

# POV: Closing Two Sales to Get One Order

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New account acquisition for complex big-ticket products and services is the most strenuous challenge facing marketing and sales teams. Unfortunately, many are disappointed with the results. A keen sensitivity to the unique sales environment for high-end B2B is essential. Marketing and sales teams need to understand that they need to close two “sales” for every order and they must learn to do this in an environment that is highly competitive and ever-changing.

## Closing the First Sale:

Before we begin to sell the prospect a solution, we must persuade the prospect to seriously consider change. A look at the universe of buyers for any product or service shows the vast majority is not planning to buy today. However, there is that a small percentage is actively considering the purchase of a solution to a problem that you can solve and will be willing to enter a discussion with you. Identifying this segment is the challenge.



Inexperienced marketers and sales people assume that identifying people that are “in the market” is highly desirable. The fact is, your chances of closing one of these “in the market” opportunities are quite low. In most cases, if they are “in the market,” their problem has already been defined and solved by your competitor. Sales reps pursuing these opportunities will waste time and ultimately hit a dead end. Instead, a rep’s focus

should be on the greater majority who have yet to be persuaded to begin the search for a solution.

## Three Stages of the Buy Cycle

Our targets are people that are not “in the market” but who should be. Our challenge is to not only move them into actively considering a purchase but to make sure that they buy from us. When we embark on a lead-generation effort, we can assume that the prospects we need to reach will be in one of three stages:

### Stage 0 - Status Quo

Prospects in this state are not planning to make a change. Sometimes they may not even be aware that alternatives to current business pains exist.

### Stage 1 - Questioning

Before a prospect decides to change, they must begin to question the merit of their current status quo position. At this stage, it is important to motivate senior decision makers to question the solutions currently in place and open their minds to alternatives.

### Stage 2 - Committed to Change

A prospect becomes committed to change when they learn during the questioning phase that they have a high probability of achieving a satisfactory return on the time and effort invested in a new solution.

Marketers who successfully move a prospect (usually a senior executive), from “Status Quo” to “Committed to Change” have defined and solved the problem, and have generated demand for their solution.

At this point, the “First Sale” is complete.

## Closing the Second Sale

Sales engagement ramps up as the sale moves into the later stages. Once the prospect has committed to change, it is up to the sales force to frame the problem and solution in a way that will lead the prospect to the best (our) solution. At this point, a more clear definition of the problem and specific accounting of the specs of their preferred solution are required. To best guide the prospect to a purchase, the sales team needs to help them develop a definition of the solution that aligns with what we are selling.

Prospects then must determine the level of internal commitment necessary for the vendor's solution to achieve the stated objective. Final vendor selection will be determined based upon the cost and risks associated with each option. Prospects will usually prefer the path of least resistance and opt for the lowest cost/risk alternative that allows them to achieve their objectives while minimizing the added value that they must deliver. Our experience is that prospects will ultimately buy from the vendor that played a pivotal role in helping them define the "solution."



Within this context, consider that research (Sirius Decisions and others) seems to indicate that sales teams believe that about 80% of the leads that they receive are not sales ready and are not pursued. Our interpretation of this data has two

implications. First, marketing has not completed the first sale. Sales is getting leads that are status quo. And second, there remains great opportunity in these leads once marketing closes the first sale and sales can proactively define the prospect business issue and prescribe a solution that benefits both seller and buyer.

## About WebReply

Founded in 1999, WebReply is a marketing company based in Natick, Massachusetts that specializes in applying years of B2B experience with state-of-the-art technology to generate demand and nurture sales leads. The company builds content-driven landing portals, newsletters, and websites using its web personalization platform, SmartHub. WebReply also offers assistance with program definition, creative direction, and program management. The company owns a proprietary suite of technologies, US and international patents pending.



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