

Introduction

Too often we assume that price is the determining factor in which supplier a client decides to use.

Other drivers (e.g. pre sales support, presentation content and presenter's enthusiasm) can be just as important.

By providing direct feedback from the client on your company's sales delivery, Sales Win Loss Analysis (SWLA) can be very helpful in understanding why/why not you got the business. The following explains why.

What is SWLA?

SWLA provides you with a clearer understanding of how well your company performed on a new business pitch whether it be a sales presentation or proposal submission.

SWLA helps:

- Focus on those clients most likely to buy your product or service
- Uncover the reasons behind lost opportunities
- Improve the effectiveness of your pitches
- Gain objective and accurate information that your reps would otherwise be unable/unwilling to provide

Given we are talking of something very concrete (i.e. why you got or did not get the sale) one can argue that fewer data points are required to reach the insights you need to make better tactical and operational decisions.

Mini Case

Let's assume you are the market research manager for "Safety Plus", a safety equipment manufacturer.

In the past 12 months your company lost 40% of the business bidden on. The reps blame this on high pricing and increased competition. Your VP Marketing thinks otherwise and requests you conduct a SWLA.

What are your next steps?

1. Begin by speaking to those reps who made the pitch. Find out what challenges they faced, their biases, etc.
2. Create two introductions, one for your company wins, the other for those customers who did not choose your company.
3. Frame your questions in a "dialogue mode". They should be easy for the client to follow and to the point:
 - Who else did you invite to pitch for your business?
 - Which supplier won the business? Why them?
 - What was the key factor (e.g. solutions given, accuracy) in deciding which provider to go with?
 - How did our reps compare (e.g. being organised, enthusiastic, knowledgeable, convincing, articulate)?
 - What did the winner do that set them apart from the other presenters?
 - Where did we fall short?
 - What suggestion do you have for us to improve?
4. Now comes the challenging part: getting companies to agree to be interviewed. To facilitate cooperation:
 - Be objective; don't go into the interview with a predisposed view of what happened.
 - Offer respondents an honourarium (e.g.\$ 50 donation to their favourite charity).
 - Point out that you are not in sales and will not be re-opening the sales process. Your simply want to use their feedback to better understand the market, buyer/seller process and ultimately improve performance.
 - Mention as well that this is a one to one dialogue not a survey.
5. Work in increments. In other words, conduct 1 or 2 surveys and analyze results prior to conducting the next set of surveys.



How to Conduct a Sales Win Loss Analysis Cont'd

6. Summarize your findings in table format:

On a 1 to 10 scale (1 being poor, 10: being outstanding) how would you rate the winner's performance versus our effort?

Performance Summary	Safety Plus	Winner	Difference
Presentation			
▪ Convincing	4	10	-6
▪ Customized to Your Needs	5	9	-4
▪ Demonstrating product	6	9	-3
▪ Informative	7	9	-2
▪ Approachable	7	9	-2
▪ Easy to follow	7	8	-1
▪ Concise	8	8	0
Professionalism			
▪ Good listener	5	9	-4
▪ Made you feel they value your business	4	8	-4
▪ Provided helpful suggestions	3	7	-4
▪ Prepared and organized	7	9	-2
▪ Understood your business	6	9	-3
▪ Appeared knowledgeable	7	8	-1
Creating Overall Impression of Company:			
▪ Ability to meet expectations	5	9	-4
▪ Ability to deliver on time	7	8	-1
▪ Necessary expertise	8	8	0
▪ Necessary resources	8	8	0
▪ Necessary technology	8	8	0

7. Provide insights that can be readily translated into recommendations on improving your new business presentations, such as:

Of 18 criteria, Safety Plus was out performed on 14 and tied on the other 4.

Significant gaps (spread of 4+ rating points between the winner and Safety Plus) relate to sounding convincing, customizing the presentation, listening well, making the client feel valued, providing suggestions and meeting expectations.

8. With this information, put together "CI Battle Cards" on each major competitor for your reps to reference.

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|--------------------|--|
| ▪ Company overview | ▪ Why they win/lose |
| ▪ Pricing strategy | ▪ Key strengths/weaknesses |
| ▪ Sales messaging | ▪ How to position yourself to win against them |

9. Track SWLA findings over time to gauge whether performance is improving and where gaps still exist.

Conclusion

Because you are talking to the decision maker, what they say is extremely important. In fact, a single survey from your prospective client can become the template for what your reps need to do to win more business.

Hence SWLA will improve your chances to win new business, by enlightening you as to what factors impacted the client's decision on whom they select .

About the Author

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