

VISUALISING THE VALUE SELLING SYSTEM®



In stark contrast to traditional sales methodologies, Inflexion-Point's Value Selling System® is based around the key phases a potential customer goes through in their buying decision journey.

This approach is particularly relevant and appropriate to complex B2B buying decisions that typically involve multiple stakeholders, and where there is the very real possibility that - after a lengthy evaluation - the prospect may decide after all to stick with the status quo and do nothing.

Each stage in the Value Selling System® relates to a key phase in the potential customer's decision-making process, and is separated by clear milestones that confirm whether or the prospect is ready to move forward to the next phase.

The system tracks the prospect's mindset as they evolve from questioning "Do we really need to change anything?" through "What do we need change to?" and "Why should we choose you?" and ultimately "Why do we need to invest in this project now vs. other competing priorities?"

The system clearly establishes what best practice has shown that top performing sales people know and do at each stage in order to advance the opportunity and maximise their chances of winning.

It also includes clear qualification guidelines that allow sales people to reliably assess their chances of winning against a number of significant dimensions and to qualify out unpromising opportunities early, before a significant amount of effort is wasted on them.

The following pages illustrate the basic principles and framework, which are - of course - always adapted to reflect the specific circumstances of each sales organisation and process.

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VALUE SELLING SYSTEM® - BUYING PROCESS OVERVIEW ON-A-PAGE

BUYING PHASE	0: UNCONCERNED	1: INVESTIGATING	2: DEFINING	3: SELECTING	4: VALIDATING	5: CONFIRMING
BUYER MINDSET:	“Do we Really Need to Change Anything?”		“What Change to?”	“Why Choose You?”		“Why This Project Now?”
BUYER FOCUS: The prospective customer’s primary focus during this phase	The customer does not appear to be actively concerned about any of the critical problems we have chosen to target	The customer is actively investigating the problem and deciding whether action is required	The customer has decided there is a compelling reason to act and are defining their decision making process	The customer is evaluating shortlisted options and trying to agree on their preferred solution	The customer is trying to negotiate the best possible terms and eliminate any remaining risks or concerns	The customer has agreed terms with the chosen vendor and is submitting project for final formal approval
SELLER FOCUS: Our primary focus during this phase	We are targeting ideal customers and key stakeholders, educating them on key market trends and positioning ourselves as experts	We are qualifying the organisation, initial contact and opportunity and trying to establish whether they have a compelling reason to act	We are engaging the decision team and working with them to establish their vision of a solution and influence their requirements	We are demonstrating our solution, presenting our proposal, defeating the competition and aiming to get selected as the chosen option.	We are negotiating terms, co-developing the final business case and seeking to eliminate any remaining doubts or reservations	We need to support our primary sponsor in arguing the case for their project against any other competing investment opportunities
KEY STEPS: Key things we need to know and do during each phase	Identify Ideal Customer and Primary Stakeholder Profiles Build prospecting database Implement thought leadership campaigns Monitor trigger events Personalised, tailored outbound prospecting	Engage the potential prospect in substantive conversation Qualify company fit Qualify solution fit Qualify the contact If initial contact is not an obvious change agent, attempt to identify and engage somebody who is Qualify whether there is a clear and compelling reason to act	Identify and if possible engage the decision making team Attempt to shape the prospect’s vision of a solution Understand the decision making sequence and timeframe Understand and if possible influence the decision criteria Qualify whether the decision making process is favourable to us	Demonstrate our superior solution fit against their decision criteria Establish our unique value to each member of the decision team Establish our unique advantages over the other options being considered Deliver and present a winning proposal that includes a compelling business case for both the project and our solution	Negotiate mutually acceptable commercial and contractual terms Systematically identify and eliminate any remaining reservations about doing business with us Systematically identify and eliminate any remaining concerns about whether the project is viable and likely to be approved Co-develop the final internal business case	Ensuring that the business justification for our project is solid and superior to other investment options Supporting our prime sponsor in their submission of our project for approval Reinforcing the credibility of the project, our company and our solution in final approval process
KEY MILESTONES: Key criteria that need to be satisfied before we can advance the opportunity to the next phase	We become aware that a credible contact in a potential target organisation is interested in a problem we have chosen to target	A credible change agent in a credible potential customer acknowledges a problem we have targeted, confirms there is a clear case for change, and agrees to move to the next stage with us.	The decision team comes up with a set of criteria that seem favourable to us, we believe the opportunity is winnable and worth winning, and they agree to shortlist us	The decision team inform us that we are their preferred solution, that the project remains viable, and that they wish to move forward with us to the “validating” stage	The negotiating team inform us that we have an agreement in principle and that the project is being submitted for final formal approval	We receive an acceptable, bookable order

BUYING PROCESS DETAIL - STAGE 0: UNCONCERNED

BUYER MINDSET:	Do we really need to change anything?	
BUYER FOCUS:	The customer does not appear to be actively concerned about any of the critical problems we have chosen to target	
SELLER FOCUS:	We are targeting ideal customers and key stakeholders, educating them on key market trends and positioning ourselves as experts	
KEY STEPS:	<p>NOTE: During this phase, the prospective customer may or not be aware of us, but even if they are, they are not yet actively engaged with us with regard to the targeted problem - and whether or not they are aware of the targeted problem, they appear to be currently unconcerned about it. Our goals during this phase are to raise their awareness of the potential problem, position ourselves as experts, and persuade them to want to engage with us in order to learn more. This is inevitably a joint effort between sales, business development and marketing.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Define the problems we have chosen to target, together with their symptoms and consequences, and identify our relevant capabilities - Define our Ideal Customer and Key Stakeholder profiles - Build our target customer database (organisations and roles) - Position ourselves as experts in solving the targeted problem(s) - Conduct broad-based inbound and outbound marketing campaigns - Conduct targeted, personalised campaigns aimed at identified prime targets 	
KEY MILESTONES:	We become aware that a credible contact in a potential target organisation is interested in a problem we have chosen to target, they are willing to engage with us, and agree to move to the next stage with us [1: INVESTIGATING]	
KEY METRICS:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Number of potential leads we identify - Percentage of potential leads that advance from this stage to the next - Percentage win rate and average value of potential leads that become qualified opportunities that we ultimately win - Average time in stage and total time to close of potential leads that become qualified opportunities that we ultimately win 	
KEY MARKETING COLLATERAL/ACTIVITIES	KEY SALES TOOLS	KEY SALES QUESTIONS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Issue and impact-based white papers and other thought leadership materials - Issue-based outbound/inbound marketing campaigns - Issue-based social media - Attend relevant events 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ideal Customer Profile - Key Stakeholder Profile(s) - Target account database - Personalised prospecting emails and call plans - Social media monitoring and outreach to targeted contacts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How familiar are you with [targeted issue]? - What impact could it have on your organisation? - Who else might be affected by the issue? - Has your company taken or thought about taking any steps to deal with the issue?

BUYING PROCESS DETAIL - STAGE 1: INVESTIGATING

BUYER MINDSET:	Do we really need to change anything?	
BUYER FOCUS:	The customer is actively investigating the problem and deciding whether action is required	
SELLER FOCUS:	We are qualifying the organisation, initial contact and opportunity and trying to establish whether they have a compelling reason to act	
KEY STEPS:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Conduct a detailed discovery process (one or more substantive conversations) - Qualify company and high level solution fits (and complete relevant qualification checklists) - Qualify primary contact (and qualify whether they are a potential change agent - if not attempt to find someone who is) - Identify cost and consequences of inaction and assess case for change (and capture details in opportunity record) - Identify who else within the organisation is affected by the problem and how - Establish whether a budget exists or if not, how the project will be funded and who will sponsor it - Assess whether they are likely to do anything and whether we have a good chance of winning - Come up with a strategy and review it with your manager - Decide whether the opportunity is winnable and worth investing resources in - AGREE AND DOCUMENT JOINT ACTION PLAN AND CONFIRM NEXT STEPS [must include buyer commitments to take specific actions] 	
KEY MILESTONES:	A credible change agent in a credible potential customer acknowledges a problem we have targeted, confirms there is a clear case for change, and agrees to move to the next stage with us [2: DEFINING]	
KEY METRICS:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Percentage of opportunities that advance from this stage to the next - Percentage win rate and average value of opportunities that we ultimately win - Average time in stage and total time to close of opportunities that we ultimately win 	
KEY MARKETING COLLATERAL/ACTIVITIES	KEY SALES TOOLS	KEY SALES QUESTIONS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Issue and impact-based white papers and other thought leadership materials - Issue-based outbound/inbound marketing campaigns - Issue-based social media - Attend relevant events 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ideal Customer and Key Stakeholder Profile(s) - Discovery call conversation planner and talking points - Anecdotes database - Issue-led introductory sales presentation - Company fit qualification checklist - Solution fit qualification checklist - Contact qualification checklist - Cost and consequences of inaction calculator 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What first drew your attention to [targeted issue]? - What impact is it having on your organisation? - Who else is or could be affected by the issue? - Have you made any attempts to deal with the issue? - What would happen if you carried on as you are today? - What are the specific costs, risks and consequences of sticking with the status quo? - Do you agree that there is a clear reason to take action? - How will the project be justified/funded?

BUYING PROCESS DETAIL - STAGE 2: DEFINING

BUYER MINDSET:	What do we need to change to?	
BUYER FOCUS:	The customer has decided there is a compelling reason to act and are defining their decision making process	
SELLER FOCUS:	We are engaging the decision team and working with them to establish their vision of a solution and influence their requirements	
KEY STEPS:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reassess company and solution fit and case for change - Establish likely deal value and reassess probable close date - Establish source of funds - Understand their decision process and timeframe - Assess whether there is a compelling event - Assess how this project relates to their overall business priorities - Identify what alternative options are being considered and assess where we stand with regard to them - Identify and engage with all the stakeholders in their decision making team - Assess where we stand with each member of the decision team - Influence their vision of a solution and decision criteria - Assess whether the opportunity is winnable and still worth investing resources in - UPDATE AND DOCUMENT JOINT ACTION PLAN AND CONFIRM NEXT STEPS [must include buyer commitment to take specific actions] 	
KEY MILESTONES:	The decision team comes up with a set of criteria that seem favourable to us, we believe the opportunity is winnable and worth winning, and they agree to shortlist us and move to the next stage with us [3: SELECTING]	
KEY METRICS:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Percentage of opportunities that advance from this stage to the next - Percentage win rate and average value of opportunities that we ultimately win - Average time in stage and total time to close of opportunities that we ultimately win 	
KEY MARKETING COLLATERAL/ACTIVITIES	KEY SALES TOOLS	KEY SALES QUESTIONS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Solution-based white papers and other thought leadership materials - Solution-based outbound/inbound marketing campaigns - "What to look for in a solution" checklists 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Solution definition / decision criteria talking points - Solution-led sales presentation - Stakeholder qualification checklist - Case studies - Solution overviews (generic and industry-specific) - Solution architecture overviews 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Who will be involved in the decision process? - What roles will the decision team members play? - What are the key steps and timeframes? - What options will you be considering? - What decision criteria and weighting will you be using? - What's the single most important decision factor? - How does this project fit with your overall priorities?

BUYING PROCESS DETAIL - STAGE 3: SELECTING

BUYER MINDSET:	Why should we choose you?	
BUYER FOCUS:	The customer is evaluating shortlisted options and trying to agree on their preferred solution	
SELLER FOCUS:	We are demonstrating our solution, presenting our proposal, defeating the competition and aiming to get selected as the chosen option.	
KEY STEPS:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reconfirm the decision criteria, process, timeframe and decision team - Identify what happens after the preferred vendor is selected (validation and confirmation) and who is involved - Reassess likely deal value and probable close date - Assess where we stand against the other shortlisted options (at both a solution and company level) - Establish and test our key differentiators - Test and validate our proposed pricing - Demonstrate our key capabilities - Offer case studies, references and other confidence-building measures - Submit draft contracts for initial review - Review draft proposal with key decision team members before submitting - Submit and present proposal to decision team - Emerge as the preferred option and eliminate all other options - UPDATE AND DOCUMENT JOINT ACTION PLAN AND CONFIRM NEXT STEPS [must include buyer commitment to take specific actions] 	
KEY MILESTONES:	The decision team inform us that we are their preferred solution, that the project remains viable, and that they wish to move forward with us to the next stage [4: VALIDATING]	
KEY METRICS:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Percentage of opportunities that advance from this stage to the next - Percentage win rate and average value of opportunities that we ultimately win - Average time in stage and total time to close of opportunities that we ultimately win 	
KEY MARKETING COLLATERAL/ACTIVITIES	KEY SALES TOOLS	KEY SALES QUESTIONS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Solution evaluation guide - Case studies - References 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Price list/ configurator - Demonstration planner/guide - Draft contracts - Proposal template - Proposal presentation template 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Have you eliminated all other options? - What do we need to agree in the next phase? - Who will be involved in the validation phase? - Who else do we need to convince? - What do we need to do to secure your recommendation?

BUYING PROCESS DETAIL - STAGE 4: VALIDATING

BUYER MINDSET:	Why should we choose you?	
BUYER FOCUS:	The customer is trying to negotiate the best possible terms and eliminate any remaining risks or concerns	
SELLER FOCUS:	We are negotiating terms, co-developing the final business case and seeking to eliminate any remaining doubts or reservations	
KEY STEPS:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Identify and engage with members of the customer's negotiating team - Agree a checklist of everything that needs to be addressed/accomplished - Establish initial negotiating positions - Negotiate and agree final contractual terms - Negotiate and agree final commercial terms - Identify and eliminate any remaining concerns or reservations - Review and if necessary refine their internal business case - Understand and document the post-validation final confirmation process - Identify and if possible engage with the final approval team - UPDATE AND DOCUMENT JOINT ACTION PLAN AND CONFIRM NEXT STEPS [must include buyer commitment to take specific actions] 	
KEY MILESTONES:	The negotiating team inform us that we have an agreement in principle and that the project is being submitted for final formal approval [5: CONFIRMING]	
KEY METRICS:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Percentage of opportunities that advance from this stage to the next - Percentage win rate and average value of opportunities that we ultimately win - Average time in stage and total time to close of opportunities that we ultimately win 	
KEY MARKETING COLLATERAL/ACTIVITIES	KEY SALES TOOLS	KEY SALES QUESTIONS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Solution evaluation guide - Case studies - References 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Give/get negotiating guidelines - Case studies - Reference calls - Executive involvement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Do you have any remaining reservations about going ahead with the project? - Do you have any remaining reservations about doing business with us? - What else do we need to prove to you? - What else do we need to do to secure your business? - What is your new vendor onboarding process? - What does the final confirmation stage involve? - When can we expect to receive your order? - When do you want the implementation to start?

BUYING PROCESS DETAIL - STAGE 5: CONFIRMING

BUYER MINDSET:	Why do we need to invest in this project now vs. other competing priorities?	
BUYER FOCUS:	The customer has agreed terms with the chosen vendor and is submitting project for final formal approval	
SELLER FOCUS:	We need to support our primary sponsor in arguing the case for their project against any other competing investment opportunities	
KEY STEPS:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Understand the final approval process - Understand the final approval criteria - Identify and if possible engage with the final approval team - Identify the potential competing projects and help our sponsor position our project against them - Support our sponsor and the rest of the decision team in preparing the internal proposal for final approval - Understand the new vendor onboarding process (if necessary) - Get the vendor onboarding process started (if necessary) - Identify the implementation team - Agree the implementation programme - Told the project has been approved - Receive an acceptable, bookable order - UPDATE AND DOCUMENT JOINT ACTION PLAN AND CONFIRM NEXT STEPS [must include buyer commitment to take specific actions] 	
KEY MILESTONES:	We receive an acceptable, bookable order	
KEY METRICS:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Percentage of opportunities that advance from this stage to the next - Percentage win rate and average value of opportunities that we ultimately win - Average time in stage and total time to close of opportunities that we ultimately win 	
KEY MARKETING COLLATERAL/ACTIVITIES	KEY SALES TOOLS	KEY SALES QUESTIONS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Company credentials 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Business case guidelines - Material to support internal project presentation - Executive involvement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What could go wrong with the final approval process? - How can we mitigate any risk to the project going ahead? - What questions do you anticipate the final approval team will ask about the project?