



# The Roles of Urgency and Patience in **Consultative Selling**



THE BROOKS GROUP

## Over the past several years, two conflicting forces have been building in business-to-business (B2B) sales organizations.

First, there is a demand by prospects for a rapid response to their inquiries. Second, the typical B2B buying decision takes much longer to make than it used to and involves more people than in the past.

In other words, you must reply to prospects as quickly as possible, but they will not necessarily respond in kind. These forces have pushed the need for a transition from a traditional selling mentality to a consultative one to the forefront.

### Quick Follow-up

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The technology research firm KnowledgeStorm recently produced a report in which they revealed that a prospect's receptivity to salespeople declines drastically as time passes. Their data shows, for example, that 88% of prospects were happy to hear from salespeople when their internet inquiry was responded to the same day. That means that salespeople who want positive reactions from prospects will respond to all inquiries the same day they receive them.

## Decision Slow-Down

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Susan Mulcahy, in doing research for Cahners, discovered that the typical B2B sale exceeding \$35,000 now requires 5.12 sales calls. Recent research from Gartner indicates that the typical buying group for a complex B2B solution involves six to 10 decision makers. Knowing that the average sales cycle for a high-dollar B2B sale lasts between 6 and 36 months, salespeople must be quick to take action and very, very patient.

## Shifting from Traditional to Consultative Selling

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Modern selling requires a unique mixture of skills. On one hand, a salesperson must exhibit a relative sense of urgency while, on the other hand, also displaying a certain degree of patience. Immediate follow-up and a need to address whatever specific needs a client may have should be combined with a willingness to move at a speed with which the prospect is comfortable.

The most extreme example of a traditional selling mentality belongs to the clichéd “used-car salesperson.” However, less extreme examples of the unfortunate traits of traditional selling are exhibited in other ways, as well. Salespeople who engage in excessive small talk, bash their competition or simply “pitch” their offering all exhibit traditional traits that will eventually lead to their elimination or commoditization.

## THE ROLES OF URGENCY AND PATIENCE IN CONSULTATIVE SELLING

The traditional salesperson's role has been replaced. Today's sales professionals must become trusted advisors filling a consultant's role. They can no longer "pitch" their product. Instead, they must ask questions, listen to answers and advise. Sometimes that may even mean facing the difficult reality that their solution isn't the right one for every person who is in front of them.

### Traditional Selling

- Product Pitch
- Bash the Competition
- Small Talk
- Know Your Product
- Dropping off Donuts
- Golf Course Networking

### Consultative Sales

- Thoughtful Advising
- Occasionally Recommend a Competitor
- Targeted Statement of Intention
- Know How Your Prospect/ Customer Will Use Your Product/Service
- Professional Relationships

## Implementing the Change

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Transitioning a traditional sales team into a consultative one is no easy task. Part of the problem rests squarely on the shoulders of sales managers. According to a survey released in *Sales and Marketing Management Magazine* and conducted by Equation Research, 65% of sales managers say they focus on building volume rather than finding more profitable customers, and 63% say they neglected personal skills development. Both of those statistics reveal startling tendencies toward traditional sales techniques rather than consultative sales strategies. In order to see the maximum return, any change to the structure of a sales force must be accompanied by adequate sales training, evaluation and compensation. In other words, a unilateral decision to transition from traditional to consultative selling will fail.

Training is only one component of a successful transition. The most positive effect will come when training is coupled with follow-up and reinforcement components that extend what is taught in the classroom beyond those walls and into the field. Too often, sales-driven organizations believe that an annual sales conference and (supposedly) weekly sales meetings will be sufficient to upgrade the knowledge and skills of salespeople. While those are important pieces, by themselves, they do not complete the puzzle.

## Conclusions

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Today's selling environment means that salespeople are thrust into situations where more people are involved in a decision in which you are required to play a rapid role. You will respond with deft and rapidity and then wait for some seemingly interminable amount of time (typically between 6 and 36 months). The shift is one from traditional selling techniques to consultative sales strategies; and it is here to stay. The unstoppable powers of technological advancement, broad market forces and customer demands aren't going anywhere. Sales teams that fail to make the transition on this new wave will be left behind by forces larger than any single organization.

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### Key Takeaways:

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- Immediate follow-up and a need to address whatever specific needs a client may have should be combined with a willingness to move at a speed with which the prospect is comfortable.
- Today's sales professionals must become trusted advisors filling a consultant's role—they must ask questions, listen to answers, and advise.
- In order to see a salesforce transition to consultative style selling successfully, managers must intentionally reinforce newly learned behaviors.



# About The Brooks Group

**We simplify the sales process to generate breakthrough results.**

For the past 45+ years, we've taken a practical approach to improving sales performance by delivering training and development programs that are actionable, relevant, engaging, and targeted to each client's needs.

At the core of all our training programs are tested and proven strategies designed to increase sales effectiveness regardless of the product or service being sold.

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