

Help Buyers **Overcome Indecision:** Six Proven Tactics

Insights from a clinical psychologist

“People don’t resist change. They resist being changed!”

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Why

do so many seemingly promising deals

fizzle?

According to studies by the data-driven consulting firm, **Sales Benchmark Index**, up to 60 percent of qualified leads are **lost to “no decision.”** More often than not, prospects decide to do absolutely nothing—not purchase from you or your competitors.

As a clinical psychologist, I became fascinated with what causes prospects to dig in their heels, leaving a problem unsolved or an opportunity unrealized. Ironically, even as we become more technologically advanced, our brains remain in prehistoric tiger-in-a-cave times and work to keep us safe. The paradox is that maintaining the status quo is not necessarily the safe choice.

In this ebook, I outline what I call **“S-T-R-O-N-G” tactics to help buyers overcome ingrained instincts to stick with the status quo.** These six imperatives *ensure you don’t unintentionally trigger prospects’ survival instincts and create resistance.*

To your success!

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STRONG sales tactics

We all share an aversion to change. It's natural for a buyer to worry about selecting the optimal solution or how even a smart change might temporarily diminish their department's productivity, increase costs or demand too much time. Pushed, your prospects may feel out of control and likely to gravitate back to a place of security—the status quo.

Psychological research tells us that tactics such as raising anxiety, arguing, and didactic explanations are more apt to halt momentum in the sales process and cause prospects to dig in their heels.

Put your prospects in charge of the change process and keep them actively engaged:

Support the change process using more reflections and fewer questions

Trust a prospect's perspective on the "change balance sheet"

Respect the difficulty of the change process

Offer encouragement for taking action

No judgment—allow all issues on the table

Guide, not drive the process—motivation for change needs to come from your prospect

Takeaway: The relational stance you take can either strengthen or minimize a buyer's natural tendency towards maintaining the status quo.

Strong

S

SUPPORT the change process using **more reflections** and **few questions**

Salespeople naturally want the list of “magic” questions that persuade prospects to buy. While it’s important to ask questions that reveal needs, it’s even more important to **use statements – or reflections – to confirm your understanding of prospects’ perspectives.**

Persistent questioning prevents collaborative conversations and builds attachment to the status quo. Reflections create momentum **by helping prospects listen to themselves to make conscious decisions.**

“It seems you are not satisfied with your software for these reasons...”

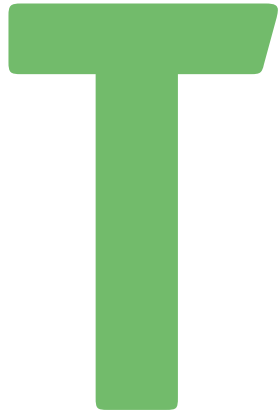
“You appear curious about how long it will take to learn the new tool...”

“I hear that your current system is working for these actions...and deficient for these...”

Tips:

- Remember you are learning your prospect’s vocabulary and gathering motivational data that will help you close the deal later on.
- You don’t have to always get it right. In fact, if your understanding is off, your prospect will likely correct you and offer information that deepens the conversation.

Takeaway: Reflections help you demonstrate genuine interest, empathy and understanding of your prospect’s situation.



TRUST your prospect's perspective of the "change balance sheet"

Important perspectives are often **hidden deep within prospects' own minds**. I think of it as intuitive balance sheets outlining the pros/cons of the status quo versus of making a change. Many prospects haven't sorted through their balance sheet to sufficiently drive efficient decision-making.

It's your job to tease out the information to **help prospects clarify their vision** and eliminate obstacles. When you demonstrate trust in prospects' views of the balance sheet, you make them feel understood and in control. Don't focus solely on the negative aspects of maintaining the status quo or the positives of making a change. **Explore the pros of the status quo and the cons of change, too** – showing your appreciation for the complexity of change.

Tips:

- Have your prospects identify the pros/cons and risks/benefits. Then offer additional data for consideration:

"Would it be helpful to hear some of the concerns other clients have had about making this change?"

"Would it be helpful to read a case study about how another client managed similar changes?"

- Help your prospect process the status quo by encouraging data collection. Quantifying a problem makes solving it feel less subjective and overwhelming.

Takeaway: Communicate that you value a prospect's perspective of the pros *and* cons of change and help them organize their own ideas in a way that leads to action.

R

RESPECT the **difficulty** of the change process

Ambivalence or fear of change does not need to lead to paralysis.

Don't shut down discussions about fears and other negative emotions.

Your prospects can only adjust to concerns and move to action if they feel validated.

Tips:

- Don't focus on the negatives of the status quo, instead on the positives of the status quo that will help guide a new solution.
- Listen to yourself. Do you sound comfortable with your prospect's concerns? Do you seem rushed or fed up?

Takeaway: Express your respect for the challenging nature of the change process.

O

OFFER encouragement for taking action

Taking action requires a tremendous amount of energy, focus and confidence. Boost prospects' confidence in their ability to lead change:

- Encourage them to keep a “list of change benefits” visible in their workspace.
- **Remind prospects of their companies' ability to support a change:**

“Tell me about a time that you got your manager to facilitate a change?”

“In your view, what positive changes have taken place in your department recently?”

Tips:

- Explore all aspects of change early in the sales cycle and focus on the benefits of taking action as the process progresses.
- Highlight both the process and the outcome of change using customer success stories. Hearing others' similar concerns and courses of action will boost prospects' belief in themselves and in you.
- Act confidently—a positive outlook is contagious.

Takeaway: Build your prospect's confidence in successful outcomes.

N

NO JUDGEMENT – allow all issues on the table

Prospects are wary of being judged as not capable to manage a new solution. The danger is they avoid change to avoid scrutiny.

Tips:

- Do not fear or try to squelch prospects' "negative" talk. See it as an opportunity to learn and progress.

- **Reflect without judgment.**

If your prospects are concerned that "it's not be the right time," play that back supportively. It may encourage a deeper consideration of options and mobilize change.

Avoid "hot words"

*"Wow, that is a **horrible** problem! If you don't know who is reading your emails, how do you know whom to call first? You must **waste** a lot of time!"?*

The words "horrible" and "waste" express judgment and stifle motivation to change.

Express curiosity, instead

"When you don't know who is reading your emails, how do you organize your day and decide whom to call first?"

With a supportive stance, prospects are more apt to have the emotional bandwidth to consider solutions.

Avoid sarcasm

If you find yourself thinking,

"They are never going to change! They just don't get it!"
— stop yourself immediately.

Acknowledge, instead

"I get that." "That makes sense." "Sure."

Follow up to learn more about concerns,
"When did it begin? Can you say more about this??"

Avoid leading questions

"Wouldn't it be better if you just took the plunge and made a change now?"

Questions that beg a preferred answer make people feel judged if they don't answer "correctly."

Validate, instead

"I have had clients with similar concerns. Would you like to hear about how they dealt with similar issues?"

Takeaway: Everything on your prospect's mind – positive and negative – can help you advance the propensity to change, so bring it on.



GUIDE, not drive the process — motivation for change needs to come from within your prospect

You know the expression: “You can lead a horse to water, but you can’t make it drink.” To facilitate change, make sure your **prospects hear their own desires and reasons for things to be different**, as well as their belief in positive outcomes.

A guiding approach minimizes resistance. Echo prospects’ own words. Sales writer **Art Sobczak** explains: “If you ask about a difficulty or challenge they have, and then address that in your recommendation using their exact language, they won’t object to their own words.”

Tips:

- Follow the 80/20 rule. Listen 80%; talk the other 20%.
- Provide perspective. It is a critical part of the conversation as long as it is shared after you have listened to prospects’ perspectives.
- Offer encouragement when prospects are concerned about their ability to make change happen.

Takeaway: Supportive interactions build your prospect’s momentum.

STRONG at a glance

Support with reflection

To learn and confirm prospects' views

Trust prospects' perspectives

Appreciate the complexity of the personal balance sheet

Respect that change is hard

Be authentic and empathetic

Offer encouragement

Focus on benefits; share success stories

No judgement

Welcome all comments

Guide, don't drive

Build upon prospects' own momentum

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Co-Founder *Craig Daniel Inc.*, April, 2012



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