

## STRATEGY AND ITS ROLE IN SUCCESSFUL SALES CAMPAIGNS

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### AN INTRODUCTION TO STRATEGY AND STRATEGIC THINKING.

'Strategy' and 'strategic' are words I hear frequently when sales teams are discussing plans to win important sales opportunities. Interestingly, the words themselves seem to be heard much more frequently when they know they are engaged in a major sales opportunity where powerful, threatening competitors are also active.

In seminars, strategy exercises are punctuated with questions like 'What's their strategy?' or, 'How competitive are we really?' or even exhortations from Account Managers like, 'We have to be more strategic!'

Here's a question - 'What is 'being strategic' about?' What words or phrases come to mind? The responses that are heard most often are 'it's the big picture', or 'it's about the longer term isn't it?' or '...doesn't planning have something to do with it?' Sometimes, if you listen really hard you can hear, 'isn't about the competition's plan' or 'doesn't it have something to do with an action plan?'

These responses do have a place in the definition of strategic thinking but the process and the components of effective strategic thinking are much, much more than just these words and phrases.

So what is 'strategy' and what has 'strategic thinking' got to do with the important business of winning sales?

The word 'strategy' originates from the Greek word 'strategos' meaning 'the general'. Like a general on the battlefield, the function of strategy, is to first, **organise** and then **direct**, the actions of the sales team via the speediest and most effective route to its primary objective - winning the sale.

Strategy defines the most effective route to achieving any sales or sales-related objective like, building a personal relationship with a decision maker, introducing a new product or launching a marketing initiative.

If an objective describes '**what**' the sales team is trying to achieve then a strategy describes '**how**' that objective will be achieved.

In his excellent book 'The Art of War for Executives', Donald Krause describes strategy and strategic thinking this way, '.....a winning executive creates the conditions of victory before taking any initiative. A losing executive takes initiative before knowing how to succeed..... in taking the initiative he carefully considers strategy. The elements of strategy are: identifying opportunity; gathering facts; analyzing alternatives; judging appropriateness and taking action' Sun Tzu in the 'Art of War' describes strategic thinking in a more concise way, 'Victory can be crafted.....I probe carefully to determine which strategies can win and which will lose....'

Strategic thinking provides the sales team with a powerful process with which to outthink and outmaneuver its competitors, create competitive advantage and deliver compelling business value to the customer.

Strategic thinking enabled American Airlines increase its market share of the highly competitive business traveller sector in the US during the 1980s.

They knew only too well that the American business travellers basic expectations of airline service was already well-established, with features such as fast-track check-in, business lounges, comfortable, spacious seating and good quality food etc.

AA knew that they had to continue to meet all of these well-established decision criteria as did all of their main competitors who also wanted to increase their market share of this valuable passenger sector.

The strategy that AA used was to not only meet but also expand the airline selection criteria of the business traveller. Not only did they continue to strive to exceed their business travellers existing expectations but they introduced an additional and unique service that made a significant and exciting impact on its target market and differentiated it from its key competitors.

They introduced 'Advantage', the very first air-miles based loyalty programme which almost immediately made a huge impact on business travellers. Business travellers very quickly

perceived the significant benefits that could be derived by choosing AA – free trips, exotic holidays and a range of other travel-related offers that was available from only one source – American Airlines. AA's success was attributable to defining and implementing a powerful strategy based on the key components of strategic thinking we looked at in Donald Krause's definition earlier.

- Identifying opportunity
- Gathering facts
- Analyzing alternatives
- Judging appropriateness
- Taking action

However for sales teams to make this kind of consistent sales impact they have to follow through on the five key components. They are the vital ingredients of effective strategic thinking. We'll look at these components in more detail later on.

I sometimes describe this highly effective approach to strategic thinking as the 'first aim and then fire' approach which should be contrasted with the more popular sales approach namely, 'first fire and, if you miss the target, keep firing, you are bound to hit something eventually!' But a word of caution! Strategic thinking does not guarantee success. Whatever strategy the team finally decides upon may still have vulnerabilities. Strategy's key contribution is that it provides the means by which the sales team can decide how it will compete at optimum effectiveness.

## **STRATEGIC THINKING – THE FIVE KEY COMPONENTS**

### **STEP 1: Identifying Opportunity – Real Gold or Fool's Gold?**

The first important decision a sales team has to make is what is commonly known as the 'Bid/No Bid' decision. How do we test that a sales lead can be developed into a real opportunity? How can we gain the necessary insight to decide that we can compete, let alone win? One of the key challenges for any sales team is that there are usually other opportunities in play. Keeping all the team's 'ducks in a row' can be a difficult task. Some opportunities are approaching the closure stage, some are not yet qualified and others are at mid-campaign stage. Finding the resources to qualify the newest leads properly can be tough but neglecting the strategic process can lead to a Catch-22 situation. Will qualifying improperly mean that the team are left to apportion valuable resources to opportunities that are in fact 'fool's gold'? On the other hand, to resource the qualification of new opportunities properly may mean a reduction on the impact on those opportunities already in play. As we'll see later, harnessing the individual resources of the complete sales team rather than the usual situation of leaving the work to the Account Manager alone can frequently help overcome this problem. With that in mind, there is absolutely no way in which this initial decision can be made with confidence without the help and assistance of the second component, 'Gathering Facts'. American Airlines strategy would never have been possible, let alone successful, unless it had first gathered key data about the marketplace, its competitors' position and most importantly, the needs of the business traveller.

AA needed to decide first that there was a potential opportunity that would produce the result that it wanted. Once this was achieved, it then had to implement the most effective strategy with which to achieve its primary objective of increasing its market share of the business traveller sector.

This is the usual starting point as far as any potential sales opportunity is concerned. This initial strategy we will call the 'Research' strategy. When a sales lead is identified, the team's action plan needs to focus on gathering specific data so that the primary objective - the 'Bid/No Bid' decision is made quickly and confidently.

A sales manager, who joined me in sales seminars run in the UK for a telephony equipment company, told the delegates of a sales situation that illustrates this important stage of the sales cycle.

One of his Account Managers had received a Request for Proposal (RFP) from a provincial government based in Scotland. As usual, the RFP contained a lot of technical information and requirements but very little about the business objectives of the project and nothing at all about any other potential suppliers who had also been invited to bid for the project. This particular sales manager had always done an excellent job in ensuring the account **managers in his team took a 'strategic' approach when preparing their response to an RFP. The teams were always briefed about any missing or incomplete information that was needed before the preparation of a first draft submission.**

The account team reconvened a few days later and discovered that they had each been singularly unsuccessful in gathering any information of any real value. They had been literally 'stonewalled'. Undeterred, they went out for a second time, spoke with more people and tried to gather the information they needed. However, the result was the same – nothing of real value had been learnt.

The Sales Manager and the Account Manager then made what some salespeople might consider an unusual decision. They decided to withdraw from the bidding process. Their decision was based on their being 'stonewalled'. The conclusion they reached was that the 'stonewalling' revealed that the likelihood of winning the opportunity was remote at best and they had probably been asked to bid 'make up the numbers'.

Determined to withdraw in as professional a manner, they made an appointment with the Provincial Government's Bid Coordinator, thanked him for the invitation to bid but regretfully they had decided, on this occasion, to withdraw from the bidding process. The Sales Manager and the Account Manager then shook his hand and left the room. Moments later, they heard footsteps behind them as the Bid Coordinator hurriedly pursued them down the corridor saying "Wait! Wait! You cannot withdraw!" When the Sales Manager enquired as to why, The Bid Coordinator replied anxiously "Because I must have three bids! I have to have three!"

The Sales Manager's rationale was clear. He always finished up his story by challenging the sales teams in the room to think very carefully about the opportunities they decided to pursue. His point was this: If we invest valuable time, money and effort in the numerous activities needed to support the bidding process when we are already fairly certain we cannot win what else might we lose because those valuable resources are tied up in this 'no-win' situation? We also looked earlier at the issue of team collaboration significantly easing the potential resource problem of actually gathering and assessing the factual intelligence. What we can see in this example is the way in which the whole team was organised and focused on collecting the key information – reflecting how, in this case the Research strategy was used appropriately as the general providing discipline and focus for the whole team.

The strategy used by the Account Team in this example is known as either 'Withdraw' or 'Disengage'. It's not always perceived as an 'upbeat' strategy but Sun Tzu interestingly confirms that 'Withdraw' is a legitimate strategy, 'A leader who knows when to *fight and when to retreat will win*.'

The critical word here is 'knows' and leads us to the second component of effective strategic thinking, '*Gathering Facts*'.

## **STEP 2: Gathering Facts – Finding the Evidence**

Donald Krause directs the sales team to think very carefully about information gathering when he says, - "*Information means getting facts – timely, accurate facts about the reality of conditions and circumstances in the competitive situation. Nothing in competition is more important than obtaining facts*"

In his book 'Selling the Big Ticket'; Buck Blessing wittily describes this common sales problem: '*A miner who starts panning whenever he sees water doesn't find much gold. The successful miner first looks for evidence*'

We live in the 'Information Age' where technology and the Internet especially, have created unprecedented access to incredible amounts of information. We can now discover quickly and easily virtually anything about any topic we want at the 'click of a mouse' with the familiar cry of 'Google it!' echoing in our ears!

With this in mind, you could be forgiven for thinking that information gathering for the sales team should be relatively straightforward. Not so!

There is a world of difference between what we will call 'general information' and 'factual intelligence'. In other words, there is general information that is 'good to have' and factual intelligence that is 'vital to have'. Effective strategic thinking is based on factual intelligence. Like the successful gold prospector, it is this kind of information which provides the vital evidence that the sales team must have in order to first, qualify each opportunity and then progress to define its competitive strategy for each specific sales opportunity.

In my seminars, I frequently find that sales teams base their strategy assessment and selection on inaccurate or unproven information or even worse, simply make assumptions about the competitive and business environment. This course of action can be a recipe for wasted time, wasted effort and a whole lot of frustration.

A colleague tells a true story of an amusing situation which happened when he was leading a seminar in Winnipeg, Canada. He was working with the client's complete sales unit – the Sales Director, the Sales Managers and the full compliment of Account Managers and their teams. He was at the stage in the seminar of beginning the Opportunity Qualification module. He led off the session with the simple question: 'Tell me what you do here to qualify your sales opportunities?' An awkward silence seemed to immediately descend on the room. The Sales Director was the first to respond: 'We use the Winnipeg Bid/No Bid System' he stated boldly. My colleague, noticing the quizzical looks on almost everybody else's face replied 'I don't believe I've heard of that particular system. How does it work?'

The Sales Director then explained that the 'system' was based on an eight sided model. On seven of the sides they wrote the word 'Bid', inserted a spindle in the centre of the model and spun it! Whichever side it landed on, that is what they did! By this stage it had become quite clear that this was a 'spooft'. The Sales Director's smile by now had given the game away! Undeterred, my colleague was determined to see the 'spooft' through. 'Interesting' he said, 'but tell me, what do you write on the eighth side?' Amid peals of laughter, the Sales Director replied, 'SPIN AGAIN!'

The Winnipeg Bid/No Bid system is alive and well in many of today's sales organisations. The system has only two qualities – It's quick and it's easy. Apart from that it is responsible for more wasted time, misplaced investment and unproductive effort than almost any other illjudged activity in the sales organisation of today.

So, unless the sales team want to remain a honorary member of the Winnipeg Bid/No Bid System Club, what market intelligence does the sales team need in order to achieve this initial objective of qualifying opportunities quickly and effectively?

There are five interconnected categories of factual intelligence that needs to be gathered in order for an effective 'Bid: No Bid' decision to be made:

1. Defining the criticality and priority of the customer's business problem or 'pain'
2. Identifying the formal decision makers and their 'trusted advisors', the informal decision influencers
3. Confirming that our business solution will address the customer's business problem.
4. Understanding each competitor's strategic position and the level of competitive advantage each position provides.
5. Assessing and confirming that we can access and deploy

I was working in Stockholm, Sweden with five sales teams from a software company and we were at the stage in the seminar when I asked them to carry out an initial qualification of some 'live' sales opportunities that they had brought with them.

Based on the five criteria, each team was asked to assess the decision they had made to compete for each of their opportunities. The objective of the exercise was to highlight three basic learning points:

1. Had they made a formal assessment based on market intelligence?
2. Was the market intelligence based on factual intelligence or guesswork?
3. How sound was their decision to engage in the opportunity?

This exercise was an important preliminary step in the seminar which would then lead on to an in-depth discussion of how to define and select the most appropriate competitive strategy for each of the opportunities.

As I moved around each of the groups in turn listening to the various discussions, debates and a few arguments as well, I was drawn to one particular team. The team comprised of three experienced salesmen and one young lady. She was new to sales and had recently joined the company as a member of an internal sales support group.

As this team discussed its sales opportunity, it became clear that a difference of opinion had developed about the accuracy of the information being used for the qualification exercise. This feisty young lady had begun to challenge the salesmen about the validity of the information they were using. Their initial reaction to her challenges was to gently remind her that the information was accurate and they really did not take to kindly to her questioning its accuracy, given that she was not only new to sales but also new to her job! Undeterred she persisted with her challenges. 'Who told you?' she asked. 'How did you find that out?' she queried. 'You didn't check that information did you?' she pointed out.

It didn't take too long for it to become clear that they were using many assumptions and a lot of guesswork in arriving at their assessment decision. Thanks to her persistence, the salesmen finally admitted, a little shamefaced that they had used far too much guesswork and had carried out a poor assessment.

Regretfully, this example is by no means the exception. Guesswork and assumptions form the basis of many sales campaigns and as a consequence, valuable resources are frittered away on sales campaigns that have no basis in factual intelligence. Ill-disciplined account managers must take responsibility for much of this unprofessional behaviour but weak sales managers must also shoulder their share of the blame for allowing valuable resources to be wasted chasing 'fool's gold'.

Let's be clear – it's virtually impossible to gather every piece of granular information – there's never enough time or people to turn over every stone. At the same time guesswork and assumptions lead not only to a plethora of unproductive sales campaigns but also impact directly onto other 'real' opportunities which should be won but are actually lost because they are under resourced.

### **STEP 3: Analyzing Alternatives - 'When you don't know where you are going, any road will do' (The Cheshire Cat to Alice – Alice in Wonderland)**

As we have already seen, strategic thinking is a function of how much 'factual intelligence' the sales team has about the customer, political, competitive and resource landscape of a specific opportunity.

However, it is at this stage that sales teams can quite easily make a costly error. Having completed the groundwork necessary to qualify the opportunity and made the decision to compete, the sales team then 'defaults' to a previously successful strategy. Why? Simply because the characteristics of the current opportunity surprisingly resembles those of a past opportunity where that 'default' strategy was successful! This is a big mistake waiting to happen! This mistake is pervasive throughout the marketplace and in my experience is responsible for many opportunities that are lost when in fact, they should be won. Some sales

teams even go as far as to implement a favourite strategy over and over again. As a result that team becomes totally predictable and are easy prey for those skilful competitors who can read their game plan and outthink and outmanoeuvre them.

The basic principle is simple – each opportunity is unique. Some of the important characteristics of each opportunity will always be different, no matter how much one opportunity may appear to resemble another.

One way to think about this issue is to look at how an airline crew prepares for a particular flight. No matter how many times the crew had flown from one departure point to a particular destination, it will always carry out rigorous pre-flight checks and will continue with some of those checks during the course of the flight. The crew may well have flown the London to New York journey many times and yet they carry out their pre- and in-flight checks each and every time.

Why? Whilst each flight may well resemble other previous flights on a particular route, there are number of variable factors which have to be considered when it comes to deciding the route that will be chosen. Weather conditions, payload, other traffic en route, fuel considerations, departure and arrival airport conditions to name but a few. All of these factors will play a role in the final flight path that is selected and filed by the flight crew. On long-haul flights it is quite likely that adjustments to the flight plan will be made to take account of what variable factors do most often – vary!

Sales opportunities are no different. Whilst the sales team might be trying to sell a tried and tested business solution to a customer in a well known market sector to address familiar business issues, there will be key differences in the profile of each opportunity. Decision makers and influencers will be different, business and personal agendas will vary, key requirements will be based on different criteria and metrics and competitors and their strategic positioning will certainly vary from previous opportunities. Like the long haul flight, the sales team will need to constantly re-evaluate its strategy based on new intelligence when the customer's buying cycle spans a number of months.

So if the sales team re-runs a previously successful strategy simply because the opportunity looks and feels like another opportunity then the outcome could well be catastrophic! As Dixon and Nalebuff confirm in 'Thinking Strategically', 'We develop the ideas and principles of strategic thinking to a specific situation you face; to find the right choice there, you will have to do some more work. This is because the specifics of each situation are likely to differ in some significant aspects'

During a seminar in Scandinavia, I was detailing, to a group of partners who worked for a major management consultancy, a number of competitive sales strategies. As I ran through each of the strategies and some examples of where each strategy had been successful, I was interrupted by a senior partner among the group, 'Thank you Terry, for telling me what I have been doing for the past ten years!' I believe he was reassured that the way in which he had been strategising, albeit intuitively, over that decade was after all, based on some sound sales principles.

This illustration though begs the question – what about intuition, that sixth sense or 'gut-feel', that sales teams may use more frequently than they care to admit? Why does this approach sometimes seem to work?

My view is that where intuition is used to define a particular plan for a specific sales opportunity and it is based on factual intelligence then there is always the possibility that intuition may well play a decisive role in defining a successful strategy. In the same way an experienced flight crew could well come up with a sound flight plan without doing all of the pre- and in-flight checks, take off and subsequently land safely. However given that the definition of a successful pilot is one who has the same number of landings as takeoffs, one has to ask whether continuous intuition would always pay off?

So, having done our pre-flight checks by assessing and qualifying the opportunity based on

factual intelligence, what issues do we need to consider in arriving at the most appropriate competitive strategy? The next step is where the 'Research' strategy really needs to be implemented with discipline, focus and speed. Here is where the resources of the whole team should be harnessed to gather more factual intelligence that will help to develop a much fuller picture of the five key dimensions we looked at earlier.

This time more detailed questions have been added to each that will develop a deeper understanding of each dimension and lead to a clearer picture of which strategy will create the maximum competitive advantage for the sales team.

### **1. Defining the criticality and priority of the customer's business issue.**

Developing further insight into the customer's business agenda will provide the sales team with a much clearer picture of the ultimate business solution needed to solve the customer's problem. That deeper insight can also help the sales team identify potential differentiators that can underpin its competitive advantage.

- How mission-critical is the customer's problem? Is it high, medium or low?
- What other customer projects might compete for funding?
- What measurable results is the customer seeking from the project?
- Which time frames and milestones are important in the customer's project schedule?
- What are the consequences on the customer's business if the project fails?
- What is the customer's budget for the project?

### **2. Identifying the formal decision makers and their 'trusted advisors', the informal decision influencers.**

This group of highly influential individuals is sometimes called the Decision Making Unit (DMU). There are two categories of individuals who make up the DMU – the formal individuals who perform the role of Decision Makers and/or Approvers and the informal individuals who perform the role of 'trusted advisors' and provide important 'behind-the-scenes' advice and assistance to the formal individuals.

- Which executives and/or senior managers will make or influence the final decision?
- Which executive(s) initiated the project?
- Do we know each of these executives and senior managers?
- How much credibility have we created with them?
- To whom do they go for advice?
- What are the personal and business motivators of the key individuals that will provide the necessary momentum for the project?

### **3. Clarifying that we can produce a business solution which will address the customer's business issue.**

A compelling business solution is developed in parallel with the customer's business issues and needs as detailed in '1' above. A business solution is much more than just a list of a products and services. A business solution should also include other important customer's requirements like deployment, implementation, ongoing support and training.

- What are the customer's key decision criteria?
- What level of priority does each one have?
- How well does our solution align with the customer's requirements?
- Will our solution actually solve the customer's problem?
- Will we need the help of external partners in order to meet the customer's requirements?
- What are our key differentiators?

### **4. Understanding each competitor's position and the level of competitive advantage each position provides.**

It is impossible to develop a winning strategy that will outmanoeuvre the competition if we have limited knowledge of their strategic position. The account team's ultimate strategy selection will depend, to a very large extent, on the strengths and weaknesses of its position compared with that of each competitor. A CRM system I saw recently had every piece of information that a sales team might ever need with one exception: a specific section for analysing competitors. An incredible oversight!

- Against whom are the sales team actually competing?
- Are they embedded in the customer's business or trying to gain a foothold?
- What level of relationship do the competitors have with the key individuals?
- What is each competitor's value proposition and important differentiators?
- What are their strengths and weaknesses?
- What strategy are they likely to use?

#### **5. Assessing and confirming that we can access and deploy the resources (people, time, money and partners) needed to compete effectively.**

Strategy and resources are inextricably linked. If key resources are not available at the time and in the quantity necessary, then the strategy will not be implemented effectively. Resources include people with expertise like marketing and technical support, partners that provide additional manpower and capability and funding to support the sales campaign.

- What resources does the account team need in order to compete effectively?
- What role will our executives/senior managers play?
- What external or customer resources will be needed?
- What does this opportunity provide by way of a Return on Investment (ROI)?
- Does the ROI justify the resources?

#### **STEP 4: Judging Appropriateness**

Step 4 is a key transition step from **gathering** to **using** the factual intelligence. Firstly the sales team needs to compare its strategic position to that of its competitors and then select its most appropriate strategy.

As we saw earlier, strategic thinking provides the sales team with the means with which to outthink and outmaneuver its competitors, create competitive advantage and deliver compelling business value to the customer. This is the stage at which strategic thinking really comes into play.

The comparison the team has to make begins by applying some key questions. The answers are provided by using the factual intelligence gathered in Steps 2 and 3.

- Where are our strengths and weaknesses?
- Where are our critical leverage points? (Key Strengths)
- Where are our critical vulnerabilities? (Key Weaknesses)
- What are the strengths and weaknesses of each competitor?
- Where are their critical leverage points? (Their key strengths)
- Where are their critical vulnerabilities? (Their key weaknesses)

Frequently sales teams assess their strengths and weaknesses by comparing their products or services to those of their competitors and not much else. They assess items like features, functionality, price etc. Whilst this comparison is necessary, it is, on its own, far too narrow and will leave the sales team vulnerable to any competitor who has taken the time to develop a clearer understanding of the overall strategic landscape.

Let's remember though that strategic thinking and strategy are not a perfect science. The sales team needs to select the strategy that it believes will provide it with maximum competitive advantage. The strategy it selects becomes known as its dominant strategy.

*'The dominance in "dominant strategy" is a dominance of one of your strategies over your other strategies, not of you over your opponent. A dominant strategy is one that makes a player better off than he would be if he used any other strategy, no matter what strategy his opponent uses' (Dixit and Nalebuff – Thinking Strategically)*

I was holding a seminar in Moscow and during the overview of common sales strategies I observed an account manager suddenly 'punch the air' and heard her stifled shout of 'Yes!' Intrigued I stopped and asked her if she was alright to which she replied 'Yes I am. Thank you so much, I just knew I was right!' Later during a break, she came to me and apologised for her interruption. I asked her to explain what she meant by "I just knew I was right"!

She told me that she had been working on an important sales opportunity for some time and had come to the conclusion that the only way to succeed was to compete for a part of the customer's project not the whole project. Her manager had pressed her on a number of occasions to try and win the whole project. However for a number of reasons, she had become convinced that this would lead to failure. The difference of opinion had led to her becoming somewhat disconsolate until she heard in my seminar about the Fragment strategy – a strategy which is designed specifically to take a piece of a project as opposed to the whole. I later learned she had not only won over her manager but had also won the piece of the customer's project using the Fragment strategy!

Amusingly, the Fragment strategy is also sometimes known as the 'How do you eat an elephant?' strategy. Answer: 'One bite at a time'!

#### **STEP 5: Taking action**

Now the sales team can focus its attention on deploying its strategy. However here is where all of the careful preparatory work can be undone. Remember, strategy is 'the general', so it's vital that the team ensures that each action is consistent with the selected strategy.

Earlier we looked at a situation where an account team withdrew from an RFP-based opportunity because they could not get enough intelligence to compete effectively. One of the key reasons why the team was able to identify this potential 'mission impossible' was because the whole team functioned together in a disciplined fashion. The whole team was focused on actions that would achieve a single objective directed by the Research strategy.

This is where the power of strategy really comes into play – at the action stage. Strategy is really a sterile part of the overall planning process until its real benefits are activated through the tactics it produces.

So what type of actions might the strategy produce? This question is really dependent on the kind of objective the sales team is trying to accomplish. If the objective is to sell a product or service to a customer by a specific date then actions could well be related to:

- Gathering outstanding intelligence
- Gaining access to key decision makers or their trusted advisors
- Making presentations to the customer's project team
- Organising reference site visits
- Developing a value proposition
- Engaging with specialist partners
- Testing an initial solution

Whatever actions need to be taken, it's the strategy that directs the sales team along the route to the final objective – winning the sale.

The competitive environment is dynamic so the actual sales plan should be reviewed regularly. One action might well change the shape and direction of the whole plan, so the team needs to be constantly flexible and adaptable. However, the competitive strategy should not be constantly changing. If the sales team want to confuse the customer and the team then change

strategy frequently! Changing strategy should only be considered, if during the course of the sales campaign, the balance of strengths and weaknesses shifts between our position and that of our competitors and consequently reduces the sales team's level of competitive advantage. *Finally heed the advice of Donald Krause, "A successful competitive operation need not be complicated. To win, do simple things well.... and quickly."*

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