Harness the *Trigger Events* that

TURN PROSPECTS INTO CUSTOMERS

# SHIFT!

CRAIG ELIAS
&
TIBOR SHANTO

*"This process is destined to expand the traditional division of the sales team into hunters and farmers by adding a new category: the trapper.*

—Gerhard Gschwandtner the founder and publisher of the world's leading sales magazine - *Selling Power*.

*" ...it's all about executing a strategy that makes it easy for a customer to say "Yes"! This book provides a straightforward path to sales success and I highly recommend it."*

—Rick LaDuca, VP of Sales - The Americas, Spirent Communications

*"...if you want to sell anything to anyone. Read this book and then...Sell! Sell! Sell!*

—Tim Draper, Founding Partner, Draper Fisher Jurvetson.

*"If you are trying to grow sales and do so with maximum efficiency? It can't help but improve your results!"*

—Dale Neilly, Vice President Sales and Marketing, Radiant Communications

# SHiFT!

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

# CHAPTER 1

## *The Window of Dissatisfaction™*

*"The two most important requirements for major success are:*
*first, being in the right place at the right time,*
*and second, doing something about it."*
~ Ray Kroc, Founding CEO, McDonalds

***If you don't read this chapter, you will miss out on the following:***

1. Knowing what your biggest competition is
2. Identifying exactly the right place at the right time in sales
3. Learning which decision-makers are most likely to buy from you in the near future

## 1.1 IT'S ALL IN THE TIMING

Selling, like life, is *all* about timing. This book is about timing and understanding the events that trigger timing (*Trigger Events*) and harnessing them to close more sales sooner. It's about mastering the art and science of getting in front of the right person at *exactly* the right time—which we call the **Window of Dissatisfaction**™— and then doing the right things when you have timing.

Knowing that *Trigger Events* result in highly productive sales efforts and deeply loyal customers will help you to close sales sooner and take home a much bigger commission check. Once you understand this timing—and it's easier than you think—you can learn to take the *right* action based on the decision-maker's buying mode. You can enjoy a much higher close ratio than you're experiencing right now, on bigger deals that close much more quickly, so you can move on and start selling to someone else more quickly.

The secret to being successful in sales is perfecting your timing. That means getting in front of the right person at *exactly* the right time.

To do that, you must understand the power of something that has a dramatic impact on the sales cycle, which most salespeople don't spend enough time understanding. It's called Path Dependency.

## 1.2 PATH DEPENDENCY

Path Dependency is what happens when decision-makers have done the same thing in the same way for so long that it's easier for them to keep doing the same things the way they have always done them. Most of the time, when you are selling, this is your competition—unless there is a compelling reason to change and a Trigger Event that makes them want to change right now.

All salespeople face the same competition: the prospective buyer's predisposition to keep doing exactly what they are already doing.

When decision-makers have Path Dependency, the investment of time, money, energy, or attention they've already made in something prevents them from taking a different approach. Just think of the way you type using a standard QWERTY keyboard (which is named after the first six letters in the top row of a keyboard). Most people have been trained to type using that keyboard layout. Why is that?

We all type that way because, on the earliest manual typewriters, the keys kept getting stuck when people typed too fast. The QWERTY keyboard was actually designed to keep the keys from jamming the mechanism! The problem is that people wanted to type faster.

The Dvorak Simplified Keyboard (shown below) solved that problem. It allowed people to type faster without the keys jamming.

However, people had invested so much time in learning to type with a QWERTY keyboard that they did not want to forgo the investment they had made or reinvest their time, money, and effort in learning something new. This is the power of Path Dependency: almost everyone is still typing on the QWERTY keyboard to this day!

The real challenge, and the real competition, is that buyers think they don't have a problem. They're happy with the Status Quo. They are too busy doing what they're already doing (i.e., taking care of things they're used to taking care of) to look at what you have to offer. Initially, it seems as though, no matter what you do, you just can't get their attention. That's the effect of Path Dependency. Once we are used to doing something, it's a lot easier to keep doing what we've always done.

Think of it this way: You have a car that you like driving, and have had generally good experiences with it over the years. On your way home from work one night, the transmission breaks. You have the car towed to the local garage, and the next day, you learn that it will cost $400 to fix the transmission. Do you buy a whole new car or do you pay $400 to fix the transmission?

If you're like most of us, you'll pay to fix the transmission. Why? Because buying a brand new car is a big undertaking, and it connects to a lot of variables you don't particularly feel like dealing with right now. Plus, you already have a good set of experiences with the car you're driving. So you fix that one. In fact, if something else goes wrong with the car in several months from now, you'd probably *still* pay to repair the vehicle rather than buy a brand new one. Sometimes, it takes a pretty dense combination of things going wrong for us to start thinking about the major commitment, such as selecting, financing, and purchasing a brand new vehicle.

***Your true competition is not a competitor who provides a similar product or service.***

It's the path the buyer has become used to traveling. And yet, what would happen if that person decided, for whatever reason, that the Status Quo was no longer sufficient? What would happen if you could get in front of the decision-maker on the day this happened? How would that affect your ability to make a sale and build a rewarding long-term relationship?

## 1.3 SEE THINGS DIFFERENTLY

If you want to improve your close ratio, you might upgrade your presentation and closing skills.

If you wanted to increase your total opportunities, you might upgrade your prospecting skills.

If you wanted to increase your deal size, you might target different customers or sell different products and services.

But if you want to improve all these things at the same time, you would have to improve your timing. You could probably use some assistance with understanding and upgrading your timing strategy. This means you will need to SHIFT your focus, and SHIFT your tactics, so that you can SHIFT your results.

You must understand the benefit of finding buyers while they are in a powerful selling window called the Window of Dissatisfaction. Learning to see and sell to those buyers in the Window of Dissatisfaction is not a matter of slightly improving upon something that you're already doing. It's a matter of seeing the selling process a little differently than you see it right now, and consistently taking action on what you learn.

**Figure 1.1**


## 1.4 TIMING AND BUYING MODES

It does not matter what you sell or to whom you sell it, buyers are always in one of three different buying modes. If you've been selling for more than a month, you already know about two of them. However, one of those buying modes, the Window of

Dissatisfaction, may seem less familiar to you. Let's look more closely at all three buying modes now.

### *1.4.1* ***Status Quo***

On one end of the spectrum is the familiar Status Quo mindset. This is when the buyer has Path Dependency and believes that the current solution meets his or her needs. It's like being on a moving train where the tracks are pointing you in only one direction.

Here, the buyer sees absolutely no reason to change. This is the part of the continuum where the person says to you, "It's okay, we're happy with what we have." In other words, the buyer will keep buying whatever he or she is already buying from the current supplier.

Decision-makers will stay in Status Quo and keep buying from their current supplier until something triggers a change. This mode is good if you're the established vendor the person is buying from but not so good if you're a salesperson on the outside trying to get in.

Think of the decision-makers in this buying mode as happy and not searching for any alternative solutions. You've run into your share of those people, right?

### 1.4.2 Searching for Alternatives


Most salespeople are equally familiar with the other end of the spectrum, which is Searching for Alternatives. At this stage, buyers clearly understand that the solution they have no longer meets their needs. They have chosen the type of solution they want and are actively engaged in the process of Searching for Alternatives when it comes to potential suppliers of that solution.

Think of decision-makers in this buying mode as unhappy and actively searching for an alternative solution. Have you met those kinds of people in your capacity as a salesperson? Of course. The only trouble is, by the time you meet them, some other salesperson has already gotten the first-mover advantage and has the inside track. The buyer has already defined *the solution*—and often, that definition effectively precludes your offering. Still, the decision-maker may tell you to "send a quote." Why? Because due diligence requires him or her to talk to multiple vendors. Does that mean you get the deal? Usually not.

### 1.4.3 Window of Dissatisfaction™

What many salespeople don't realize is that between these two commonly known buying modes is a third buying mode, which isn't quite as obvious as the other two modes—until you learn to recognize it.

This buying mode typically requires a little practice for salespeople to learn to see. That practice, however, could be the best time investment you ever make in your sales career. If you are a professional salesperson, you should know that understanding and learning to see this most important buying mode, the Window of Dissatisfaction, is the key to putting timing on your side.

Think of decision-makers in the Window of Dissatisfaction as unhappy but not searching for alternatives… yet!

It is during this powerful selling window, before the decision-maker takes action, that he or she has begun to see different ways to solve the problem. This is where real opportunity can be found. The decision-maker's buying cycle typically starts long before we start our selling cycle. **The Window of Dissatisfaction is where the decision-maker's buying cycle starts.**

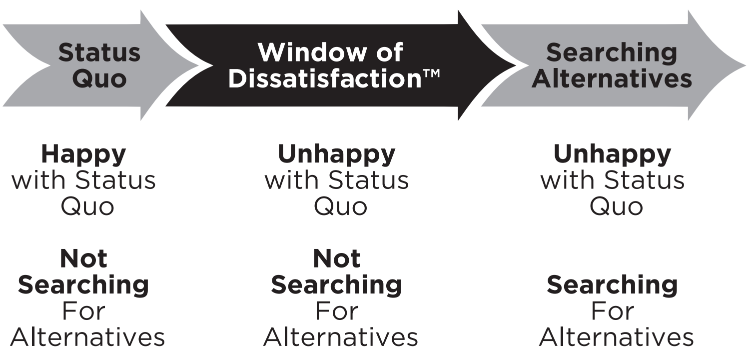
The Window of Dissatisfaction opens as a result of events that trigger people to forgo their Path Dependency and start thinking about doing something different. Notice, though, that it opens *after* the buyer experiences a Trigger Event that causes them to leave Status Quo but *before* that buyer has found the time to start the process of Searching for Alternatives.

This point is critical to your sales success so we are going to say it again. If you take nothing else away from this book, remember this:

The Window of Dissatisfaction begins after the decision-maker experiences a Trigger Event and decides that what he or she has is no longer sufficient, but before he or she has started doing anything about it.

The following visual will help you to put this career-changing point in perspective.

**Figure 1.2**



## 1.5 TIMING AND SALES CYCLES

If you've studied marketing, you're probably familiar with the AIDA (Attention, Interest, Desire, Action) formula for what you want to do with your promotion and marketing efforts. In our case, we looked at it from the decision-maker's point of view and what they go through.

The process of what people go through before they make a purchase becomes:

A = Awareness I = Interest D = Desire A = Action

Think of the Window of Dissatisfaction as being comparable to the Desire (D) stage in the AIDA formula.

When you find buyers in the Status Quo buying mode, you have to wait for them to go through all four stages, which is usually a very time consuming process.

When you find buyers in the Window of Dissatisfaction, there is already an *Awareness* of a problem, there is already *Interest* in solving the problem, but most importantly an event has triggered the *Desire* to leave Status Quo and start thinking of ways to solve the problem. However, there has not been any *Action* to solve the problem yet.

Basically, what's happening in the Window of Dissatisfaction is that the buyer has experienced a *Trigger Event*. (Chapter 2 is all about understanding these *Trigger Events*.) That *Trigger Event* has put something important on the buyer's to-do list, but the buyer is busy and can't find the time to do anything about that to-do item yet. You can identify with this, can't you? We all know what it's like to get so busy that you can't do everything you'd like to do.

When you're a buyer, and you're in the Window of Dissatisfaction, you know that you *should* be taking action, but you're just so busy with everything else that you haven't been able to get around to doing it yet!

Buyers in the Window of Dissatisfaction speak a special language, which takes just a little time for any good salesperson to master. Later in this chapter, we'll show you how to understand that language. For now, though, we'd like you to think for a moment about what *usually* happens when salespeople don't bother to understand that language.

Those salespeople typically end up doing one of two things:

**A.** They speak to people who haven't begun the AIDA process and are not yet aware of a problem - aka Status Quo.

**B.** They speak to people who have already completed the AIDA process and have decided on a course of action that involves a competitor - aka Searching Alternatives.

They skip everything in the middle! How much sense does that make?

**When you get to buyers in the middle they have desire or emotion related to solving a problem they are most likely**

**to act.** By focusing on these buyers, you'll have a much shorter sales cycle, a higher close ratio, and you will sell at a much higher price.

## 1.6 TIMING AND CLOSE RATIOS

Here's a question. How much do you think it is costing you—in terms of both time and money—to talk to prospects and customers the way typical salespeople do?

In 2003, as part of his research for his first company InnerSell, Craig surveyed more than 200 sales managers and salespeople around the world. Out of that research came some numbers we are going to share with you. The numbers vary by industry and geography so we'll give you the range of typical numbers.

As it turns out, when you are trying to sell to someone who's in Status Quo buying mode (the buying mode where the person is "satisfied with what they have"), your close ratio is likely to be less than 1% (1 in 100). That's a lot of time, and not a lot of dollars. And that's not such a surprising number when you think about it. Remember, people in this buying mode are happy with what they have, and see no reason to change.

When you find buyers who are on the other end of the spectrum, in the Searching for Alternatives mode, the numbers get a little better. The odds are between 10 and 20% (about 1 in 5, 1 in 6, or 1 in 7) that you will close the sale. There are a lot of variables, of course, but on average that's what you'll be looking at.

Why isn't the number higher than 20%? Because these people have realized that what they have is not sufficient, and have already chosen the preferred solution. At this stage, they are going through the motions with different suppliers. ("Send me a quote!") Of course, when someone is already talking to a number of different suppliers, it reduces the odds of your closing the deal.

When you reach people while they are in the Window of Dissatisfaction, and you get to them before anyone else does, your average close ratio will be between 60% and 90% (on average, about 75%). Why is the close ratio so much higher? Because they want to solve the problem but have not yet taken action on selecting the solution they will use.

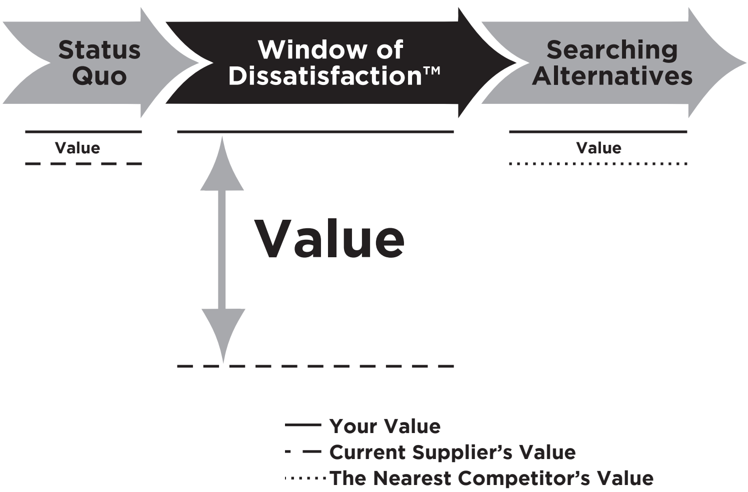
Think about that for a second. On average, **you are five times more likely to close a sale when you have the right timing**. "Right timing" means that you are the first viable seller to see this decision-maker while they are in this Window of Dissatisfaction. You are five times more likely to close that sale than you are when you reach the same buyer once they have moved into the Searching for Alternatives buying mode.

Again, it's all in the timing!

## 1.7 TIMING AND VALUE

Your close ratio is so high when a decision-maker is in the Window of Dissatisfaction because that is when they typically see the most value in becoming your customer. Let's look at the three buying modes more closely now, this time in chronological order and with the perspective that a decision-maker generally pays more when they believe they are getting more value. As shown in figure 1.3 below, a buyer's perception of value changes as they go through the three buying modes.

**Figure 1.3**




### *Status Quo*

Let's say that you find a buyer during the Status Quo buying mode, as shown in the preceding diagram. The dashed line represents their perception of the value of what they currently have. The solid line represents their perception of the product or service that you provide. The challenge is that, during the Status Quo buying mode, the difference between the two lines is typically not enough to convince somebody to become your customer.

### Window of Dissatisfaction

But then something happens. You know what that something is, don't you? It's a *Trigger Event*. Maybe a provider unexpectedly closes up shop for a week or misses a deadline. Maybe there's a quality problem or a change in personnel. It could be any one of a thousand things. But something happens in the buyer's world, something triggers a new way of looking at the situation, and suddenly the buyer's level of satisfaction with their current solution decreases.

Now that the buyer has entered the Window of Dissatisfaction, their perception of the value you provide is far greater.

### Searching for Alternatives

But there's a challenge. If you do not connect in time with the buyer who's in the Window of Dissatisfaction, and that buyer starts the process of Searching for Alternatives, their perception of value becomes the difference between what you offer and what your nearest competitor offers! This is the difference between your dashed line and the competitor's dotted line.

Obviously, you want the buyer to define your value before your competitor enters the picture. You want to reach the buyer before they start talking to your competition and the Window of Dissatisfaction closes!

## 1.8 TIMING AND THE BEST CUSTOMERS

Once you grasp this concept of value, you realize the importance of reaching the buyer while they have the problem on their to-do list but before they have started compiling a list of alternate suppliers.

Why is timing so important? When you find a buyer who is still in the Window of Dissatisfaction, you tend to get a much higher price than you do when the buyer has begun Searching for Alternatives. Once that search begins, you get a much lower price. Similarly, when you find a buyer in the Window of Dissatisfaction, you tend to get a very short sales cycle, as opposed to a very long sales cycle once the buyer begins Searching for Alternatives.

By the same token, your close ratio is generally very high in the Window of Dissatisfaction compared to when you find someone who is already Searching for Alternatives. Then, your close ratio is very low.

This is why this new understanding of timing matters!

A buyer's perception of the value you bring changes according to the buying mode you find them in when you first start selling to them. The buying mode you find somebody in also has an impact on the kind of customer that person turns out to be.

**Figure 1.4**


| | |
|---|---|
| **Core** | Peripheral |
| **Loyal** | Disloyal |
| **80% of Profit** | 20% of Profit |
| **20% of Headaches** | 80% of Headaches |
| **Reference** | |
| **Referrals** | |

As shown in the figure 1.4, when you find a buyer in the Window of Dissatisfaction buying mode, you will tend to find a core, loyal customer who will represent 80% of your profit and 20% of your headaches. These types of customer will gladly be a reference for you and are likely to pass along timely referrals, one of the most treasured things in sales. Our experience has been that buyers who are Searching for Alternatives, on the other hand, tend to be peripheral, disloyal, unprofitable, demanding customers. These buyers are unlikely to be a reference for you and unlikely to give you referrals.

It comes down to this: **The sooner you get in front of these motivated buyers, the more likely you are to become the person that helps them shape what they believe to be the ideal solution to their problem.**

In the previous figure 1.4 above, the customers we all want are on the left. The ones that most salespeople get are on the right. The only difference is how soon you got to them during their buying process.

## 1.9 STOP DOING WHAT YOU'RE TOLD!

How do you take advantage of timing? By learning the language people speak when they are in the Window of Dissatisfaction. This is a language that very successful salespeople have learned to use. Fortunately, it's not that hard to learn because you speak this language yourself when you're a buyer.

Let's look at how you can understand when people are in these different buying modes, and what you should do when you find them there.

### *1.9.1 Status Quo*

As we said earlier, you probably have a very good sense of when a buyer is in Status Quo buying mode. Here, buyers will generally say, "Sorry, Craig, I'm not interested. I don't need it right now." Typically though, the person will not say, "We don't need that and we never will." The message is, "We really don't need what you're offering right now." Whatever they've got up and running—whether it's a relationship with a current supplier or some other way of handling their situation—is working for them. Your timing is not right because they're all set for now.

### 1.9.2 Searching for Alternatives

Now let's fast forward to the third mindset, Searching for Alternatives. This is one you have to be careful of, as it sounds so enticing. When you talk to these people, you feel like you've finally succeeded! The person says, "Craig, I'm so glad you called. This is exactly the right time for us to be talking about this. Tell me all about what you're offering." You may even hear, "Send me a quote as soon as possible!"

Even though these kinds of messages can sound very encouraging, especially after you've received ten or twelve rejections in a row—and even though you want to spend time with these people—building relationships with them should not be your top selling priority!

Why? Because they're almost certainly talking to multiple prospective vendors right now, in addition to talking to you. What's more, they already believe they know what the ideal solution looks like! When you spend all of your available time jumping through hoops for these people, your deals will be smaller, your selling cycle will be longer, and the lifetime value of the customer will be smaller than you deserve. That's what happens to most salespeople because what they hear initially from buyers who are Searching for Alternatives sounds more encouraging than anything they initially hear from people in the other two groups. All that glitters is not gold.

To move to the next level in your career, you have to set your sights on identifying that group of buyers in the middle, the critical group that's still in the Window of Dissatisfaction.

### *1.9.3 Window of Dissatisfaction*

You're probably curious: How can you recognize these people? Well, as we say, it takes a little practice. Often, these people will say things like, "I'm really busy, but can you call me back next week?" It almost sounds like a brush-off because they usually are, like the rest of us, really busy. In fact, most of the time, salespeople treat that response as though it were a brush-off because they won't set a date and time to get back in touch. But with practice, you will learn to recognize something in the person's tonality that suggests he or she does want to talk to you at some point.

These buyers may say, "You know what? I'm going to be looking at that in a few months. Why don't you call me back in September when we'll be looking?" It's now July; they're telling you to call back in September. They could have simply said no, or even hung up on you. They didn't. They want you to stay on the radar screen. Why? Because they have something on their to-do list, which they know they should take care of. They're thinking that you can help them take care of it. These are the people you want to build up relationships with! Why don't they want to talk about it right now? You just interrupted them, and they have a lot of things to do. That's all.

These are the people you want to connect with!

When you hear something like, "Call me back in September," they are really saying, "I want to talk to you at some point." Bells should start going off in your head. And whenever you hear those bells, you should know that, at that moment, your only job as a salesperson is to focus like a laser beam on this opportunity. Learn as much as you can during this first call, follow the buyer's lead, and then find creative ways to not have to wait 60 days (or whatever it was) before getting back in touch.

You do not have to follow the buyer's instructions in the Window of Dissatisfaction! You do, however, have to follow the person's emotion and intent.

## 1.10 REACH OUT NOW!

Read it again! The person said you weren't supposed to call until September... or next month... or three weeks from now… or whatever the "instant timeline" he or she created when you interrupted the day. Ignore that.

You must find some way to get the Window of Dissatisfaction buyer out of the mental environment that they are in during your first call, which is likely to be "wrap this call up quickly." You must find some way to connect with them again—the sooner the better, regardless of the instructions you were given!

You may now be conditioned to call people back when they tell you to call back. Recondition yourself!

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***Change this part of your selling routine and you can change your career!***

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Take the buyer out for breakfast, coffee or lunch, golf or skiing. Or, if you're far away, try to set up a conference call using CynoCast, Go To Meeting or a similar service. Whatever the person told you to do, change the pattern somehow and find a way to get back in touch in the short term. (In Chapter 4, we will share specific ways of doing this in a way that the prospect will respond to positively.) Doing this will accelerate the pace at which the prospect will confide in you their "dissatisfaction," and lay the groundwork for you becoming the Emotional Favorite™.

To make that happen you must get them out of their office (an environment where they are likely to be interrupted by a phone call, email, a superior, a co-worker, or a subordinate) so that the Window of Dissatisfaction buyer can tell you more about the problem, preferably before the end of the week.

Don't get too hung up on timelines, but do get hung up on the idea of getting this person engaged, sooner rather than later, no matter when you were told to call back. Your goal with the buyer in the Window of Dissatisfaction is to have a friendly conversation about the problem, whether that's on the first call or the second. It's best if this happens during the first call, but even if it has to happen during the second call, you can still plant a few seeds about what your solution looks like. And you can get the buyer to walk away with the understanding that you might be able to address this issue that's been bugging them, but that they haven't yet been able to do anything about.

Don't be fooled into thinking that calling back a couple of weeks before September (or whenever they told you to call) will make any difference. All you will be doing is wasting time while the person moves into Searching for Alternatives mode—where your competitors will be ready and waiting!

## 1.11 HAS IT HAPPENED ALREADY?

If you have been in sales for a few years, you probably have a few customers you reached while they were in the Window of Dissatisfaction. But do you know which ones they were?

Would you like to know which of your current prospects are currently in the Window of Dissatisfaction?

***Set aside 30 minutes and you will understand EXACLTY who are the best prospects and how you can get to them.***

During that 30-minute period, take the first 10 minutes to use the form in figure 1.5, that is found at www.TriggerEvent-Book.com/window, and make a list of the new customers you've acquired in the last 12 months.

**Figure 1.5**

| Customer Name | Situation | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Shorter Sales Cycle | Easy | Higher Price | Reference-able |
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Start with your newest customers (the ones you recently won) and work backward. If you have too many to cover in half an hour, then pick the top five or ten (i.e., the ones who matter most in your world). Identify as many people who have bought from you for the first time within the last 12 months.

Once you've made that list, identify the ones where you had a shorter sales cycle. Put a checkmark next to each of those where you had a shorter than average sales cycle.

Next go down the list putting a checkmark next to each of those people you feel were easy to sell to.

Next, put a check mark beside the customers where you encountered little or no price objection.

Finally, put a checkmark next to those people who you feel are more than willing to be a reference for you.

Now look at all the people who have three or more checkmarks next to their name. In all likelihood they were in the Window of Dissatisfaction when you first connected with them.

If you're like most of the people we work with, getting to this point of the analysis will take you no more than ten minutes. For the balance of the 30 minutes you set aside to do this exercise, try to identify the best possible answer to this question: What exactly did you do to find these specific customers? Invest time and attention figuring that out. Replay all the scenarios.

Focusing on the answer(s) to that question with great internal clarity, day after day, will help you to put the power of repetition on your side and help you to notice when you are facing a situation where a decision-maker is likely to be in the Window of Dissatisfaction.

What you have just done is a form of Won Sales Analysis™. This is an extremely important tool that will help you replicate your biggest wins. We cover a more detailed form of Won Sales Analysis™ in Chapter 3.

## 1.12 DO THE RIGHT THING

When you start interacting with prospects, you're going to notice that something very interesting is happening. You'll notice that, just like you, buyers have something called Selective Perception.

Most of the time, the buyer's Selective Perception is looking for evidence to stick with what's already working. That's just the way human beings are programmed. We don't usually go around trying to change systems and habits that aren't giving us a problem. We operate on the assumption that there's no real problem, and we look for evidence to support the idea that there's no real problem.

Most people you talk to are looking for evidence that they don't really have a problem. In these cases, Selective Perception is operating on behalf of your true competition in the sales cycle - Path Dependency. As we've seen, this is the routine that has already been built up—the sheer force of habit—that connects to sticking with an existing vendor (or no vendor at all).

Because they're looking for evidence that they don't think they have a problem, most people are happy with the Status Quo. They are too busy to look at what you have. And no matter what you do, you just can't get their attention. They have Path Dependency. As described earlier in the chapter, they're happy with what they have, and it's a lot easier to keep on doing what they've always done than it is to do something different.

Changing what we're doing right now to address a business problem involves Path Dependency. In most cases, unless there's a major problem, we don't want to go through the headache, hassle, and hard work of establishing a new vendor relationship. If there's an existing relationship that's working, then it's okay. Sometimes, doing nothing is okay.

You always have competition, but the competition is not a person or company. The competition is not a competitor who provides a similar product or service. It's the path the buyer has become used to taking.

Your competition is the Status Quo, which is all the different ways they can use to get the same outcome, or solve the same problem while spending the same money. It may not necessarily be the same amount, but it involves spending the same money.

So what do you want to look for? I guarantee that you will see four or five times more people in the Window of Dissatisfaction when you look for buyers who are dissatisfied with your competition, not just your competitors.

So let's put this all together…

When you find buyers in Status Quo buying mode, they are happy with what they have and see no reason to change. The long-term strategy here is to become the buyer's Emotional Favorite, which is the person they would rather do business with, and find a way to raise the buyer's expectations. As long as the buyer's perception of the current supplier's product or service is greater than or equal to the buyer's expectations, they will stay in Status Quo buying mode.

When you find buyers who are actively engaged in Searching for Alternatives, you must find a way to reduce the buyer's perceived risk of being your customer. The majority of buyers act in a risk-avoidant way. They already have a preferred choice, or a favorite. And odds are they will not change. But the idea is if something happens and their first choice falters, we want to be their *clear* alternative choice. And you want them to buy from you because they think it's less risky than it is to buy from any of your competitors in that situation.

When you find buyers in the Window of Dissatisfaction, your only job is to get them out of their office and telling you about the problem they want solved or the outcome they would like to achieve. Let them talk and, when the time is right, plant a few seeds around how you can help them.

The big question is: How much time do you want to spend with those buyers? Wouldn't you rather spend your time with the people who've made an internal commitment like this?

"Man, I've got to start looking for a new car. This is the fourth time this car has gone into the shop in the last five months."

## SHIFT!

There are three key things to take away from this chapter:

1. YOUR BIGGEST COMPETITION IS buyers who have Path Dependency. These buyers in Status Quo buying mode have a lot of time and money invested in what they currently have and are happy with the value they get from their current solution.
2. PERFECT TIMING IS when the decision-maker has entered the Window of Dissatisfaction, and no longer believes that what they use provides sufficient value. They want to do something about this but they are too busy Searching for Alternatives related to other time-sensitive issues that they are not talking to your competition.
3. YOU KNOW YOU HAVE TIMING WHEN the buyer tells you about the problem they want solved or the outcome they want but they do not tell you the exact solution they want to buy.

### *Actions*

To take advantage of what you now know, you should do the following:

1. Spend at least 50% of your prospecting time with those who are in the Window of Dissatisfaction.
2. Get those who say something like, "Call me three months from now," out of their office and talking about the problem now, not two or three months from now.
3. Review every sale to get a feel for what a decision-maker in the Window of Dissatisfaction looks like and the actions they typically take.

### *Resources:*

- A full sized (8.5 X 11) version of the Window of Dissatisfaction worksheet and a completed example can be downloaded from www.TriggerEventBook.com/window
- Special offers on Sales 2.0 tools and services related to the Window of Dissatisfaction, such as CynoCast can be found at www. TriggerEconomy.com

# CHAPTER 2

## *Trigger Event Selling™*

*"You have a row of dominoes set up, you knock over the first one, and what will happen to the last one is the certainty that it will go over very quickly."*

~ Dwight Eisenhower

So how can someone be in Status Quo on Monday and then in the Window of Dissatisfaction™ on Tuesday? The answer is simple: the person experienced a *Trigger Event*.

***If you don't read this chapter, you will miss out on the following:***

1. Why your target customers can want what you sell all of a sudden
2. How to start seeing the *Trigger Events* that create customers everywhere you go
3. Three things that make target prospects want your products and services

## 2.1 TRIGGER EVENTS

We have all seen clips on the news where someone decides to set a new world record with an exhibition of falling dominoes; as they fall, the dominoes create an elaborate picture. Everything is in place, all the angles are perfect, but nothing happens until one event sets off a chain reaction of events. One tipped domino creates all of that movement! It is the same in selling.

Thousands, even millions, of dominoes are lined up in your prospect's world... and then one thing comes along and changes everything. That one thing is the *Trigger Event*. Planning and being ready will help you to leverage and take advantage of the *Trigger Event*. Without preparation, you may become a spectator to the opportunity instead of the person who benefits from it.

What goes into a *Trigger Event*? Read the following true stories. As you read them, consider how many times you have seen something similar unfold in your world. Think of all the decisions you made due to a single event—your personal *Trigger Event*.

Because we want you to internalize what we are talking about, on occasion we will provide you with two examples: a B2B example that applies to your selling efforts and a B2C example that applies to your personal life. It is our intent that one or both will resonate with you and you'll have a better understanding of what we are talking about.

### 2.1.1 Changing the Product Mix

Acme International, a sales organization, had a tightly focused line of products that were sold on a subscription basis. Territory reps were incented on two metrics: closing new streams of revenue (i.e., capturing new logos), and maintaining and growing the monthly recurring revenue (MRR). The sales reps had a Customer Relationship Management (CRM) program in place to manage the business; each rep managed his or her plan through a spreadsheet process that allowed them to communicate where they were against the plan, determine their commissions, and so forth. Managing and administering the compensation plan and payouts was relatively simple; using that compensation plan to motivate the team and drive performance was also straightforward, due to the relative simplicity of the product line and the plan.

Then a new and innovative CTO came on board, a host of spin-off products materialized, and suddenly each salesperson had an opportunity to offer new versions and components of their core products. This was good for the reps and the company, as it allowed them to get into more companies, expand their presence in existing accounts, enhance their role as the incumbent, and leverage the Status Quo.

However, new products also added some complexity; the margins on the company's products now varied wildly, which impacted the payout to the sales reps. It required the company to move from a simple compensation plan based on a single percentage of revenue payout model to a variable plan with different permutations based on what was sold. In addition, the new products led to the recruitment of specialists (people who sold only one product), which had a further impact on the administration and management of the compensation plan.

For a number of years, the CRM account executive who sold to Acme had been looking for ways to upsell different components to the company. One day, while sitting with the Sales Operations manager, he heard her express apprehension

# CHAPTER 3

## *Won Sales Analysis™*

*Learn the past, watch the present, and create the future.*

~ Anonymous

Now that you know what *Trigger Events* are, and the three types of *Trigger Events*, we are going to share a strategy for winning more deals in the future by identifying the *Trigger Events* that brought you business in the past.

***If you don't read this chapter, you will miss out on the following:***

1. Which *Trigger Events* result in your best customers
2. What to say to get prospects to become your customers
3. How to close more sales with those who are motivated to buy now

## 3.1 WHAT ARE YOU ANALYZING?

If you are like most salespeople, the odds are good you have been spending your time analyzing the wrong thing.

Most salespeople have been trained to spend their time, effort, and energy looking at the sales they lose so that they can determine why they lost the sale and identify "what went wrong." Our perspective is different. To win more business, we believe that you need to reflect on what made you win so that you can replicate your biggest wins.

Many sales managers have been heard saying, "If you lose the sale, don't lose the lesson." We want to challenge you to do the opposite: When you win the business, learn how you can win more just like it.

This is exactly what Craig did in the summer of 2002. For many years, he just got lucky in sales. He had a knack for being in the right place at exactly the right time. This streak of luck continued until September 10, 2001, which was the day he joined a company called WorldCom. The next day, the world changed—and it kept on changing in the days that followed, especially if you sold for a living. For those of you who can't remember what it was like selling in the aftermath of 9/11, let's just say that it was extremely tough to get anyone to change their buying pattern. People were deeply entrenched in their Status Quo.

But even in a post-9/11 environment, Craig managed to get lucky again. He was named the number one salesperson in all of Canada less than six months after joining the organization. Unfortunately, that was just before WorldCom admitted conducting $11 billion in accounting fraud. The world changed again. For the first time in his life, Craig found himself in a situation where absolutely nobody would buy from him.

He had some holiday time coming. So he waited until August, and he took afternoons off for the entire month. Every afternoon he analyzed his past sales to determine when he had been good, when he had been great, and when he had been absolutely unstoppable.

That August, Craig did something he'd never done before—he reflected on his successes. By doing so, he not only learned what had created his success, but he also learned a process that he could repeat over and over again to get in front of highly motivated decision-makers at exactly the right time.

The system you are reading about now is based on his reflections during August 2002, and the insights that came from them.

At the end of August, he began to think that there must be many people who thought along the same lines, so he did an experiment. He went to Google and typed in the phrase "sales analysis" in quotes. He inserted the quotes because he was looking for just those two words in that order. Google told him that there were almost 500,000 pages on the Internet that contained the term "sales analysis." He then decided to add the word "lost" to the search; he typed "lost sales analysis" in quotes. He found more than 2,500 pages that talked about how to win more business by analyzing the business that you had lost. But that is not what he had just done. He had found a way to replicate his biggest wins by analyzing the business he had already won, not the business he had lost. And when he searched for the phrase "won sales analysis" in quotes, he found, to his amazement, only two pages on the Internet.

Of all the pages on the Internet that talked about sales analysis, **virtually none of them talked about winning more business by analyzing the business you have already won.** Craig's conclusion was that a lot of salespeople are analyzing things but almost no one

# CHAPTER 4

## *The Emotional Favorite™*

*"The successful man is the average man, focused."*

~ Unknown

Now that you have looked inward to know who to focus on, we're going to help you look outward to see the people you want to start building relationships with.

***If you don't read this chapter, you will miss out on the following:***

1. Who your target customers call first when a *Trigger Event* happens
2. Who is worth taking the time and effort to build a relationship with
3. How to become the person buyers call first when a *Trigger Event* happens

## 4.1 BEFORE WE GET STARTED …

Chapters 4, 5, and 6 offer concepts and strategies that work best in parallel. They do not operate in isolation, nor do they represent separate steps. They are meant to help you identify specific shifts to your selling process that you will implement over time as part of a seamless whole.

How you use the information in these chapters depends on where you are at the time, what relationship you have with a target buyer, and whether a *Trigger Event* has recently taken place. Obviously, there are several different combinations.

Knowing which combinations are in play at any given time will help you to determine which strategies and methodologies you should lead with.

Everything you learn in the second half of the book is meant to work together and support what you have learned thus far. Each of the Shifts you make in your approach as you put this program into practice will affect your overall plan for direct contact with decision-makers.

## 4.2 THE EMOTIONAL FAVORITE

Now that you understand how *Trigger Events* work, you are ready to learn how to get first-mover advantage when they happen. One way to get first-mover advantage is to be the first person the decision-maker calls when they decide it's time to start Searching for Alternatives. This person—called the Emotional Favorite—is the person a decision-maker knows, likes, trusts, and wants to see succeed.

People do *some* business with those they like, but they do *more* business with, and refer more business to, the person they know, like, trust, and want to see succeed—their Emotional Favorite. Consider the following story, which is based on an event that happened to one of our colleagues.

Mel works for one of the largest office supply companies in Canada. He used to start his buying discussions with purchasing agents. In prioritizing his prospecting time, he made no meaningful distinction between one purchasing agent and another. In his view, they were all equally good starting points. Unfortunately, Mel's sales cycle was long and usually difficult, and he wasn't happy with the average deal size he was securing.

One day, Mel decided to take Bill, the most successful salesperson in his organization, out for lunch and ask him some questions to determine the following:

- What did Bill do differently?
- What did Bill avoid doing altogether?
- What was Bill doing that made him such an effective salesperson?

The answers Mel heard during that hour-long lunch changed his career and his life. Bill was not targeting purchasing agents. He spent most of his prospecting time creating relationships with CFOs, and not just any CFOs: He targeted those CFOs who had just been promoted into the job or had recently been brought in from the outside.

Why the emphasis on new CFOs? Bill had conducted a Won Sales Analysis after each sale, and noticed a pattern: Companies often changed office supply vendors, or added a new office supply vendor, within 120 days of a new CFO assuming the job. The more new CFOs Bill reached out to, Mel learned, the better Bill's chances of building relationships with those who had the money and authority to do something.

# CHAPTER 5

## *Trigger Event Referrals™*

*The tip of the iceberg is just a spec of what lies below the waterline*

~ Issac Newton

You might be getting a few referrals for visible opportunities that are above the water today, but odds are you are missing out on a significant number of visible opportunities that are below the water.

***If you don't read this chapter, you will miss out on the following:***

1. How to get better referrals from your existing network of contacts
2. Who is "In The Know" when decision-maker's experience a *Trigger Event* and suddenly want what you sell
3. How to get those "In The Know" to introduce you to decision-makers at EXACTLY the right time

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In the 1980s, Craig got his first sales job working for a company called AMP of Canada. He was hired as a telemarketer to handle all accounts in Western Canada that had sales of less than $10,000.

Back then, AMP had three distributors in his territory: Hamilton Hallmark, ITT, and Cardinal. He wanted to grow his territory so that he could be promoted to outside sales. He started building relationships with inside and outside salespeople with the distributors who were selling the most in his top accounts. He then developed sales opportunities within his accounts and then passed those opportunities onto the salespeople for the distributors.

Craig was applying the Emotional Favorite strategy you learned in Chapter 4 to those who were often "In the Know" before he was. It did not take long for these distributor salespeople to recognize the value of the opportunities they were being given and soon they started reciprocating by bringing him in on opportunities that they had discovered.

Can you guess what happened? Just 90 days after he joined AMP as a telemarketer, he was promoted to outside sales. He kept his focus on building relationships with and adding value to those "In the Know" about opportunities before him. As a result, he was promoted and transferred twice in the next three years and selected for AMP's "Captain's Club" for distinguished sales excellence.

If you are looking to increase sales in the territory you already have and earn the opportunity to take over a more senior territory, read on to learn more about how to get those "In the Know" to introduce you to decision-makers after they experience a *Trigger Event* but before they have found the time to call their Emotional Favorite.

## 5.1 WHAT ARE YOU DOING NOW?

Think of the total number of referrals you could generate over the next 12 months. We could picture those referrals as an iceberg.

You may already be getting the occasional referral from a customer or acquaintance, but we're willing to bet that the referral was about an opportunity that is above the surface. In other words, it's active and open for your competition to also see.

You will probably miss 90% of the referrals you could get over the next 12 months because you are not connected to people who know most of the relevant opportunities that will surface during the next year. Most salespeople have not mastered the art of pro-actively generating referrals that will most likely turn into business. In this chapter, we show you how to master that art.

Very often, salespeople are told to "generate referrals" by asking current customers and/or their best prospects for the names of other decision-makers. They are told to say, in so many words, "Who else should I contact that would benefit from working with ABC Company?" Then they're told to exercise the willpower necessary to wait out the (inevitable) awkward silence that follows.

What happens after that long pause? Well, in most cases, the customer or prospect tells you that no one comes to mind. (By the way, that's usually true. People generally don't think

# CHAPTER 6

## *The Credibility Curve™*


*The toughest thing about the power of trust is that it's very difficult to build and very easy to destroy."*

~ Thomas J. Watson

Even if you get in front of highly motivated decision makers at exactly the right time you are unlikely to win the sale if you don't minimize the perception of the risk they take on by becoming your customer.

Getting in front of highly motivated decision-makers at exactly the right time will help to put solid opportunities into your sales funnel. However, there are still two things you need to do to maximize the likelihood you will close those opportunities:

1. Make it less risky to be your customer (covered in this chapter).
2. Make the most of your first call or visit (covered in Chapter 7).

### *If you don't read this chapter you will miss out on the following:*

1. Understanding the biggest killer of sales - risk
2. Learning how to diminish the two components of risk
3. Discovering the three types of credibility that overcome a buyer's perception of risk

## 6.1 OVERCOMING RISK

Here's the bottom line. When decision-makers who have experienced a *Trigger Event* don't buy from you, the most common reason is simple: They perceived the risk of becoming your customer as being too high! Will they say as much to your face? Probably not. But when you encounter multiple so-called objections in the sales effort (e.g., the timing isn't right, the budget authority is not in place, the data you offered is insufficient), the underlying cause of the deal not closing is often the decision-maker's perception of an unacceptable level of risk of doing business with you.

It amazes us that most salespeople spend little or no time consciously dealing with the buyer's adversity to risk. In our experience, the biggest killer of sales is risk.

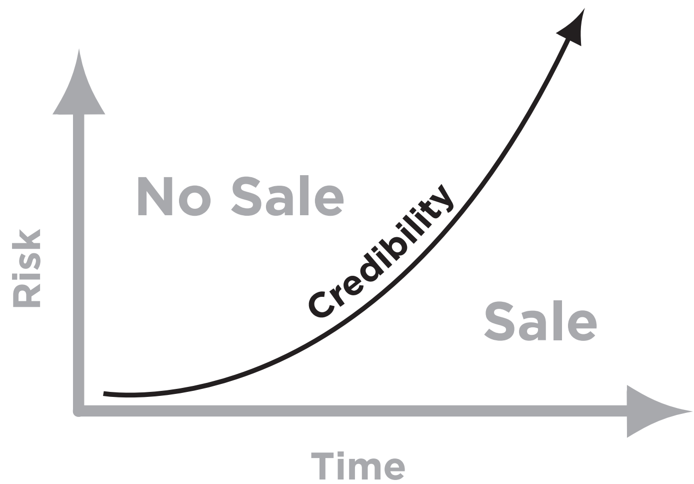
***The decision-maker perceives the risk of being your customer to be too high.***

To overcome this risk, you need to develop credibility.

Your first challenge is the instant you start trying to sell to a prospect they start thinking about all the risks of buying from you, as shown on the left of figure 6.1.. The best way to offset risk is with credibility, also shown in figure 6.1.

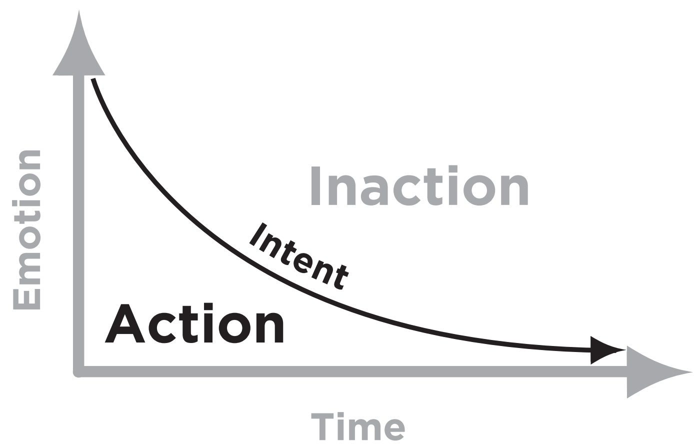
Your second challenge is that credibility takes time to build, shown in figure 6.1 below.

**Figure 6.1**




Your third challenge is that time is short when you are trying to capitalize on the emotion and related intention of buying, which is created by *Trigger Events*, as shown in figure 6.2 below.

**Figure 6.2**



# CHAPTER 7

## *First Call Effectiveness™*

*"When it comes to the future, there are three kinds of people: those who let it happen, those who make it happen, and those who wonder what happened."*
~ John M. Richardson, Jr

A large number of the deals you chase are won or lost on the first call simply because you failed to prevent the series of events that caused a decision maker to start the process of Searching for Alternatives.

Now that you have learned the first six major components of Trigger Event Selling™, it's time to put them all together to make the most of your efforts during your first call (in person or on the phone) to the prospect and prevent, or delay, them from calling your competition. A process we call First Call Effectiveness™

***If you don't read this chapter, you will miss out on the following:***

1. Identifying which opportunities you are most likely to close
2. Starting prospects down the path of becoming your customer
3. Preventing prospects from noticing and talking to your competition

## 7.1 MAKE THE MOST OF THE FIRST CALL

James sells an accounts receivable application that allows customers to move to a paperless invoicing system. He recently completed a comprehensive Won Sales Analysis encompassing his last two years' worth of wins.

James learned the following about the business that he wins:

- James' deals take an average of eight weeks and four meetings to close if he meets a prospect within two weeks of that person experiencing a *Trigger Event*.
- On the other hand, the process of closing the deal takes ten to twelve weeks and six meetings if he gets to the prospect three to six weeks after a *Trigger Event*
- His chances of closing diminish to almost nothing eight weeks after a *Trigger Event*.

James learned the following about how to make the most of his critical first call with prospects:

- Whenever he starts the process with a Chief Financial Officer or VP of Finance, first meetings that end with getting permission to spend half an hour with the front line accounts receivable person, conduct a template review of the accounts receivable process, and schedule a follow-up meeting with the CFO result in a proposal 90% of the time. Of the proposals generated from such meetings, the value of the deals that close is at over 90% of the initial dollars proposed.
- When James only manages to spend time with the accounts receivable person or do the audit, but not

both before meeting with the CFO, he only generates a proposal 70% of the time. These deals close around 80% of the initial dollars proposed.

- When James is only able to get a first and second meeting with the CFO, and does nothing else, he only goes to proposal 45% of the time. The closing rate on this group of discussions is 60% lower than the closing rate of his ideal scenario, and deals usually close from 60% to 80% of the dollar value of the initial proposal. To achieve the price concessions typically required in these scenarios, James usually removes important features, which means that these deals also result in features concessions that may create a weaker Status Quo when James' application becomes the incumbent.

As a result of conducting this detailed analysis of more than 25 closed deals, James knows that the more new CFOs he talks to, and the newer the CFO, the higher his close rate. He now knows—with a great deal of certainty—that he wants to achieve three goals in his initial meetings with a CFO:

1. Meet with the CFO as soon as possible after the *Trigger Event* of the CFO stepping into their new job.
2. Get a commitment for an interview with a frontline user (an audit).

# ABOUT CRAIG ELIAS

Craig Elias is the creator of Trigger Event Selling™, and the Chief Catalyst of *SHiFT* Selling, Inc.

Craig's *Trigger Event* strategies have:

- Won him a $1,000,000 prize in a global "Billion-Dollar Idea" pitch competition
- Made him a top performer at every company he has worked for – Including WorldCom where he was named #1 within 6 months of joining the company
- Earned his last company, the distinction as one of Dow Jones' 50 most promising companies in North America
- Resulted in coverage on NBC news, in The New York Times, The National Post, The Wall Street Journal, Sales and Marketing magazine, and Business 2.0

# ABOUT TIBOR SHANTO

A 20-year veteran of the information, content management, and financial sectors, Tibor has developed an insider's perspective on how information can be used to, shorten sales cycles, increase close ratios, and create double digit growth. Called a brilliant sales tactician Tibor shows organizations how to execute their strategy by using the right information to create the perfect combination of what are the tactics to apply and when.

Prior to Renbor, Tibor spent 10 years with Dow Jones; after launching their Canadian business and building a solid team and revenue base, with double digit CAGR, Tibor was appointed Sales Director for Canada and The Central USA. As Director of Sales Strategy, Tibor developed a very forward thinking global Sales Training program and was instrumental in building their Client Solutions organization. Tibor is a director and contributor to The Sales Bloggers Union.