

15x Ways to do better at the cat and mouse game that can be hi-tech sales.

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1). Educate, don't sell.

"Selling to people who actually want to hear from you is more effective than interrupting strangers who don't. [Seth Godin](#)

Helping is the new selling.

The most successful salespeople are the ones who aren't viewed as salespeople, but who are subject matter experts and can add value through their advice. The effort needs to focus on not just chasing down a sale but by adding value through sharing knowledge.

Ask yourself:

- How do buyers describe the challenges or goals your offering addresses?
- How do buyers learn more about these challenges or goals?
- How do buyers decide whether the challenge or goal should be prioritized?

2). Define your buyer's journey.

Avoid building your sales process around your own needs; address your customer's pain. Buyers don't want to be prospected, nurtured or closed, as these steps add zero value outside information that they can find themselves.

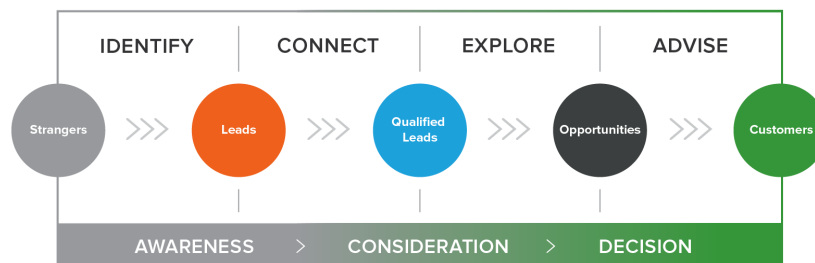
An important step for developing an inbound sales perspective is to define the [buyer's journey](#) to be able to adopt a "buyer-centric" attitude that places the buyer's needs foremost.

A few simple questions to ask yourself when you are formulating a buyer's journey are:

- **Buyer Stage** – at what stage is your lead at Awareness, Consideration or Decision?
- What information needs do your prospects have and how are they researching the subject?
- For this type of **buyer persona**, do they have a preferred way to digest the content or interact with you?

3). Develop a sales process that supports your buyer through the journey.

Once the buying journey is defined, the next step is to build your sales process. This **inbound sales** process supports the buyer through their purchasing journey starting as a stranger right through to becoming a loyal customer (see **HubSpot** Inbound sales methodology below). As a result, salespeople and buyers feel aligned through the buying and selling process, not at odds with one another.



4). Don't start with "What is your budget?"

Before the relationship starts to blossom, is it really necessary to know about budget up front anyway? If you have done adequate research you will know if they have bought something similar in the past or fit the profile of buyer who would.

Instead of demanding a budget figure try to understand your contacts process for buying, what are the typical obstacles or considerations taken into account in a sales process.

5). Identify buyers you believe are a good fit.

Many buyers have already entered the awareness stage of the buying journey before they engage with salespeople and as an active buyer these should be targeted first. Active buyers may have recently visited the company website, filled out a form, opened an emails, or left a clue of their need in some other way.

Before you can identify potential buyers, you need to define which buyers you can help and which buyers you can't. This is called the ideal buyer profile, and defines which buyers are a good fit for your offering or not.

6). Define how you will connect with a buyer.

Modern buyers do not rely solely on messages from salespeople today to learn about products and services. This information is readily available online whenever buyers are interested. They do want to have a two-way conversation with an expert who can help and offer advice at the right time. If you are going to know when that time is, or what triggers to look for you will need to define your **buyer personas**. These semi-fictional customer definition will help you to segment your target market and learn their behaviour.

7). What is your customer's pain?

You won't get the answer simply by asking. It could be that the buyer themselves is not clear on what symptoms they have to be able to identify their problem. Everything we buy is bought for a reason, so unless you know the **pain**, how can you truly help and tailor your approach to address this?

8). Are you the decision maker?

Are you asking if they're the ultimate decision maker or who you need to get past to move on to the next step in the buying process? Instead, ask the question "Who is involved in this process...?" to reveal relevant influencers, stakeholders, and the ultimate decision maker.

9). How strategic are you?

It is unlikely that your prospect will say "not at all" (even if that's the truth). On the other hand, if they do show vulnerability, this is something for you to take into account in your approach and need to consider if this customer is the right fit. The most effective tactic here is to listen to your prospects responses.

10). Would you like a proposal or quote?

When you ask this question, it can go one of two ways - either "no thanks we are happy with what we have..." or "yes, we will gladly take a proposal..." (and use it to price check another vendor.) A proposal should simply be a summary of expectations, a scope of work and serves as documentation for the work being completed.

11). Would you like a presentation?

If you are presenting, then you are talking at the prospect and not listening to them. Presenting credentials always has a place, but rather than being too bullish at such an early stage it is more effective to ask questions of your prospect to learn what their challenges are and how they would need help.

12). Is this a good time to chat?

Unfortunately it is rare to find a prospect who has been sitting by the phone waiting for a salesperson to call. This question gives your prospect an easy way out, so ask if this is a bad time to call and hopefully with permission expand on the reasons for the call.

13). What will it take to earn your business?

This isn't exactly the way a successful partnership starts. Get to know the prospect's business challenges, and how you can help and offer advice. But initiating a one-way relationship is not going to be good for business, and may not put you in a good light in terms of your approach to doing business.

14). Can you tell me about your business?

It is tempting to open with a question like this, but such a high-level approach tells the buyer that you may not have done your homework. Start with questions that try to develop an understanding of where the business is at, it's challenges and goals at a strategic level.

15). Engaging conversation - checklist.

- Ask permission - it's appropriate to show respect by asking permission to ask questions.
- Start broad, and then get specific - open-ended questions are a good way to start gathering information and put your prospect at ease.
- Build on previous responses - and on your research.
- Use the prospect's industry buzzwords, if appropriate.
- Keep questions simple.
- Keep questions non-threatening - take the pressure off.
- Focus on desired benefits based on your understanding of their needs.
- Maintain a consultative attitude, exude a relaxed tone of voice and wait for responses.
- Don't be in a hurry to get to your next appointment.

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