CLOSE & FOLLOW-UP

Stay close to close: Practical tips to double your proposal to win ratio

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Let's set the scene...

We spend hours and sometimes days putting together a proposal for one of our prospective clients. They "must" have it by end of play on Friday. We send it at 5:59pm "with kind regards", breathe a sigh of relief, and head into the weekend.

Then we wait, and wait, and wait. And then we wait a little more.

We want to be polite and give the prospect as much time as they need to make a decision, right?

Usually, not much happens.

We write them a note a week later to check whether they've received the proposal and if they have any questions. Normally, they reply with something as extensive as "Yes," "No," or even "We'll be in touch. Thank you."

We wait another couple of weeks and then beg again for an answer. But after 2 or 3 tries, we start feeling awkward and unappreciated, and leave it alone.

These prospects rarely buy, and we end up frustrated that we've wasted all that time for nothing.
Sound familiar? We've all been there.

Qualify first!

Here are a few tips to help you navigate this situation, or even avoid it entirely. However, before you start implementing anything else, make sure you are qualifying every opportunity appropriately. Investing in proper qualification to make sure you and the prospect are a good fit can save a lot of time and headaches down the road.

Assuming you have qualified well, and there's no obvious reason why the opportunity should not move ahead, take a look through these suggestions to help you close more deals.

1. Call to set up a meeting *before* you send the proposal.

This is a very simple but extremely effective way to help you shift away from chasing and begging to a more professional peer-to-peer relationship.

Before you even send the proposal, especially if it's for a sizable opportunity, pick up the phone and say something along the lines of,

> "Peter, I'm really excited about finishing the proposal. I'm actually just about to send it over. But before I do, I just wanted to check, when would be a good time to go through it with you? I'm looking at my calendar… does the end of next week look doable?"

An even more effective habit to get into is to set up a meeting to review the proposal before you leave the previous meeting.

The reason we want to present the proposal rather than to let them go through it on their own is to position, explain and sell the value of our offering. Everything we do around this will help them make a more favourable decision.

> ***SBR Source:*** One of our biggest clients in the IT consulting industry doubled their conversion ratio of proposals to wins from 18% to 36% simply by introducing this small change into their sales process.

2. Use *polite persistence*.

As our clients are busy, if we are too polite and reserved, they will probably forget to get back to us. The deal is priority number 1 for us, but not for them.

On the other hand, if we are too persistent, then we might annoy them, and they'll never pick up the phone. We need to be somewhere in the middle, and the happy medium here is "politely persistent." There are a few ways to position yourself in this zone:

- Combine persistent activity with a very soft, friendly tone and appreciation of their busy schedule.
- Set expectations in advance.
- Ask for their permission: *"Can I be politely persistent and call next Friday? I know how busy you are."*

In simple terms, polite persistence is calling one more time than you feel naturally comfortable, with a big smile on your face.

3. Use modern tools and communication channels.

It's surprising how many organisations don't use their CRM system effectively to capture all their follow-up activity. If you can keep all your opportunities in your head, then you don't have enough activity!

We are also seeing that using a variety of channels to conduct follow up increases the success of your communication.

> ***SBR Source:*** Channels such as WhatsApp are becoming very effective when trying to chase down a busy executive.

When you see in your CRM that you've called 4 times and sent 2 emails, try to change it up a little. Try the odd LinkedIn message or WhatsApp. You might be surprised by the results.

Happy selling!

To discover more about helping your team close more deals, let's talk growth.