

How can we make the sale when a buyer puts a premium on something we don't do well?

You've uncovered a customer problem you're confident you can solve - and gotten them to see the need for immediate action. But, you're not home yet. In most major sales, recognition of needs leads to evaluation of options. Your prospect will be weighing you against competitors to assess whose strengths best conform to what they've determined as most important to them. Here are our research findings on how to win, even if you fall short in one or two key areas.

Know When to Stop "Selling the Problem"

1. **Once** need for action is accepted, get on with establishing you're the best option
2. **Clues** include set up of purchasing committees, presentation requests, published specs
3. **Buyers** attach value to salespeople who educate them on how to make smart choices



Uncover Customer Decision Criteria (price, quality, delivery, etc)

1. **Identify** each attribute that the buyer will be using to "grade" purchase options
2. **Ask**, don't guess – most buyers will gladly confide what is important to them
3. **Pay** particular attention to attributes that are perceived as most and least important
4. **Stack** rank your attributes accordingly to identify where you will need to improve fit
5. **Question** any decision criteria that exclude you for no good reason



Influence Criteria to Suit Your Strengths

1. **Begin** during needs recognition phase by emphasizing issues that play to what you do best
2. **Court** technical experts behind the scenes before they "dig in" on specs that lock you out
3. **Preempt** the competition by persuading buyers to embrace criteria only you can meet
4. **Encourage** discussion, reinforce the wisdom of decision criteria where you excel
5. **Promote** the importance of secondary criteria that serve your interests



Reduce Importance of Criteria You Can't Meet

1. **Never** put buyer on defensive with outright assertions that a key criterion is unimportant
2. **Instead**, try and overtake an unpromising criterion by building up one that plays to your strengths
3. **Alternatively**, try to redefine a decision criterion so you can address it more easily
4. **For example** "speed" as "output" if your slower machine is less likely to be down for repairs
5. **To dampen** the appeal of a difficult-to-meet criterion, try pointing out unappealing trade offs
6. **For example** buyer that insists on the lowest cost, may have to "pay later" in terms of durability
7. **If buyer** won't rethink criteria, explore creative ways to overcome shortcomings of your solution



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