

## THE BIG PICTURE: INFORMATIONAL SERIES

### THE QUALIFIED PIPELINE: KEEPING IT REAL

Sales reps often are bothered by “no’s.” But, I believe what is more gut-wrenching and ego-robbing is a “maybe.” When you stare at a stack of callbacks with a never ending litany of “evaluating all opportunities, call back in 4 weeks” in the notes, call reluctance and self-doubt often creep in. Our self talk asks us “Why should I make any more calls? Maybe my pitch isn’t all that great, What did I say that’s stalled the deal?”

Maybe’s can be devastating. The renowned sales coach, John Orvos talks about being put into “Maybe Land”. This is not where you want to be as a salesperson. To minimize the chance of being sent to “Maybe Land,” you can lessen the number of wishy-washy responses by seeking movement on every call you place or conduct face-to-face. What you’re looking for is movement.

“Movement” is defined by the prospect doing something as a result of your conversation that places them closer to the ultimate objective of buying from you. In our seminars we call it “moving the peanut up the hill.” If they aren’t doing anything, or aren’t willing to, your momentum has stalled (if it was even there to

begin with), and you’re wasting your precious time by pursuing this opportunity.

Let’s look at ways to get more movement.

#### 1. **Equate Getting a Decision, Yes or No, With Progress**

I’ve always said that if I’m ultimately going to get a no, I want it today... not six weeks, six months, or six years from now. Not to suggest that you should tear through leads without regard for the quality of your calls. Striving for action ensures quality.

#### 2. **Weed Out The “Dogs”**

These are the people contributing to your gray hair. The ones who tease you with their feigned interest or don’t want to hurt your feelings by not being direct. Call them all with one objective in mind: *get a decision, yes or no.*

*“Mary, we’ve talked quite often over the past six months about how our software can help you decrease your materials expense. I’m wondering what the probability is that we arrange for an install within the next two weeks.”*

If their answer is a definitive no, find out why, and address it if you can. If not, which is more likely, since they probably weren’t a real prospect to begin with, congratulate yourself on a successful call, and move on.

#### 3. **When Scheduling a Call Back, Know Why and Make Sure They Know Why**

What have they committed to DO as a result of this call? “Let me think it over,” won’t do. After all, if they’re not doing something between now and the next contact, why would you want to call them back? What will they consider, using what criteria, and what will happen next and when?

#### 4. **Ask For More Decisions**

A major cause of “maybes” is the absence of an explicit request for a decision, or commitment to do something. The lesson here is simple, move them forward or move them out. You’ll save time, and get more sales.