



## Collaboration Selling™ – Introduction

*Brief Whitepaper*

Collaboration Selling is built into SmartFunnel, supporting better (insight-based) sales dialog, saving time, making coaching easier for Sales leaders, selling more with less frustration, and enabling more accurate Sales forecasting. The method has been proven to work extremely well in B2B solution sales.

A central concept in Collaboration Selling is that customer champions usually “peg” vendors as people who offer “products” only, and consider competition as something based on comparing products and vendors. This leads to time available for sales conversation often spent on product and pricing details which, sadly, many sales people will accept and encourage.

Meanwhile a typical customer champion underestimates the power of internal competition in the customer organization, which exists at multiple levels, in terms of problems to solve, how they can be solved or survived, and the priorities and urgency of diverse problems and opportunities. The senior executive buyer usually chooses the option with the best internal action proposal - not necessarily the best product. Thinking about how this happens for your business, and your products, leads to an understanding of the “end game” for how you will win or lose when it comes time to cross the goal line.

Are you experiencing any of these common sales problems?

- Stalled deals
- Projects shelved until “next budget year”
- Internal Sales team resources wasted on proposals which do not get approval
- Requests for discounting in order to close
- Losing to the status quo
- Losing to competitors

Assume that in 80% of these cases the customer champion did not have a strong internal proposal - your vendor proposal may be great, but the way it was presented internally at the buyer organization may not win against internal competition.

The Collaboration Selling method helps your champion prepare and deliver a strong internal proposal. This method is consistent with what is taught by most sales gurus and sales trainers.

The method guides a sales person to a pattern of discussing certain topics and writing the results down. This builds an internal proposal for the champion, in stages which create influence for the seller. The method helps gets all stakeholders identified and on board, and creates a preferred consultative role for you - gaining immense credibility for you and your company.

It starts with each sales rep learning to deflect customer requests for product, price and configuration info, and direct attention to the needs of the customer business, with a focus on the four elements we consider key to all decisions. In fact, the sales person is also motivated by the knowledge that he/she must provide leadership in the customer dialog, as buyers appreciate receiving new ideas and insights.

The 4 elements of project approval or rejection, common to most significant B2B acquisitions, are defined as selling stages within SmartFunnel:

- Purpose** Does the investment support a key business need, or set of needs?
- Payback** Does it give us a financial reward commensurate with the investment?
- Time Drivers** Does the timing have urgency to support our other resource allocations?
- Proposal Fit** Does the offered solution fit well to solve the problem(s) defined?

Importantly, for B2B proposals which do NOT get approved, one or more of the above four elements is usually the reason for non-approval.

You can confirm this yourself by taking 3 of your own Deals that are stalled or lost. Look for reasons, write them down, and compare them to the 4 elements of project approval shown above.

Successful Sales Reps prepare for the final executive approval from the beginning, working with their champion to co-author and document an internal proposal. They follow a process using customized sales tools, building the Proposal in stages as a Project Outline, guided by the SmartFunnel system and stages of progress. This puts the pins in place to have the customer team ready to buy, making the champion look good, and winning the final approval.

We call it “winning the end game” and that is the goal of Collaboration Selling.

Author contact info: Peter R. Fillmore, SmartFunnel.com [peterf@smartfunnel.com](mailto:peterf@smartfunnel.com)