

# Is The Juice Worth The Squeeze?

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Selling as well as running your own business takes pure determination and persistence - It takes time to build pipe and grow your business. Some ex-colleagues of mine from Zendesk may remember a slide I created for one of our Friday afternoon huddles. It looked like an optician's eye chart with the word Activity from large to small.

One of the core ingredients to being a successful salesperson is Activity Activity Activity! It does eventually pay off.

I had a BDR on my team who was relatively new to the role and very keen to have an impact. Of course in outbound sales it takes time and persistence to get traction.

She had a strong work ethic and was doing more than required, but felt as though she wasn't getting much in return. This is classic outbound sentiment.

I asked her:

Are you creating new companies in the CRM  
Are you adding at least 3 contacts per company  
Are you sending out emails and calling these contacts

The answer was of course yes and I reassured her that all this activity would pay off, and sure enough after about a week the response and meetings started coming in.

It is a game of numbers but it is also a game of patience and sometimes luck.

Which brings me on to Today's topic where we will talk about Qualification and Asking questions relative to the Software and Tech space - Establishing if the Juice is worth the squeeze!

First, what does the word qualify mean? Plenty of definitions out there, but the 2 I feel are the most appropriate from a sales perspective are:

**A condition that must be fulfilled before a right can be acquired; an official requirement - And that's exactly what a good qualification call is about - Assessing a prospect's requirements to establish whether or not your solution is adequate and if the conversation should go further.**

**The action or fact of qualifying or being eligible for something - The word eligible is interesting here. You are ensuring that both your solution and the prospect's needs are a good fit.**

We have two sources for potential leads one is Inbound which is usual with a product led strategy and the other is outbound more traditional with Sales Led strategies

**Inbound** is more common with out of the box solutions or a one size fits all, for example: SurveyMonkey, Delighted, Zendesk, Streak, Hubspot

With these solutions Leads come in via trials which last from 14 to 30 days as well as other marketing mechanisms.

**Outbound** is more typical with complex tailored solutions such as in the ERP, CRM, Telco spaces and adopts a sales led strategy.

Leads are outreached by BDR teams (and often Account Executives) using relative content sourced online or via internal use cases.

In both cases marketing does of course play a big element in getting attention and driving interest.

**Now let's look at the differences in how these leads can be qualified:**

### **Inbound Questions:**

Your goal here is to, as per the definition, understand the requirements and assess the eligibility of your prospect for the solution you are selling. The only means to do this is through questioning.

BANT is probably one of the most efficient qualification checklists to cover these initial criteria and get your deal qualified. This looks at Budget, Authority, Need and Timeframe (my favourite!)

Of course you don't jump straight into it, but you ask questions around that acronym to understand if there is a conversation to be had. For example:

What has you looking at solutions like ours?

Are you using something today - If yes what's wrong with that? If no then look at the reason/requirements they have that makes your solution "Eligible" OR why they think it is eligible to solve their problem?

Moving on from there you want to find out more about the contact, are they a decision maker or the MAN (manager with authority and need), Have they explored budgets and if not what is their buying process and criteria?

Finally the timeframe is a tricky one and one which may result in Happy ears as I will mention shortly. ASAP, Yesterday, tomorrow etc... is not a timeframe. I used to have these types of conversations and challenge them with:

If I send you a service order now can you sign? AND of course they couldn't, but at least that prompted them to give me a much better indication on the actual timeline.

Your goal with time frame is to understand:

- What is driving the need/how urgent is it?
- Is there a deadline that has to be met?
- How long do they typically take to buy something?

### **Outbound Questions**

**Outbound - Does not necessarily have a need, but is open to a Conversation = This is KEY and why these calls should be more conversational.**

**The goal is to assess how high a priority is the problem your solution can solve.**

To do this you really want to get a sense of what prompted them in your outreach, to accept the call. I feel this is the most direct and efficient means to getting to the point and starting the conversation. Remember they have allocated time out of their busy schedule to speak with you, so don't beat around the bush, they know you are selling them (trying to) something.

Then your goal similarly to an inbound lead is to get a clear picture of the landscape i.e.

What they are using now or doing now that has led to this call?

What impact of the current situation and why it needs to be fixed/solved?

What they need i.e. their shopping list of requirements to assess your solutions eligibility (there will always be some compromise so always be upfront about what you can and cannot do to assess if there are any deal breakers from the onset)

Their ideal landscape and how that benefits both the contact and the wider organisation.

With complex solutions the sales cycle is longer, requires more internal support and education from the salesperson to help the prospect through the customer transition.

### **IN Both cases:**

Plan your calls to prepare questions, learn about any recent events at the prospects company and more importantly to show that you have done some research.

Take a relaxed and conversational approach, no one likes to be sold to or treated like a checklist. People buy people first and then the product/service you are selling.

Where you feel there is a deal to be had always but always get next steps agreed to on the call. The prospects we speak with are very busy so take the opportunity to get time booked there and then. Failure to do so results in chasing and more than often, no deal.

As conversations progress use MEDDIC - Excellent qualification check-list NOT a sales methodology - It helps you collect those vital Nuggets of info and plan your questions and calls effectively.

It is all about give and take - Take the info and promise something in return that incentivises the prospect to continue speaking with you. If you give everything away you will have failed to demonstrate value and the prospect will have no more need to speak with you.

### **Red Flags Beware of Happy Ears & Time Wasters**

No matter what NO HAPPY EARS - Ironically this type of listening is not listening at all! Your mind and wishful thoughts are deafening to what reality is. We've all suffered from this key though is to what? QUALIFY!!!!

Happy Ears or the result of being under pressure can lead to poor time management eg:

Inbound - People with no business looking at solutions for problems they haven't yet created for themselves.

People with no authority looking to position something internally - Trust me that won't get far!

Outbound - People taking calls but who are not clear on what you are selling.

People with incredibly extended timelines looking too far ahead of any potential buying cycle (of course that can apply to inbound as well)

In saying that you never want to underestimate a lead - You never know.

In one of my earliest sales trainings at the Golden Pages we were encouraged to - ALWAYS ASK FOR REFERENCES!

The time to Buy is Now but so is the time to ask questions - The number one in qualifying is to ask the right questions - I know that sounds obvious - but rather than get disappointed because you are speaking to someone who is looking for the wrong solution or has an extended timeline do some detective work and see if there is a more immediate opportunity with another contact at that company.

ABQ Always be Qualifying - To cement a deal you want to be sure that the buyer is committed/engaged and that you have no doubts.

