

*Four Ways to Create Urgency in a Buyer*

by Tom Clarkson



Year end is approaching. How can you create a sense of urgency within your clients or prospects to close potential deals before then? How can you uncover their individual motivations to create motion and closure?

It's the classic sales conflict.. Your metrics are driving your behavior and your agenda is pressured by the time of the year (and maybe your manager). Do you all of a sudden change your TRUST equation with your client because it's the fourth quarter? Will you jeopardize your relationship for one more good year end?

$$\text{TRUST} = \frac{\text{Credibility} + \text{Reliability} + \text{Intimacy}}{\text{Self-Interest} + \text{Risk}}$$

Basic seller-buyer relationships and best practices do not change because of the calendar. While time of the year does influence buying (and selling) behavior, the ultimate goal of all sales strategies is to deliver client value. You need to evaluate how your initiatives advance the interests of your clients. Once you create value and advance your clients' agenda, you can work on making it urgent and important.

Before we discuss urgent, let's focus on important. Value is defined by your clients. They will act—committing time, money, and people—to those projects that they believe will generate positive results for their business. It is incumbent upon you to align your capabilities to your clients' needs and successfully communicate their value in your clients' own language so they will be inclined to act. Few buying decisions are made without value alignment and a solid business case.

How to accelerate your clients' decision-making process is another matter. However, the following variables might increase your chances to create "urgency" in their minds.





## 1. Focus on value.

Can you make the value larger? This can be done by enrolling several other members of your client's organization. If you can make an impact on a larger part of the client team, you are likely to have more support and fewer conflicts. You might also consider how to expand the initial scope of the project to deliver additional value. Large-impact projects that solve the most important business problems or impact the largest part of the organization are likely to get acted on first.



## 2. Focus on timing.

At what stage is your client in the decision-making process? What factors could push it up on your client's agenda? Is there a key influencer or user who has a vested interest in the project who could become your advocate? Will your benefit stream improve performance results and make a quick impact on the bottom line?

In a typical business cycle, the focus tends to be placed on year end as the time to finish, to end. Make it the time to start instead. How many businesses waste the first quarter getting ready for the new year, and end up with a nine- or ten-month execution time frame? Get a fast start on the new year by putting your investment in play during the fourth quarter. You'll have a full 12 months to execute.



## 3. Look for leftover budget.

The needed budget might not reside in your sponsor's plan, but it could still be within the company someplace. Measure your project against all other spend options. Convince those holding the purse strings that your A project should move up the timeline, or that even your B project seriously challenges those that have been approved for spending. Articulate why they should "switch" places in the calendar for execution. Make your argument about value, not you vs. them.



## 4. Look for added value benefits to motivate your client to act.

Demonstrate what else your project might accomplish. Will it change the perception of your client in a positive way? Will the project give your client more control? If the project seems to lie outside your client's personal comfort zone yet still makes great business sense, help reduce your client's risk level.

Let's not forget that, above all else, you must maintain the TRUST equation with your clients—even when your agenda is pressing you to act before your clients appear ready. Pushing a year-end decision hurts your credibility, reduces your level of intimacy with your clients, and highlights your self-interest. Conversely, your clients will always be willing to listen to ideas that help them advance their most important and urgent initiatives.

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