

baxter  bean

STRATEGIC DIRECTION & TRAINING

*selling to
senior managers, owners
and executives*



**steps and
processes for
effective selling**

*Baxter Bean
www.baxterbean.com
Calgary, Canada
1 877 283 2281*

Overview

There is a significant difference between selling to a user of product and services versus selling to a decision maker, who may never use the product.

The purpose of this report is to provide insight into:

- the process of selling to senior decision makers
- typical purchasing criteria's
- methods of approach
- effective strategies

The information contained within this report has been assembled from observations of buying situations along with detailed information gathered through sales interviews. This information can also be referenced with many different types of produces/services, including tangible/non-tangible or consumable/durable.

It reflects our ideals and should not be considered the “only” approach. Clearly different situations require different approaches, however in most cases using these techniques will likely improve the selling process.

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Overall View Of The Role Of Senior Management, Owners and Executives

Senior Management roles can be defined as:

- Leading change
- Managing budgets / expenses / resource allocation
- Managing revenue generation
- Forecasting
- Predicting and establishing future trends
- Setting the pace for the organization
- Acting as key representative of the organization or department
- Specific to Owners, they may also see the company as an extension of their personal assets

Overall Attributes Typical To Senior Management In Purchasing Decisions

The most common attributes of Senior Managers are:

- Action takers
- High value on time
- Concerned about impact on people / budget / organization
- Expecting quick return on investment
- All expenses should “improve” situations or organizations
- All expenses must be highly justified

Remember that most often Senior Managers will be more likely to “spend money to make money” than to “spend money to save money”.

Entry Points

Accessing the Senior Executive typically is predicated by:

- Company reputation / external referrals
- An existing relationship, either business or pleasure
- A relationship with a strategic business partner / vendor or client
- An internal referral from either a business peer or staff member
- Networking

The least effective process for gaining access to Senior Managers is cold calls. Of cold calling processes, the least effective is “door knocking”.

The most effective process for gaining access to Senior Managers is referrals, the most effective referrals being from within the organization or through business friends or peers.

Screening Processes

It is not unusual for Senior Managers to use roadblocks to filter out sales people. Some of these include:

- Using the secretary as a “gate keeper”
- Deferring inquiries to other people within the organization
- “Putting off” a commitment to meeting

The most effective means of overcoming this screening process is to not take these roadblocks personally and to continue trying to make contact. This may include calling at “off” hours, using peers as leverage, etc.

Gaining Attention

The key attention “grabbers” for Senior Managers are:

- Needed products or services
- Return on investment or expectation
- Speed of return on investment
- Competitor exploitation (not belittling)
- Overall value to organization
- Budget reduction
- Increased revenue
- Improvement in time usage or availability

The goal of grabbing attention should be to book a face to face appointment. Many Executives will try and “riddle” the sales person on the telephone. It is best to deflect all queries to the meeting time.

Executive Filtering

Executive filtering occurs when sales people have gained access to the Senior Manager and the Manager chooses to “test” the sales person for credibility and worth. It is wise to be prepared with these action items:

- Have a “30 second” commercial on your company and yourself. Any longer and you waste time
- Be prepared to speak relevantly to the business needs
- Ask questions... don’t get caught in feature dumping
- Be honest, if you can’t help in one area... say so

Executives are looking for “fit”. They are not only wondering what value a service may bring but what value the sales person will bring also.

Initiating The Sales Process

During the initial meeting, Senior Managers are judging the salesperson in these areas:

- Is the salesperson trying to identify and understand our needs?
- Do they understand our drivers and business stance?
- Have they asked key questions ... who, what, where, when, why?
- Have they established a vision or goal?
- Is the sales person:
 - Presentable
 - Professional
 - Confident
 - Incisive
 - Honest
 - Introspective
 - Flexible
 - Interested
 - Strategizing
 - Diplomatic
 - Confidential about competitive situations

In most cases it is expected that the sales person will book a second appointment to provide a preliminary view or recommendation to the Executive. Sales people who deliver immediate action plans are often discredited. Senior Managers are expecting sales people to “go away” and come up with a unique solution to their problems.

The worst impression a sales person can leave with a Senior Manager is that of time wasted. Other worst attributes are:

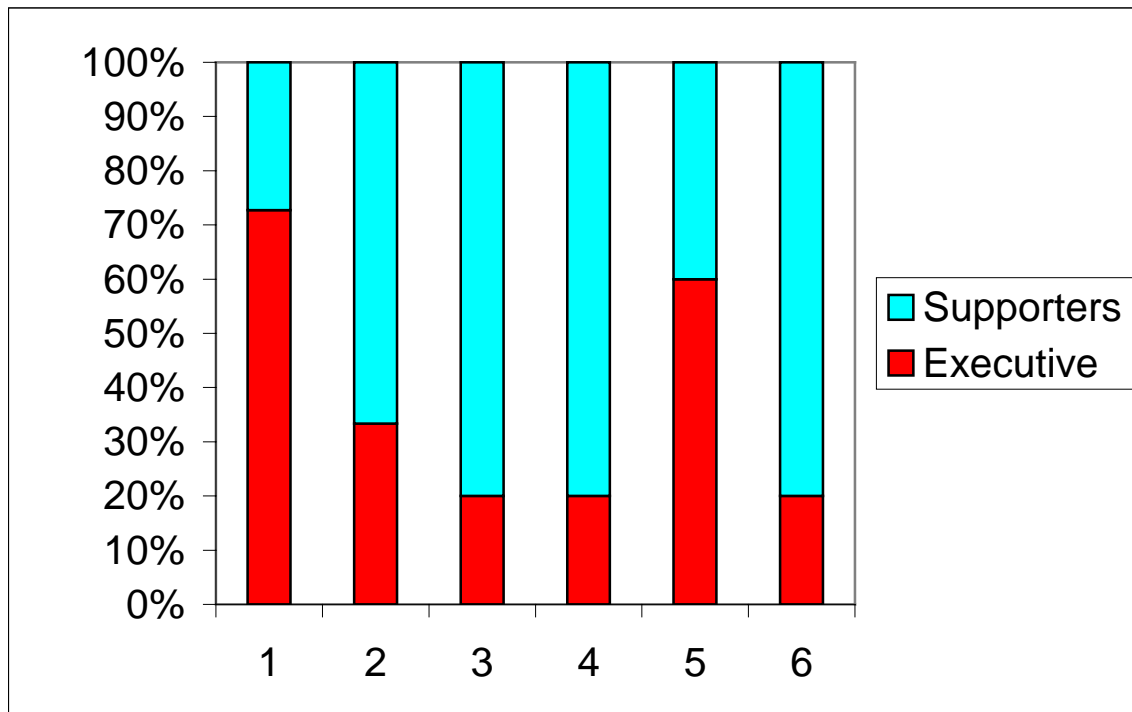
- Arrogance
- Disinterest in the company needs
- Failure to take notes
- Failure to recapture information accurately
- Selling during the initial meeting
- Poor attention to detail

Decision Making Roles

There are two distinct roles built around the buying process. There is the role of the user and the role of the purchaser. Often, the role of the key decision maker is played by the Senior Executive with the majority of the purchasing workload being distributed to others, such as users or technical associates.

Senior Executives will be involved in the buying decisions more likely within the following parameters:

- 1 – Visioning
- 2 – Assessing
- 3 – Trialing
- 4 – Negotiating
- 5 – Recommending/decision making
- 6 – Buying/purchasing (signing)



Typically the Senior Manager will engage at a average level of 73% (from 50% - 95%) specific to their efforts at the visioning stage and then remove themselves from the process, re-entering at the recommending stage.

A sales person may spend more or less time with a Senior Manager during certain periods of the selling cycle and must understand the need for a broader understanding of all key supporters in the buying situation.

Selling Tools

Selling tools are effective in gaining Senior Executive buy in. The expression “they buy through the sales person, but they buy the company” comes into play in this arena. The most effective tools that can be used in building trust and buying desire with Senior Managers are:

- A factual financial spread sheet showing return on investment
- A reasonable argument to support return on expectation
- A process flow chart, indicating timelines, activities, etc.
- Other company executives from the selling company “joint selling”
 - Equally positioned persons
 - Senior Executives
 - Project Managers / Designers
- An impact vision
 - What will it look like with / without the product or service
- References
- Testimonials

Although brochures and demonstrations of product are important, most Senior Managers just want to know that what they are buying will “work” and deliver on goals.

Repeat Business

Recurring business is often based on the first few business transactions. Senior Executives repeat purchases when:

- Sales promises are “over delivered”
- Products and services deliver beyond the expectations
- Sales people show an ongoing desire to do everything they can for the client, at any time, anywhere
- An ability by the supplying company to forecast problem areas and deal with them quickly when they arise
- Resiliency from the supplier firm
- An ability to problem solve from the supplier firm

Summary

Ultimately the sales person has only one chance to get it right with Senior Executives. Practicing and performing with excellence will provide a greater return.

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