

# THE THIRD WAVE SELLING NEWSLETTER

## THE DECISION PROCESS, PART TWO

Vol. 1 Issue 7

December 2004

Imagine *knowing precisely* what steps need to be taken to advance a sale. Imagine you and your buyer *communicating clearly* with each other, and each of you working to help the other improve best results. Imagine your customers and prospects *helping you* make sales. Imagine if every salesperson knew all of this. Imagining can become experiencing when you effectively implement The Decision Process™

In the last issue of the Third Wave Selling E-zine we introduced the concept of The Decision Process. We discussed how The Decision Process differs from most processes used by sales organizations, and we explained why implementing The Decision Process in your business can provide the greatest level of success for your sales. No matter how successful or advanced your business' sales efforts are, your company is still hindered by what many people think of as selling. To overcome this you must professionalize your sales process. Imagine Consulting has defined selling as: *the formal process that enables two or more parties to reach a mutually beneficial result.*

The only way to build a professional sales system that will enable you to improve your best results (and also allow the widest variety of salespeople to feel professional and worthwhile) is to create a system *based upon a process for both buyers and sellers to produce win-win results.* Imagine Consulting calls this The Decision Process. The Decision Process provides a documented progression of decisions that the prospect/customer *and* the salesperson go through in making a buy/no-buy decision. The Decision Process is a completely open and honest system used to tie effective solutions with the appropriate problems they solve and is not designed to manipulate anyone to do anything that is not mutually beneficial. (If you

missed part one of The Decision Process, e-mail us at [e-zines@imaginellc.com](mailto:e-zines@imaginellc.com), and we will forward you a .pdf version.)

### REMOVING DECISION RELUCTANCE

In this issue of our newsletter we will outline how The Decision Process can work within your organization, and we will provide examples demonstrating how such a system can cut your pipeline time. While I have always found that salespeople can come up with an unlimited number of reasons that someone does not buy from them, those reasons generally fall into one of three categories:

1. The customer does not really need what you are selling,
2. The customer does not trust you. (This was discussed in a previous issue of this e-zine and will be the focus of future e-zines);
3. The customer is stuck, unable to make a decision, because they do not have the adequate information that is a precursor to the buy/no-buy decision.

One of the early decisions customers make is determining that they indeed do have a concern or a problem. A common mistake made by salespeople at this point is that they *assume* that because a customer states they have a problem, the customer will also understand what it will take to solve the problem, or the salesperson erroneously assumes the customer wants to solve the problem. Based on these assumptions, the salesperson goes full bore into talking to the customer about all of the wonderful things the salesperson's company can do to help them solve the problem.

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Often the presentation is eloquent, and the salesperson is complemented on the presentation. The customer may in fact give the presentation a great degree of thought and consideration. The customer may call the salesperson to further discuss the issues. The salesperson and the sales manager will typically view this as a positive indication that the customer is about to make the decision to buy.

However, the customer has failed to answer for herself several key questions: How much does this problem cost me? Where does the problem rank when compared to my other problems? What will the pay-off be in implementing the solution? What are the risks associated with the solution? What are the alternatives? The list goes on.

In the presentation that the salesperson made, the salesperson may have given the customer all of this information. However, the information may have been presented out of order. The salesperson might have skipped steps and left the customer to figure things out on his/her own. This is a critical mistake. The leading cause of a prospect's failure to make a decision is the salesperson presenting information out of sequence. This is not to suggest that the salesperson has not provided a lot of information. In fact, all too often, the salesperson may have *overloaded* the customer with information. Decision reluctance occurs when little to none of the information provided by the salesperson is related to the particular decision that the customer is attempting to make. Furthermore, the customer may be unaware that she lacks the necessary information to make a decision.

### DEVELOPING THE DECISION PROCESS FOR YOUR COMPANY

In order to develop The Decision Process for your company, you must identify, articulate and document the many decisions your customers and clients consider when making the decision to buy your products or services. Furthermore, you must list those decisions in the order your customers follow when they make decisions. Both of these are critical.

It is important to understand that when the decision to buy occurs, it actually represents the culmination of many decisions made along the way. Don't confuse the decision process discussed here with what the old school of selling called the "momentum close" technique. With that technique the salesperson works to ask simple questions, eliciting a "yes" response from the prospect. When the salesperson asks the buy/no-buy question, the prospect, already used to saying yes, agrees without thinking about it. The Decision Process is not an attempt to dupe customers into buying. It is a process that honors the customer and the many considerations made in the process of buying.

While it is impossible to outline every decision a buyer goes through across all industry types, there are some key decisions every buyer makes. To better understand The Decision Process, it is important to first know the four phases of the business development process:

1. Discovery – In this phase the customer is discovering you and/or the solutions you offer.

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2. Diagnosis –In this phase the customer is diagnosing their problems and the implications of their problems.
3. Collaboration –In this phase the customer collaborates with you to design the most effective solution to the problems they recognized in the diagnosis phase.
4. Implementation –In this phase the customer decides on which alternative solution (if any) will be implemented.

Within each phase customers are making several decisions about the issues related to that phase. For example, in the Discovery Phase, customers may be making decisions about whether or not your company is the type of company that can be helpful to them. They may be looking at your advertising and deciding if it appeals to them. They may be listening to your salespeople (or you) and deciding if you can really add value to their situation. (Please see Third Wave Selling E-zine Volume I, issue 1, *Avoiding the Commoditization Trap* for more information on this topic.)

### THE DECISION PROCESS IMPACTS BOTH BUYER AND SELLER

One of the differences between the decision process that I advocate here and both the “old school” and “new school” of selling is that this process is interdependent –it is not a “sales” process, nor is it a “buying” process. This means that during each phase not only are buyers making decisions about whether you company adds value, *you, the seller, are making decisions about whether the customer is appropriate for your business, as well.*

This means that it is the salesperson’s job to determine when to stop trying to sell, as much as it is to determine how to close a sale. This paradox –the less you try to make sales, the more sales you make – is the key to developing a sales system that will give you an on-going competitive advantage. It means that the goal of the salesperson can no longer be “to make a sale.” It means the salesperson must become a *professional participant* in the process by using his/her judgment to make important decisions along the way.

### AN EFFECTIVE SALES PROCESS

Let’s face it, most people do not need your solution. They’ve been getting through life just fine without it. Unless you sell energy, food or communication technology (or you are Microsoft), you are not going to get the majority of people in the market to buy your product. Rather, you ought to be looking for those select few people who most need your solution and are *willing to pay a reasonable sum to purchase it.* Think about it, what percentage of potential buyers ever actually buy from you? For most companies, if 20-30% of potential buyers actually bought their product or service, the company would have more than enough business to keep busy and successful for years. The reality is that there is not enough time to focus effectively on every potential customer. The real goal of an effective sales process is to weed out the 70-80% (or whatever the percentage is for you) who will not buy so you can spend your valuable time on those who will. The key is to make sure that you spend enough time with enough people to give enough value so that enough people buy your products/ services.

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Developing an effective decision process will help you dramatically reduce your wasted time, energy and money. John Wanamaker once said, "I know I waste 50% of the money I spend on marketing. My problem is that I don't know which 50%." Imagine Consulting can help you begin the critical task of focusing your sales process. For information on The Decision Process or other ways to improve your best results e-mail us at [TheDecisionProcess@ImagineLLC.com](mailto:TheDecisionProcess@ImagineLLC.com).

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