

With such a limited number of true selling hours each day, your and your team's time should be invested with people who should, can, and most likely will buy your offering. A moment with anyone else (when you're aware of it) is a time management tragedy.

Continually qualifying your sales opportunities is the best way to make sure you're investing your sales time wisely.

Here's how...

1. Create a list of your formal qualification points.
2. Assume nothing throughout the entire sales process.
3. Continually ask qualifying questions.
4. Be prepared to end a sales process if it no longer looks like a good investment of time.
5. Always close a discussion confirming next action steps (further qualifying your prospect's/ customer's commitment to the effort).

## THE QUALIFYING GUIDE

### Create formal qualification points

To create a list of your formal qualification points, take an objective look back at those deals you've won over the last year/ month/ week and find the common threads that brought these customers into your business. Consider such points as...

- Do those who buy from us have a stated date or timeline for implementation when the sales process begins?
- Do our prospects/ customers usually have a specific budget allocated for purchasing our product/ service?
- What's the typical title or area of responsibility of those who buy from us?
- Do most people who buy from us purchase something from someone else that's similar to our product/ service?
- Is our firm usually the first company the prospect approaches for a product/ service like ours, or the last?
- Are most people who buy from us first-time buyers of our product/ service?
- Do most people who buy from us buy something else first?

Then look for the common threads among the deals you lost. When these points come up in the future, you'll know it's likely better to allocate your sales time elsewhere.

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**THE QUALIFYING GUIDE, continued****Qualifying questions**

Powerful questions to help you continually qualify your prospects...

- What do you see as the next action steps?
- What is your timeline for implementing/ purchasing this type of service/ product?
- What other data points should we know before moving forward?
- What budget has been established for this?
- What are your thoughts?
- Who else is involved in this decision?
- What could make this no longer a priority?
- What's changed since we last talked?
- What concerns do you have?

**Sample exit statements**

How to most appropriately exit a sales situation that's no longer worth your time...

- "At the moment, I'm not sure we can provide enough value to you, but I'd like to keep in touch should things change. May I keep in touch periodically?"
- "That sounds like an exciting project. We may be a little early in our discussions given all of your priorities. May I give you a call in two months?"
- "Wow, you really have your hands full at the moment. Perhaps we should talk again in a few months and let you focus on these other priorities. May I subscribe you to our company newsletter?"