

## The Intelligence of Win/Loss Reviews

by Lani Cathey



The following question set is effective in voice of the customer interviews. Assessing the consolidated reasons for wins and, more importantly, losses lets you enhance perceptions and address any deficiencies.

- What was your role in the decision and what was your process for selecting a solution?
- What were the predominant reasons for (not) selecting XYZ Company? What were your most important criteria (in order of importance)?
- What were the top three business issues that you were addressing? How well did XYZ Company address/solve those issues?
- Who were the leading XYZ Company competitors for your business? What were their differentiators?
- What did you consider to be XYZ Company's differentiators?
- What could the XYZ Company team have done differently that would have given you greater yes-ability to their solution (positive and negative)?
- Would you consider XYZ Company for any future (additional) solution requirements?

Understanding why customers didn't buy from you is as important as why they did. Reviewing your wins and losses presents a unique opportunity to improve your sales performance. These must-do's for conducting a successful win/loss review will help you diagnose sales cycle performance, verify competitive differentiation, and ensure your sales process is aligned to your customers.

I recently read that fewer than 20 percent of selling organizations conduct a win/loss analysis with any regularity or discipline. Yet surveys show that companies who adopt a formal process for win/loss reviews outperform their less structured competition. In this article, we'll take a look at the benefits and elements of a win/loss review process.

The benefits of win/loss reviews are many.

- >> They are a valuable exercise to help mitigate sales cycle volatility. Understanding why deals are won—and, more importantly, lost—contributes to more accurate forecasts about the likelihood of deals closing.
- >> Assessing the trends in how and why deals are won or lost over time also allows you to fill any gaps—in your offerings, your talent, or your process.
- >> Companies spend a lot of time and money on sales training. Win/loss reviews can reveal what is working and what needs to be retooled.
- >> Soliciting voice-of-the-customer feedback helps you understand your customers' perceptions and needs, and unearths new ways for you to provide incremental value.
- >> Knowing what factors move a customer to choose your competitor over you allows you to focus on what makes the sale. Your key business drivers for your customer's business? Your potential bottom-line impact? Your business case? Answers to these questions can be used to expand your product/service portfolio and channeled into improved market messaging.
- >> With this intelligence in hand, your win rate improves and your sales cycle contracts.

**Win/Loss Review Process.** Performing analyses of client wins and losses over a defined period of time produces recommendations that will improve your win rates and increase your odds of success. Win/loss reviews generally encompass the following perspectives of a deal.

**Voice of the Customer.** Customer voices are diverse. A greater understanding of them provides a knowledge platform that helps your team develop collaborative, customer-focused strategies. They also become a roadmap for driving go-to-market planning and customer targeting.

**Proposal Review.** How persuasive was the proposal? How well did it clearly present and sell the solution? The proposal and presentation analysis examines whether the win strategy was sound and whether the proposed technical and management approaches supported the strategy.

**Internal Sales Team Debrief.** A team review of each opportunity tunes your organization into what your customers feel and think, what they say, and how they act and respond to you. This feedback is most valuable—it adds fact to opinion when you are searching for ways to create incremental value for your key customers.

**Market Analysis.** A win/loss review lets you explore your customers' experiences and attitudes about their business—what they buy, why they buy, and why they align to particular suppliers. You learn where and how they see value created and approaches that differentiate preferred suppliers from the rest of the pack.

When Critical Path Strategies conducts win/loss analyses, we examine selected deals based on our TRUST methodology.

**Technology.** How did you clearly demonstrate a technical fit? To what level did your solution meet your client's requirements?

**Relationships.** Who were the key approvers, decision makers, and influencers? What relationships were critical and what was your relationship plan and approach?

**Utility (Value).** What was the value proposition and how was it perceived by your client? How did you align to pricing, value, business impact, and client business strategy?

**Strategy.** How did your client participate in developing the strategy? How did your team pursue the opportunity? What were the leverage points? Competitive differentiation?

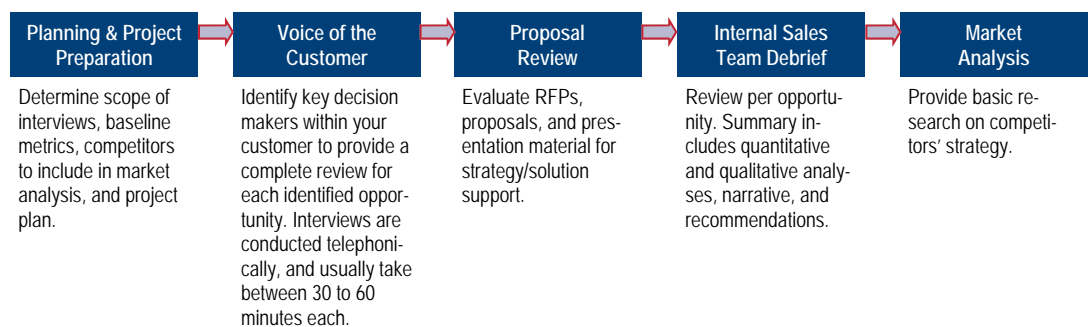
**Team.** What team was put in place and how was it aligned to your client's project team? How was the opportunity managed?

Learning what your customers think is critical to the understanding of your sales effectiveness. The data gleaned from win/loss reviews become a valuable collective body of information that can inform and drive decisions within your organization. When used over a period of time, the aggregated reviews reveal trends across your selling organization and your solution portfolio—and those of your competitors. Not to mention your customers' buying behaviors. Arming your salespeople with this competitive intelligence dramatically increases their probability of sales success—and the selling effectiveness of your entire organization.

**ABOUT CPS.** Critical Path Strategies helps clients improve the effectiveness of their sales organization. Our portfolio of services addresses the strategic, organizational, and relationship issues that impact selling performance. Our powerful processes enable clients to transform their sales culture, enhance their competitive position, and accomplish strategic business initiatives. Our clients—emerging companies and members of the Fortune 500 alike—typically measure 100 to 500 times their CPS investment in revenue growth.



**Win-Loss Review Process**



Visit CPS online . . . [www.criticalpathstrategies.com](http://www.criticalpathstrategies.com)  
 Join our LinkedIn Group . . . **The Best Best Practices in Sales Effectiveness**