effective way to differentiate yourself from less well-prepared competitors who are after a quick sale.

BUYER'S MATRIX

Name: _____
 Title: _____

Roles and Responsibilities
 What exactly is he/she in charge of or expected to manage? _____

Business Objective and Metrics
 What does he/she want to achieve? How is that success measured and evaluated internally? _____

External Challenges
 What external factors or industry trends might make it more difficult to reach his/her objectives? _____

Strategies and Initiatives
 What strategies and initiatives are already in place to help achieve the objectives? _____

Internal Issues
 What issues does the organization currently face which might prevent or hinder achievement? _____

Primary Interfaces
 Who are the peers, subordinates, superiors and outsiders with whom he/she frequently interacts? _____

Status Quo
 What's the current status quo with regards to your product, service or solution? _____

Change Drivers
 What would cause him/her to change from what is currently being done? _____

Change Inhibitors
 What would cause him/her to stay with the status quo, even if they're not happy with it? _____

4

Map the decision-making process and use

Now you know what is important to your prospects and how they think and feel about change initiatives, you're now in a stronger position to serve their business needs and increase your personal value. Your prospects will make three very different and distinct decisions as they consider building a working relationship with you. These decisions are:



Decision #1 – Allow access?

Prospects will first decide whether or not they want to connect with you and listen to what you have to say. Your objective here is to get your foot in the door and be granted some of their precious time. To achieve this, you need to move them from being oblivious to curious.

Decision #2 – Initiate change?

Next prospects determine whether making a change will be worth upsetting the status quo or not. Put another way you need to get conceptual buy-in here which will only come when prospects figure working with you is worth their investment of time. To do this, you've got to move them from being complacent to being committed to change.

Decision #3 – Which resources?

Thirdly you have to convince the prospect working with you and your company is better than working with anyone else. Even at this stage, there is still a strong bias towards retaining the status quo so the underlying challenge is to move them from being open to a wide variety of options to being certain you're the right resource to tap into.

"At each stage of your prospect's decision-making process, there are certain things you need to do to increase their interest in and commitment to change. If you do something at the wrong time, you destroy the opportunity. That's why it's important to know where your prospects are in the decision-making process."

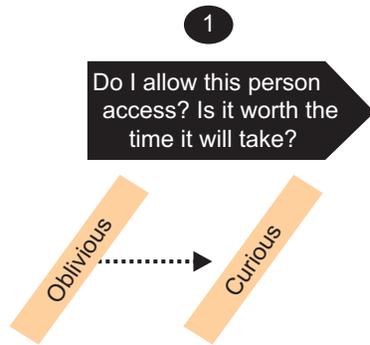
– Jill Konrath

2.

The SNAP sales blueprint

Decision #1 – Do I allow this person access?

When you first start out, the prospect will be thinking everything is going okay. As you communicate with them, they will be trying to figure out whether it's worth having an in-depth conversation with you. To get them to agree to this, you have to move them from being oblivious to curious.



You can take it as a given, most people will approach any initial contact with you with three basic assumptions:

- “I don’t need any interruptions.”
- “I need to protect my time at all costs.”
- “Salespeople are a total waste of time.”

In practical terms, you’re competing against all their deadlines, the fires they’re trying to put out and everything else on their schedules. If you come across as a self-serving seller who’s only interested in getting the order, they won’t want to know you. To get prospects to grant you access to their time, you have to pique their curiosity and get them thinking. And just to make this even more interesting, you’ve got to achieve all this in twenty- to thirty-second conversations, ninety-word e-mails or one-page letters.

“Every three to five seconds, your prospects ask themselves: ‘Is this of interest?’ If not, your gonzo. Your prospects read e-mails with their finger on the Delete key and their BS detectors on high alert. The moment you’re seen as irrelevant or self-serving, you’re deleted.”

– Jill Konrath

The four SNAP factors can and will impact on this first decision in these ways:

- S** Unless you pack a simple and targeted message into your communications, you will get dismissed out of hand. Prospects are looking for a reason to say no right away and complex material will trigger that reaction every time.
- N** You won’t get access to people unless what you say has value – it is relevant to the prospect’s needs, issues or objectives. If you demonstrate understanding, they might be willing to go further. If you deliver a canned pitch, you’re not worth meeting.
- A** You have to be aligned with what the prospect cares about. If you fail to be ruthlessly relevant, you’re out of there.
- P** This is the key to gaining access. If you can tie into the priorities of the individual or their organization right from the get go, your odds of getting access will soar.

Overall, gaining access is a matter of delivering just the right thirty-second conversation, ninety-word e-mail or one-page letter. It’s not a matter of coming up with some canned speech which is full of self-promoting puffery, technical tripe or creative blather. Basically if you fill your initial approach with the kind of overkill and verbiage traditional salespeople use, access will be denied. Remember, these are frazzled prospects who have more on their plate than they care to contemplate. You have to craft a winning value proposition to get access to their time.

“Frazzled customers don’t care about what you’re selling. They don’t want to change anything, because for them, change is work. To gain access, you need to create a gap between your prospect’s status quo and what could be. Your targeted prospects need to see that there are options they don’t know about yet – ones that may make their lives easier, save them money, or enable them to reach their impossible objectives.”

– Jill Konrath

In practice, this is not the time to strut your stuff and talk about how good you are. To get access, you have to clearly articulate a value proposition which is aligned with what the prospect is trying to do. When you get your value proposition right, everything else falls into place.

Unfortunately, there is no “universal” value proposition which will appeal to anyone and everyone. There is, however, a formula worth using:

**Value Proposition =
Business Driver + Movement + Metrics**

- “We help data centers reduce their power and cooling energy consumption from 13 to 79 percent.”
- “We help companies increase their lead conversion rates at the same time as they maximize their marketing spend.”

Good value propositions focus on business drivers which prospective customers will recognize as being important and then show what movement from the status quo is achievable. Using verifiable numbers adds credibility and highlights what could be, especially if you include some case studies and examples. Interview your existing customers, figure out what kind of tangible difference you can lay claim to, build that into your value proposition and then use that in every e-mail, phone call and voice mail you leave.

The real catalyst for gaining access to decision makers will be trigger events – both internal and external:

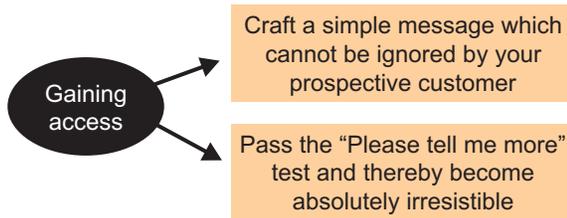
- An internal trigger event might be poor quarterly or annual earnings announcements, the launch of a new product, changes in ownership, a major acquisition or new contract, etc.
- External trigger events could be natural disasters, legislative changes, the entry of a major new competitor into the marketplace, general economic conditions and so forth.

As you analyze your customer base, you can pick up on trigger events which are relevant to other companies who will be looking for your product, service or solution as a result of those trigger events. There are all kinds of information services available which can effectively put your search for trigger events on autopilot. This might include using:

- RSS feeds from Web sites.
- Google alerts whenever new information is posted.
- Subscription alert services like InsideView.

You can also use LinkedIn.com or a company’s own Web site to find out who you can contact to start the sales process rolling. Facebook is another tool which may help you create some initial contact points within your target company.

Once you've developed your value proposition, coat-tailed on a trigger event and figured out who to contact, there are now two things remaining to be done in order to generate access to that organization. You have to:



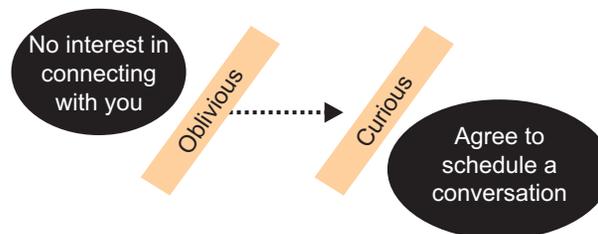
- *Craft a simple message* – based on the research you've done about the prospect's business or their industry. To put together a message which is so irresistible prospects will immediately pick up the phone and call you back, build in three elements:
 - FIRST, establish credibility by mentioning who referred them to you and then link to a specific trigger event which you know about.
 - SECOND, pique their curiosity by communicating your value proposition, sharing an insightful idea or alluding to important information which could solve some of their problems.
 - THIRD, close for the next step which would be to set up a time when you can talk about this or have them take some other action step.

"George, this is Henry Klitz here with Medical Marketing Applications. Raewyn who works in your Los Angeles office said I should talk with you. I saw on your Web site that your division is the newest division in your company and that you're planning on launching into the U.S. market early next year. We've worked with a number of other medical device manufacturers and we've helped them decrease the lag time between product launch and reaching forecasted sales goals by almost 35 percent in most cases. We should get together and talk about how we can reduce the amount of time you'll need to spend on the road next year too. I'm available after 1:00 pm today at (555)238-4505. Let's chat. Cheers."

- *Pass the "Please tell me more" test and become absolutely irresistible* – by being primed and ready to go when they contact you to follow up. Resist the urge to start sprouting technical gobbledygook when they call you back. Instead you should be ready to:
 - Expand on the issue or challenge you raised.
 - Share a success story.
 - Ask a question which will engage them.

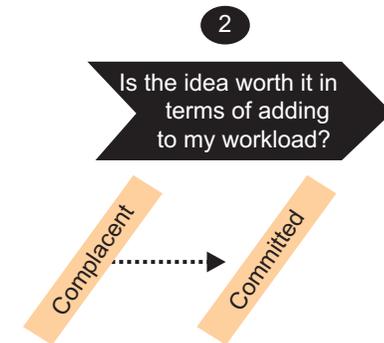
Whatever you do here, keep things simple and focused. Chat on the phone, set up a time to talk in more detail and then get off the phone and let them go back to work. This will be a refreshing approach, especially to someone who deals with salespeople all day every day. Remember, the people you're dealing with are frazzled. To become absolutely irresistible, work to become their unpaid resource center for helpful things. Never call them just to "check in" but only if you can provide value by giving them a new idea, telling them about some educational resources you think might interest them or something along those lines. Consistently provide them with valuable content which will help them do their job better and they will look forward to hearing from you. And don't forget they will be checking you out all the time as well so make sure your digital online image reflects the same level of professionalism you're trying to project in the flesh.

Remind yourself the objective of this step is not to try and sell your product or service offering. That's all other salespeople care about and therefore they come across as pushy. You're working with people who are crazy-busy and frazzled. Your primary goal is to move the prospect from being oblivious about your existence to the point at which they are curious enough to agree to speak with you further – nothing more.



Decision #2 – Should I initiate change?

This is all about whether or not it's worth disturbing the status quo which now exists in their organizations. People will be loath to add to their workloads unless the value of the change is clear and obvious. With this decision, you're trying to move the prospect from being complacent to becoming committed to change.



Once you've piqued their interest and got them to meet with you, the prospect will still be thinking:

- "This sounds like a lot of work and I don't have time."
- "Would making a change be worth it?"
- "Who would I have to battle to get this through?"

What you need to do in this second step is to get the prospect to realize working with you will be the best use of their time and resources. You'll be battling against the pull of keeping the status quo and against all the other ideas which could pull the prospect in another direction.

If you deliver a canned pitch at this stage, the prospect will figure they're just wasting their time. Equally, if you come in with a consultative sales approach where you ask all kinds of questions rather than doing your own homework first, the prospect will be equally aggrieved.

In reality, your product or service is irrelevant at this stage. The only thing that matters is whether or not your offering can help the prospect's organization achieve its aims. They will buy-in to what you say only if:

- You unearth unidentified problems.
- You provide a solid solution to an unsolvable problem.
- You show how to capitalize on an unseen opportunity.

You've aced this decision if they say: "We have to change. It's time to evaluate our options."

Again, the four SNAP factors are very important:

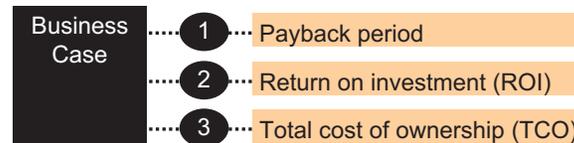
- S** Being able to deliver a sizable impact will get you noticed but you have to simplify the complexity of the change required if you're to have any chance of success. The easier you can make it, the better.
- N** You want to provide so much reference material and fresh thinking they come to see you as an asset and part of the evaluation team. That way, if they go ahead, you're in the driver's seat.
- A** Crazy-busy people only have time for ideas with the potential to have a big impact. Bigger is always better in this regard.
- P** To keep the change initiative a high priority item, you have to root out all the issues which could bog down the decision-making process.

The objective of your initial meeting with a new prospect is not to dazzle them with what you have to offer. Nor do you want to ask them loads of questions so you can figure out what to sell them. Instead, you want them to understand what's possible if they agree to work with your company. This should be a short meeting which ends with them saying, "OK, this makes sense. Let's calendar some time to take the logical next steps."

To signal your brief meeting will be different, give the prospect an agenda which details what you want to cover. The main item should be to discuss and hopefully work together on a business case which sets out the potential impact your product/service could have on their organization's ability to achieve their objectives with the least amount of disruption. The key to your success in helping them make Decision #2 (Should I initiate change?) is to do your homework beforehand so you can work with them to co-develop a strong business case for moving forward. If your business case is strong enough, they will then go to bat for you with their management team when the time comes.

Bearing in mind the fact you won't have much time with frazzled customers, you need to think in advance about the questions you need to ask. Go back to your Buyer's Matrix and make an educated guess about their priorities. You then ask questions about all the specific factors which impact their ability to be successful. In this way, you get the raw material from which you can gradually work with them to develop a business case for

change which just happens to involve your product/service offering in an integrated fashion.



Decision makers usually require that your business case sets out three key factors:

- How long it will take for the company to recover its initial investment.
- The total value or return on investment which will be generated if they move ahead.
- All of the direct and indirect costs which will be wrapped up in using your product/service.

Your job here is to cut the complexity involved in developing the business case and then to become the expert they decide they can't live without. So how do you pull that off in a brief meeting? There are several viable approaches here. The most relevant are:

- *Be invaluable* – turn your brain, your knowledge and your expertise into the key differentiation. You're dealing with frazzled customers who have frantic schedules with little time for research, strategizing or reflection. Signal that you see your role as delivering those functions rather than acting solely as an animated sales brochure for your product. Let the prospect know you're prepared to roll up your sleeves and get down into the trenches with them and since you've done this before, that will be a real boost to their chances of success. Tap into your talents, passions and abilities on behalf of your prospects.
- *Use your smarts* – to help the prospect understand and appreciate the value they would get from making a change. This is not a matter of giving them a PowerPoint presentation which is bores them to tears. Rather you have to definitively demonstrate you understand their challenges and are equipped to help them close the gap between where they now are and where they could be in the future. Forget about your product, service or solution and focus on the prospect's most important challenges and they will enjoy collaborating with you.

- *Demonstrate your abilities as a business improvement specialist* – and you will most definitely stand out from the crowd. Bring your prospect ideas, insights and information which stimulates their thinking. Have the mindset your product/service is just one part of the value you add. Working with you is the other. Immerse yourself in your prospect's business and industry and challenge their thinking. Ask the right probing questions and then make suggestions, offer advice and provide guidance. The fact you do this rather than merely asking for the order won't go unnoticed.

"I'm not saying you should do this with every sales call you make. These strategies work best when you focus on targeted businesses who have similar objectives and/or challenges as your best customers. When you focus on being invaluable, you can literally create new sales opportunities out of thin air. Frazzled customers are looking for someone to lead them out of their everyday chaos. Being an everyday value creator enables that to happen."

– Jill Konrath

If your business case is strong, then the chances are good the prospect will decide to move forward with a decision to change. That means the real work is just about to begin. They have conceptual buy-in and now it's time to talk about the practicalities involved in implementation. To avoid them becoming overwhelmed at this stage, it's vital that you cut the complexity and keep things simple.

The best ways to simplify the way ahead are:

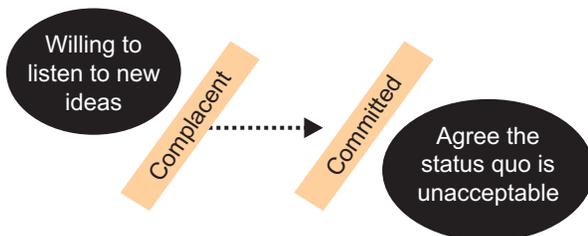
- Build confidence by telling them you've been through this with many other organizations and you'll be able to act as their guide and navigator.
- Illuminate the path forward by breaking it down into sequential steps, each of which are entirely manageable and logical.
- Have some candid up-front conversations about the toughest issues which are usually funding, involving everyone who needs to be onboard and resistance to ideas which are "not invented here."
- Put together a transition team and get them working on mapping out the best way forward for their organization to implement.

- Consider whether it's realistic to augment or add on to an existing program rather than teaching everyone something entirely new. This might be a reasonable way forward and could allow for a structured and orderly change.
- Think small – suggest doing a pilot project which targets a small problem first in order to build momentum for larger scale changes later on.
- Be careful not to generate information overload conditions. Make sure everyone has access to the information they need to implement but not so much they become paralyzed or bogged down. Feed them education resources slowly rather than in an overwhelming flood.
- Assemble an implementation toolkit for everyone. Put together the assessment tools, background articles, white papers, checklists, e-books and other materials which they will need. Make it easy for them to get up to speed with what's required.

To sum it up, to help people make Decision #2, you have to do whatever it takes to become a catalyst for change. You have to:

- Simplify the decision and the way forward.
- Become an invaluable resource provider for prospects.
- Keep everyone on track and aligned.
- Consistently raise priorities and maintain momentum.

Since you're dealing with people who are already frazzled even before you come on the scene, this will be a challenge. Rather than selling to them, you have to work alongside them and help them figure out what needs to be done to implement if they decide to move ahead. There are no guarantees they will go ahead and they may still decide to go with a competitor but if you work smart, you'll be in the best possible position to get their business. Your goal is to move the prospect from being complacent to committed to change.



Decision #3 – How do I select the best use of our own resources?

To make the sale, you now have to convince the prospect to work with you and your company rather than any other option. There will still be a strong pull for the status quo so to get people to make this decision, you have to move them from being open to a variety of options to becoming certain you are the right resource to utilize.



By this stage, the frazzled prospect has agreed the status quo isn't acceptable any more. They now realize there are new opportunities for growth which can be created and ways that costly problems can be eliminated. They're thinking:

- "I'm not sure who to choose – there's lots of options."
- "I don't want to stick my neck out here."
- "We will live with the consequences for a long time."

Your challenge now is to stand out from all internal and external competitors so the crazy-busy prospect says: "We want to work with you!" Bear in mind a frazzled customer would prefer to lump you in with your competitors so price alone can be used to make the decision so you have to find ways to send the signal working with you will generate the most value.

"Even after your prospect says, 'We want YOU!' potential showstoppers could still derail this decision. So until you get all the details worked out, it's still not a done deal. Working with prospects at this stage of their decision making is all about choices and certainty."

– Jill Konrath

Although you're close to making the sale, you still have to keep the SNAP factors at the front of your mind:

- S** Even highly motivated prospects can cool off when they start to total up all the changes they will need to make in order to change their organizations. To offset this natural tendency, root out complexities and simplify the path ahead. Build their self-confidence.
- N** Unless and until you bring unique value to the deal, they will consider you as being disposable. If they don't sense you're adding unique value, they will look for the lowest cost option.
- A** You have developed a solid business case. Now you have to address risks. The prospect will want to be sure going with you is safe and that you're aligned with their corporate values.
- P** It's important to keep things moving forward and avoid getting bogged down. You have to align with their corporate priorities.

Your natural tendency at this stage – when you're face-to-face with a hot prospect – will be to babble on in glorious detail about what you have to offer and to present your pricing options for their final decision. Wrong, wrong, wrong. If you do that, you'll come across as an overeager beaver who is no different from everyone else selling the same kind of thing. Instead, slow down, catch your breath and remind yourself what's really going on here. Your job with Decision #3 is to remove any perceived risks involved in going with you. Instead of whipping out your order form for their signature, you need to:

- Make certain you've identified the primary decision makers.
- Developed a detailed Buyer's Matrix for each of those decision makers.
- Create a decision map which sets out all of the small decisions they will need to make on the way to their major decision to move ahead with a purchase.
- Landscape the competition – try and anticipate what your primary competitors will do to pitch for this piece of business you're after here.

In all of these areas, coming back to the four SNAP Rules will be the best way to ace Decision #3.

SNAP Rules

S

Keep it simple

Do everything you can to make Decision #3 as easy as possible. Rather than overwhelm them with an exhaustive display of all your expertise, try and act more like a guide or a advisor. Most prospects will love it if you cut through the fog and tell them these are the key factors worth considering when making a decision. It's even feasible to lead them by asking them questions about the driving force for their decision to change, how they plan on making a decision and the criteria they will be applying. Bring up the tough stuff they may be tempted to gloss over. Create a road map for the way forward. Stress what stays the same and what needs to change.

"Be rigorous in analyzing your sales approach, sales tools, and company policies for complexity. Always ask, 'How can we make it simpler?' Complexity is simply an obstacle that needs to be removed."

– Jill Konrath

SNAP Rules

N

Be invaluable

Your aim is to become the one they want to work with. To differentiate yourself and win over frazzled prospects, collaborate with them as if they were already customers. Drop the sales mentality and become a resource they trust because you act in their best interests. Bring them new ideas and fresh thinking on a regular basis so they get acclimatized to having you do that. Raise issues they need to be thinking about in advance so they gain confidence in your street smarts. Always be truthful and act with integrity. Look on this as an opportunity for the prospect to road test what you have to offer before making their final decision.

"Decisions today are rarely about price only – even though that may be what you hear most of the time. Crazy-busy customers willingly pay more to work with sellers who make their jobs easier, help them sort through the clutter, and bring them useful ideas and information. You are truly the differentiation with these frazzled people."

– Jill Konrath

SNAP Rules

A

Always align

Staying aligned is all about balancing the value-risk equation. Even if what you have offers a great return-on-investment, frazzled prospects will be weighing up whether the value of making the change outweighs the costs of staying the same. You must put forward a compelling business case and then help your prospects understand what the real costs will be of doing nothing at all. Unless you articulate the consequences of inaction clearly and concisely, they might not be aware of these themselves. Nobody wants to make a bad decision which will impact on their careers so it's vital you minimize the risk of accepting your proposal. Risk can be reduced by leveraging the qualitative data generated by external sources, by ensuring transparency, engaging multiple stakeholders in the same change initiative and by actively managing internal expectations.

"When your prospects are making the third decision, certainty is a crucial factor. Unless they feel confident they're making a solid business decision, one that will help them achieve their business objectives, they'll stay with what they have. It's just plain easier – and less scary."

– Jill Konrath

SNAP Rules

P

Raise priorities

In the runup to making a final decision, your prospect will probably need some outside validation you do what you say you can do. Provide that for them in the form of conversations with your existing customers, video testimonials, site visits or press clippings.

Once you've provided that, most companies will then invite the companies on their short-list to give a formal presentation to their buying team. This is your opportunity to shine – or else lose the business. Apply the four SNAP factors to your presentation – keep it simple, invaluable, aligned and prioritized. Tell the story of why they should work with you and give them a feel for what it will be like to collaborate with you to create more added value for their own organization.

Similarly, your written proposal should follow the SNAP principles. Key elements:

- A cover page which sets out your value proposition in clean and concise terms.
- A one- or two-page executive summary which is snappy and desired outcome based.
- Your central business case supported by real-world examples.
- Your proposed solution.

Put everything else such as references, case studies, client list, analyst reports and so forth into an appendix where it's available if they should want to read it.

As you develop your final presentation and written proposal, consider what you can do to make it easier for them to say yes. Some possible strategies in this regard:

- Propose fewer options – perhaps one optimum solution rather than a choice of three.
- Break your offering down into small pieces which can be split over multiple budget cycles.
- Give them more bang-for-their-buck by adding in other components at no additional investment.
- Offer economies of scale – buy-one / get-one-free works well in a retail setting. Perhaps it will be helpful for you as well.
- Put some skin in the game by tying a portion of your fees to the successful execution of the project.
- Make your written contracts simpler.
- Offer payment over time or other creative payment solutions.

Overall, Decision #3 is all about getting the prospect to see the pitfalls in maintaining the status quo and commit to working with you rather than any other option.

