Mastering Outcome-Centric Selling:

... because your customers care far more about their business outcomes than they do about your products, or your so-called “solutions

inflexion-point
Outcome-Centric Selling®

inflexion-point
Outcome-Centric Selling®

01
Why it's time to focus on outcomes

Complex B2B buying journeys are inevitably complicated. Our customer's decision process is rarely straightforward or linear. Multiple stakeholders are involved, often with widely different perspectives and priorities. Without strong internal project sponsorship, consensus is unlikely and without consensus, action is unlikely.

These challenges are compounded by an uncertain business climate. And yet despite all this, a significant number of organisations are still investing in new projects, but only when these investments satisfy three key criteria: the project must be **strategically relevant, tactically urgent,** and be capable of delivering **rapid time-to-value**.

Today's business buyers need to be convinced that any project they invest in will deliver **worthwhile business outcomes**. This has profound implications for today's B2B sales organisations:

- Rather than simply thinking in terms of our sales process, we must also seek to **facilitate** our **prospective customer's buying decision journey**
- We must establish a **clear case for change** <u>before</u> we promote the specific benefits of our proposed solution
- We must recognize that our **most significant competition** will often come not from other similar vendors but from **other projects** that are seen to be of a **higher strategic priority**
- We must measure our progress in terms of tangible, measurable **advances** in our **prospective customer's search** for **better outcomes**, and not just by the sales tasks or activities we have completed ...

inflexion-point
Outcome-Centric Selling®

The evolution of B2B sales methodologies

Business-to-Business selling has already evolved through one significant **transition -** from selling products to selling "solutions".

The first era of B2B selling was characterised by a **product-centric** sales approach that focused on features, advantages, and benefits with little regard for the customer's objectives. During this period, sales training was largely focused on transferring product knowledge and on teaching manipulative sales techniques with an emphasis on "closing".

The transition towards "**solution selling**" started several decades ago and was characterised by a consultative, problem-centric sales approach that focused on uncovering and solving customer problems. Most of today's most common B2B sales methodologies, including SPIN®, Challenger, Strategic Selling, Sandler, Customer-Centric Selling and many others can be regarded as variations on this common theme.

Unfortunately, customers buying these so-called "solutions" often failed to achieve the results they expected. And in a world where business customers increasingly prefer to consume things **as a service** by **renewable subscription** rather than as an outright purchase, the impact on customer loyalty and on renewal rates will inevitably prove toxic for vendors that fail to pay sufficient attention to customer outcomes.

Time for an outcome-centric perspective

That's why we at Inflexion-Point - and a growing number of forward-thinking sales organisations and sales experts including the Technology Services Industry Association - have concluded that the B2B sales community needs to shift gears again and transition from a problem or solution-led mindset to an **outcome-centric approach** to selling.

Your customers don't want generic "solutions" - they expect specific business outcomes

This is not just a minor semantic difference. Today's prospects are not looking for a vendor's self-defined generic "solutions". Before they are ready to commit to change, they need to be sure that they are going to achieve the **specific business outcomes** they are expecting, within their expected cost and timeframe.

If our prospective customer cannot be convinced of this, they are likely to **stick with the status quo**. And if they are somehow persuaded to sign up for our proposed solution and yet fail to achieve their expected business outcomes, they will be unlikely to renew or expand their relationship with us as a vendor ...

... that's why becoming outcome-centric is so important.

Focusing on business outcomes - not just functional needs

It's worth making a distinction between the "**needs**" that most solution-centric methodologies encourage salespeople to discover and develop and the **business outcomes** that today's customers are actually looking for.

Needs are typically expressed (or re-interpreted) in terms of the features, functions, or capabilities the "solution" is expected to offer, and many solution-centric selling methodologies emphasise this aspect of the discovery process. But a potential vendor's apparent ability to satisfy those needs is rarely enough to guarantee that a prospective customer will **buy from them** (or that the prospect will do anything at all).

The prospective customer's expected **business outcomes** are far more significant in influencing their decision **whether** to change, **when** to change and **what** to change to. Outcomes represent tangible positive changes from the customer's current situation (their **status quo**) to a **better future state**.

The customer's **confidence** in the **likely achievement** of these business outcomes is now usually the **most significant factor** in determining whether or not to proceed with the project - and the extent to which the expected outcomes have **actually been achieved** is the most significant factor when deciding whether to **renew** and **expand** their relationship with a vendor.

Decision-makers care about outcomes

There are other significant reasons why focusing on achieving meaningful **business outcomes** is a far more effective sales strategy than only focusing on identifying and satisfying functional needs. Low-level customer contacts often think in terms of needs that must be satisfied. But the **high-level executives** that are today's key project sponsors, economic buyers and ultimate approvers primarily think in terms of the key business outcomes that must be achieved.

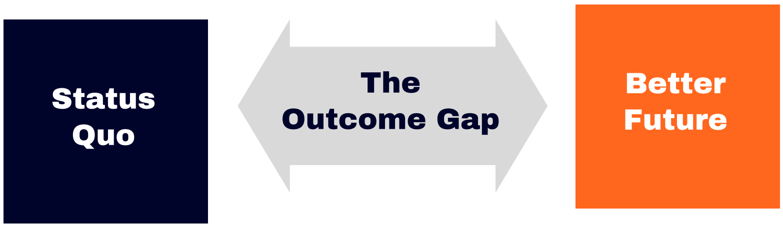
> If your current contact is unwilling or unable to talk about business outcomes, they are unlikely to be the decision maker

If our primary contact can't talk about about the business outcomes they are looking for (and why they are important) rather than their functional requirements, they are almost certainly **not** the ultimate **decision-maker**. And if they aren't able to identify the specific outcomes that they need to achieve, they are probably not very serious about the need for change.

And if by some miracle they **do** still end up buying from us, if their desired business outcomes are not clear from the start it will be harder for them to prove the business value of implementing their solution. And if they can't prove the business value they have derived from implementing our "solution", they are far less likely to renew or extend the relationship - and they will almost certainly **never become profitable**.

Stretching our customer's outcome gap

This is why it is so important to focus on the business outcomes our customer is seeking to achieve at the earliest possible stage in our discussions with them. The **Outcome Gap** represents the perceived difference between their current situation (the **status quo**) and the **better future outcomes** they can expect to achieve from implementing the best possible solution - preferably ours.



When this outcome gap appears to be small and stable, our prospective customer is likely to conclude that they can afford to stick with the **status quo** and do nothing. But when the **outcome gap** is seen to be **large and growing**, they are far more likely to decide that they need to take **urgent action**.

Today's most effective salespeople help their customers to recognise the full business impact of the issues they are facing

Today's most successful salespeople don't just focus on discovering the customer's already-recognised issues: they also educate the customer as to the full scope of the unconsidered **impacts**, **implications,** and **consequences** of failing to address these issues. And they introduce previously unconsidered issues and persuade the customer that - if ignored - these are also associated with additional significant negative consequences.

We need to **stretch** our customer's **outcome gap** to the **widest possible extent**, and in doing so increase the chances that the customer will decide to take decisive action. This isn't just about the customer's current position: it's also about the probable future consequences (almost always increasingly negative) of continuing on their current path.

We need to resist the "**itch to pitch**" our proposed solution the moment we uncover an issue we believe we can help our prospect to deal with. It is **far more effective** in the long run to avoid this temptation, and to **hold back** from presenting or prescribing our potential solution until our prospective customer has acknowledged - with our help - that they have a compelling need to change ...

inflexion-point
Outcome-Centric Selling®

02
Every customer needs a unique value proposition

The primary mechanism for establishing this Outcome Gap is our prospective customer's **unique value proposition**. This captures our responses to the **four critical questions** that every potential new customer is looking for convincing answers to before they will be prepared to commit to action:

1. **Why** do they need to **act** (*rather than stay on their current path*)?
2. **Why** do they need to act **now** (*rather than later*)?
3. **Why** should they choose **you** (*rather than any other option*)?
4. **Why** should they **trust** you **-** *to ensure they achieve their desired outcomes*?

Whenever there are weaknesses, gaps, or inconsistencies in the answers to any of these questions, the probability that our prospective customer will decide to take decisive and timely action **declines dramatically**.

That's why Inflexion-Point puts the crafting of a unique **customer-specific value proposition** at the very heart of our Outcome-Centric Selling® methodology, and why our approach is centred around guiding salespeople to progressively co-create action-driving compelling value propositions with every prospective customer.

Let's examine each of these 4 questions in turn...

inflexion-point
Outcome-Centric Selling®

[1] Why do they need to act (rather than staying on their current path)?

If our prospective customer is not completely convinced of the need to **act**, they are likely to continue on their current path. The **wider the gap** between the **status quo** (their current situation) and their hoped-for **better future outcomes**, the more they are likely to decide to change direction.

We have a critical role to play in this: not just in helping our prospective customer to acknowledge that the business impact of the issues they were already aware of is **larger** than they might previously have appreciated, but also in introducing significant **new** issues and their associated consequences that our prospect might not have previously considered or thought to be relevant.

In complex B2B sales, every salesperson's most significant competitor is almost always the status quo

In addition to progressively stretching this **outcome gap** between the customer's **status quo** and **better future**, we also need to find out how our prospective customer might already have been trying to deal with their already recognised business issues, with what results, and what obstacles might remain in their way.

Identifying the **obstacles** that are or could be holding our prospective customer back is an important element of shaping their unique value proposition, because if our prospect does not anticipate any obstacles to navigating the change, they are likely to conclude that they don't need our help.

Underpinning the "**why change**" message is the degree and clarity of the contrast between our prospective customer's **pain metrics** (the negative costs and consequences of inaction) and their **gain metrics** (the measurable positive benefits of change).

Typical **pain metrics** often include unnecessary costs, lost revenue, wasted time, reduced productivity/effectiveness, the exposure to avoidable risk and other negative consequences.

Conversely, typical **gain metrics** often include reduced/eliminated costs, additional revenue, increased speed/agility, increased productivity/execution, the mitigation or elimination of risk and other positive consequences.

If our prospective customer is to decide that they need to **act**, we have a critical role in making the **status quo** seem **more dangerous**, stretching their perception of their **outcome gap**, highlighting the **better future** that can be achieved, persuading them we can help them eliminate the obstacles in their way, and contrasting and **amplifying** their pain and gain metrics.

Hopefully, the importance of answering this question will be self-evident: if the customer cannot recognise a compelling reason to change, they are likely to **do nothing**.

[2] Why must they act now (rather than wait until later)?

Even if - with our help - our prospective customer has been convinced that they need to change, we still need to convince our prospect that they need to **act now**, rather than later.

Without a clear sense of **urgency**, decisions tend to slip. In fact, deciding to do nothing and stick with the status quo (at least for the moment) is now the most common reason for apparently well-qualified opportunities to stall or fall out of the sales pipeline at an advanced stage.

It is our responsibility to create the **maximum possible urgency**. Even if our prospective customer has an apparently compelling event, we still need to do everything we can to **amplify** the costs of inaction and the benefits of change.

And if no apparently compelling event exists, we need to help our prospective customer to recognise and acknowledge that the longer they delay action, the **worse** things will get - that they will continue to incur avoidable costs, to forgo achievable revenue growth, and to be exposed to avoidable risk.

We need to work with our customer to create the strongest possible **internal business case** for taking action now, rather than later. We cannot afford to leave this to chance - we must work closely with the project sponsor to ensure that their internal business case is as compelling and urgent as possible, and that the relative priority of the project is high.

Any significant investment in a new project is likely to go through some form of final **approval** process. It is equally likely that some of those responsible for final approval will have had little prior knowledge of or involvement in the project.

It is probable that some members of this final approval group will be asking a variation of the question: "**why** do we need to do this **now**?". If the response is not clear, even an apparently well-qualified opportunity can fall at this final hurdle.

Final approval depends on confidence in the decisions the customer is being asked to make

Gartner's latest research highlights the critical importance of **decision confidence** in the customer's final approval process - confidence that the need to change is real, confidence that the best option has been chosen, and confidence that action is urgent.

We need to support this by offering **credible evidence** - in the form of existing customer testimonials, user references, case studies, third party research and so on - that gives our prospective customer confidence that their better outcomes will actually be achieved on time, within budget and with the minimum of disruption.

Hopefully, the importance of answering this question will be self-evident: if the customer has no sense of urgency, they will (at best) **delay their decision**.

inflexion-point
Outcome-Centric Selling®

[3] Why should they choose <u>you</u> (rather than any other option)?

The third layer of the value proposition involves giving our prospective customer the confidence that we are offering them the **best possible option** for achieving their **better future outcome**.

That requires that we understand all the other credible **solution options** they are actively considering, that we show how and why our approach is **distinctively different** from these other options, and that we successfully convert our differentiation into our prospect's confidence that they will achieve provably better outcomes.

It's important to recognise that our prospective customer's other credible solution options will often extend beyond our most obvious direct competitors and may include in-house developed solutions as well as **entirely different approaches** to addressing the issue.

Claims of product superiority are rarely regarded as credible sources of lasting differentiation

Product- and solution-centric salespeople (particularly in technology-based businesses) are often driven to base their **differentiation** around the claim of better product functionality - but this is almost always a **mistake**, since these feature-based differentiators are often hard to prove and frequently overtaken by competitive developments.

Competing on the basis of having a **distinctively different** and **superior approach** establishes far more effective, powerful, memorable, and long-lasting positioning in the customer's mind than competing on the basis of short-lived so-claimed "better" features and functions.

We need to use simple, clearly articulated **themes** rather than long lists of questionable product or service differentiators. Our claimed differentiation needs to be encapsulated in the form of a simple customised-to-the-customer phrase along the lines of "if there is one thing that sets our approach apart, it is [PRIMARY UNIQUE DIFFERENTIATOR]"

Needless to say, we then need to translate this differentiation into a set of clear and **specific benefits** to both their organisation as a whole and to the key stakeholders. These must build upon and go beyond the generic benefits that any competent solution could offer them with **unique benefits** that we convince them they could only achieve by adopting our approach.

If we cannot establish this level of uniquely valuable differentiation, we run the risk that our prospective customer - faced with what appears to them to be a set of apparently similar solution alternatives and outcomes - will, if they do anything at all, simply choose the **most familiar** or **least expensive** option.

[4] Why should they <u>trust</u> you?

In their best-selling recent book, **The JOLT Effect** Ted McKenna and Matt Dixon (of "Challenger Sale" fame), suggest that the worst thing we can hear from a prospective customer isn't a "**no**" **-** it's "***I need to think about it***."

When salespeople hear this, their conventional response is to leverage the customer's **Fear of Missing Out [FOMO]** by redoubling their efforts to persuade the prospect that if they do nothing, bad things will happen. But this approach backfires far more often than it succeeds.

This is because **-** as the author's ground-breaking research demonstrates **-** once customers reach an advanced stage of their buying decision journey, they **care a lot less** about succeeding than they **care** about **not failing**.

The last thing they want to do at this stage is to **make a decision** that they later **come to regret**.

The Fear of Messing Up [FOMU] becomes progressively more important as the final decision approaches

That's why it's vitally important that we all do all that we can throughout our sales cycle **-** and in particular as our customer approaches the final **point of commitment -** to establish **trust** in our company, in our proposed solution, and in our absolute commitment to ensure that they **achieve their desired outcomes**.

There are three key elements we need to pay attention to:

First, we need to do all that we can to build their **decision confidence** by eliminating any remaining concerns or reservations about whether the **issue** really **needs to be addressed**, whether they really need to **commit to the project** at this point, whether **our approach** really is the **best way forward**, and whether our organisation has what it takes to become their **trusted partner**. This last aspect is particularly important if we have not previously done business with them, and/or we are a relatively unknown brand.

Next, it is vitally important that the **key stakeholders -** and in particular the **executive sponsor** of the project and our **champion**(s) within their organisation **-** believe that both their **reputation** and their potential for **career advancement** will benefit from their lobbying for both the project and for our approach.

Finally, we need to do all that we can to **minimise the perceived risk** of going ahead with our proposed approach. Providing **credible external references** that the prospect can relate to is one obvious tactic, but we might also want to look at how we are **structuring the deal -** can we do it in a way (perhaps a phased approach, rather than a huge upfront commitment) that makes it **easy** for them to say "**yes**"?

Whenever our prospective customer regards our organisation as something of an unknown quantity, finding ways of **establishing trust** will be critical to our success ...

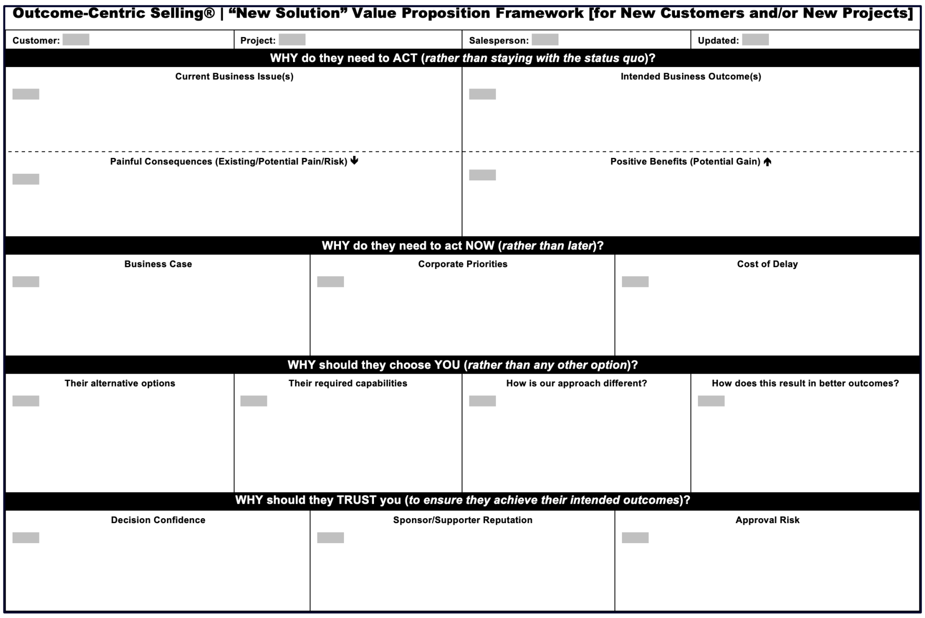
Pulling the customer’s value proposition together - a progressive process and a collaborative exercise

The crafting of each customer’s unique value proposition is inevitably a **progressive** process of discovery, verification, and refinement. It is most effective when performed as a **collaborative** exercise with key members of the customer’s stakeholder group.

That’s why our approach to outcome-centric selling puts the crafting of this value proposition at the very heart of both our sales process and our customer’s buying decision journey, and why we have developed a **simple framework** to guide you in completing the exercise, to summarise what you have uncovered, and to draw your attention to what you still need to find out and verify.

The framework - one of many available to clients of Inflexion-Point’s Outcome-Centric Selling® Academy - covers our prospective customer’s four key questions:

1. **Why** do they need to **act** (*rather than staying on their current path*)?
2. **Why** do they need to act **now** (*rather than later*)?
3. **Why** should they choose **you** (*rather than any other option*)?
4. **Why** should they **trust** you - *to ensure they achieve their desired outcomes*?



The “**why act**” section focuses on establishing and amplifying the **outcome gap** between the prospective customer’s **current business issue(s)** and their **intended business outcomes**, establishing the **painful consequences** of staying on their current path, and highlighting the **positive benefits** of successful change.

inflexion-point
Outcome-Centric Selling®

The "**why now**" section seeks to establish the strongest possible case for **urgent action** by bringing together their internal **business case**, making a **clear connection** between this project and their **key corporate priorities and initiatives**, and highlighting the **costs and consequences of delay**.

The "**why you**" section seeks to clearly differentiate your approach from all their other options, starting with identifying which options they are actually going to **shortlist**, establishing their **required "must have" capabilities**, highlighting **how** and **why** your **approach** is **different**, and summarising why this will lead to **better business outcomes** for them.

The final "**why trust**" section seeks to eliminate any of the remaining reasons that might otherwise hold them back - focusing initially on the steps you have taken to ensure they are **confident** in the **decision** you are asking them to make, making sure that your **sponsors** and **supporters** believe it is in their interest to champion your approach, and summarising the steps you have taken to **minimise** any remaining perceived **decision risk**.

Perfecting their value proposition

As you will have gathered, perfecting each prospective customer's value proposition is both a **progressive process** and a **collaborative exercise**. It is critically important that you involve your prospective customer in the process, and that you **verify** and **validate** the key elements of the story with them.

The effort involved in crafting the story will pay for itself many times over, and the information and insights contained in the completed value proposition will provide the perfect foundation for the all-important **executive summary** of your formal proposal to your prospective customer.

This value proposition framework - together with simple definitions and guidelines - is just one of many editable templates available to clients of Inflexion-Point's **Outcome-Centric Selling® Academy** - please book a call to find out more: https://www.inflexion-point.com/book-a-call

inflexion-point
Outcome-Centric Selling®

03

Facilitating our customer's buying decision journey

The recognition that complex B2B buying decision journeys are **inherently complex** and (particularly when it comes to unfamiliar or discretionary purchases) **often unpredictable** is another crucial difference between solution-focused and outcome-centric sales methodologies.

Rather than thinking in terms of a deceptively straightforward and unrealistically over-simplified sales process with clearly defined steps and stages, outcome-centric selling recognises that the typical B2B buying decision journey is inherently **complicated**, **non-linear** and involves **multiple stakeholders** who often have different motivations and priorities.

This has some very significant implications:

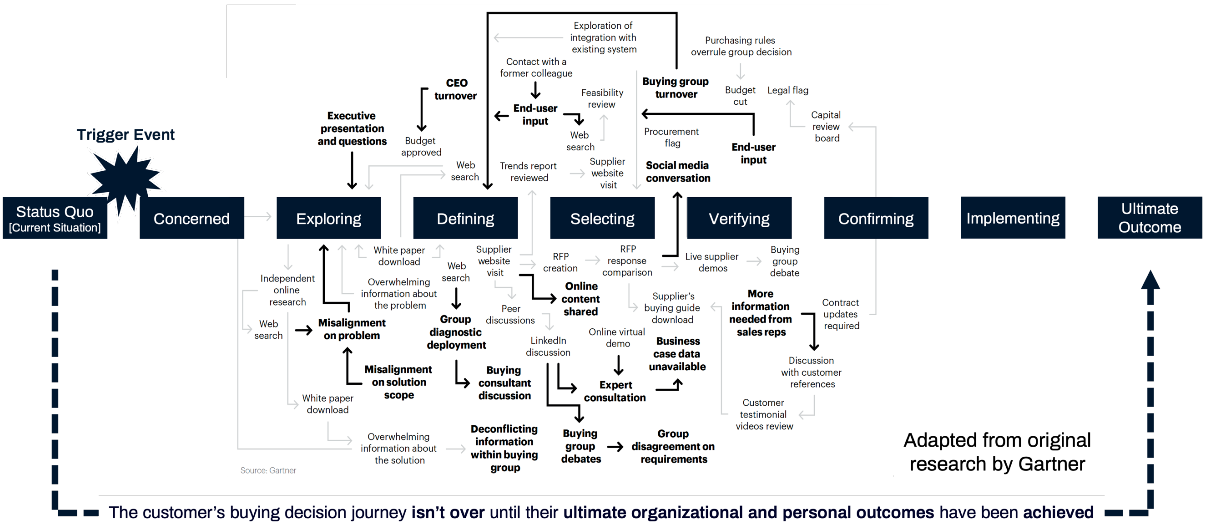
- Without strong **internal leadership** of the buying decision journey, stakeholder consensus is unlikely.
- And if the stakeholders cannot achieve **consensus** about how best to address the issue, action is unlikely.
- Having a compelling and coherent customer-specific value proposition is a **powerful** and **critical foundation**, but by itself is not enough ...

inflexion-point
Outcome-Centric Selling®

Key phases in the buying decision journey

We need to acknowledge that for any complex or complicated situation, our prospective customer's **buying decision journey** will inevitably have twists and turns along the way. We need to recognise that this journey can go forwards or backwards at any stage or be abandoned altogether.

Gartner's visualisation of their recent research about the **actual dynamics** of typical B2B buying decision journeys - particularly for unfamiliar or unfamiliar purchases - illustrates just how complicated they can be:



Accepting that our prospective customer's journey can move backwards as well as forwards, it's important to recognise that almost every successful complex B2B buying journey passes through **each of the following phases** at least once (and frequently more often):

Status quo

This is the state that most of our potential customers are likely to be in, most of the time. They seem (to an outsider observer, at least) to be **satisfied** with their **current situation**, and do not yet appear to be actively concerned about any of the issues we have chosen to target.

Trigger event

But then **something happens** - either inside or outside their organisation - to draw their attention to an issue they had not previously considered to be important.

Curious

As a result of the trigger event, our potential customer becomes curious about the issue, and they typically invest some time and resource in a **basic initial investigation**, usually via web search.

Exploring

If their initial research suggests that the issue is worth understanding in more detail, our potential customer typically moves into a **more active exploration** of the issue, its consequences for the business and the potential solution options available to them.

Defining

Once a **consensus** has started to emerge around the **need to act**, our potential customer then normally moves into a phase during which they start to define which options they should shortlist, who should be on the decision team, which decision criteria they should use and what the decision process and timeframe should look like.

Selecting

Having decided how they are going to decide, our potential customer then moves into the selecting phase, during which they typically exhaustively **evaluate** their shortlisted options, seek **proposals** from qualified suppliers, and attempt to reach a **consensus** around their **preferred option**.

Verifying

Once our potential customer has selected their preferred option, they will typically then seek to verify their decision and to make sure that they have negotiated the **best possible terms and conditions** as well as seeking to eliminate any remaining **concerns** or **reservations** about either the need to pursue the project or their preferred option.

Confirming

If the project is of any significant size or impact, an **internal business case** typically now needs to be submitted for final approval, often to a person or body that may not have been involved in the details of the decision process to date.

By this phase, our primary **competition** has shifted to all the other **different projects** the customer is also thinking of investing in, and it becomes more important than ever that the final approvers have positive answers to the 4 critical value story questions: why act, why now, why you and why trust? If not, our sales campaign can fail at this last hurdle.

Implementing

Once our customer's order has been received, the next stop of course is to work with them to **implement** their chosen solution. But they often still do not regard their buying journey as over even after the new solution is up-and running.

Outcome achieved

In an outcome-centric world we need to recognise that our customer's buying journey is only over when they have successfully **achieved the business outcomes** they sought to accomplish when they set out on their journey in the first place.

Passing through the phases

The likelihood of a **positive decision** and of a **successful outcome** declines whenever a customer bypasses or rushes one or more of phases in this journey - such behaviour often simply **stores up trouble** for later.

Many buying journeys end up revisiting previous phases

Whilst successful buying journeys tend to pass through each phase at least once, customers will often **revisit** one or a number of these phases as new facts emerge or their circumstances change.

This is why it is so important for us to be aware of the **current phase** of the customer's buying journey at all times, to recognise that it may **move backwards or stall**, and to do all we can to identify and **eliminate any obstacles** that may be holding the customer back.

The benefits of engaging early

Salespeople that successfully **engage** and **influence** the customer during their **curious**, **exploring** or **defining** phases are **far more likely to win** than those who only become aware of or involved in the opportunity once the customer has already reached the "**selecting**" phase.

Salespeople and sales organisations that manage to successfully engage even earlier - while the **status quo** still prevails, or when a **trigger event** has either recently happened or is currently underway - do even better.

04

The Outcome-Centric Selling® toolkit

It should be obvious that salespeople need effective tools and guidelines to support them in today's complex B2B buying environments - but that traditional rigidly-defined linear "sales processes" will inevitably fail to offer the necessary flexibility.

Rigid, centrally dictated and over-prescriptive rules are inherently unproductive in complex, highly variable B2B buying environments and are anyway likely to be ignored by the more intelligent and effective salespeople in favour of the things they have learned actually work in practice.

That's why Inflexion-Point's Outcome-Centric Selling® toolkit is best thought of as a **flexible framework** that enables intelligent salespeople to diagnose where they are in each opportunity and guides, reminds and equips them in what they need to know and do to **facilitate** each phase of their prospective customer's buying journey.

Moving the middle - and boosting the best

We need to acknowledge that some members of today's sales community - although apparently effective in product- or solution-driven sales environments - will simply not be smart or adaptable enough to survive in a world of **enhanced customer expectations**, whatever sales system or methodology they follow.

And it's equally true that the relatively small percentage of consistently **elite sales performers** - who usually turn out be quick learners as well as being blessed with both practical and emotional intelligence - will always be able to **adapt** and **thrive** in a rapidly evolving business environment.

The greatest performance improvements come from supporting 'middle-of-the-road' salespeople

It's the largest "**middle-of-the-road**" group of salespeople - if they are reasonably intelligent, open to learn and committed to their personal development - that will benefit the most from being guided by an approach that combines the collective learning of their colleagues combined with the emerging best practices of other successful sales organisations.

But **elite performers** also benefit from participating in and contributing to the development of their organisation's sales methodology. Their colleagues can learn from their expertise and accumulated learning - but the top performers also benefit from the resulting checklists and frameworks in the same way that elite surgeons and airline pilots do.

There's little value in applying a rigid sales process to a complex and non-linear buying environment. That's why our approach to Outcome-Centric Selling® has been implemented as a **flexible toolkit** rather than an unbending process, and why we take pains to incorporate and reflect the winning behaviours of each sales organisation's top sales performers.

Salespeople are more willing to adopt this approach because they see our toolkit as a **supportive skeleton** rather than a suffocating straitjacket, because it supports their initiative rather than supressing it, and because it reflects it reflects the accumulated wisdom of colleagues they regard as role models.

Guidelines, checklists and one-page plans

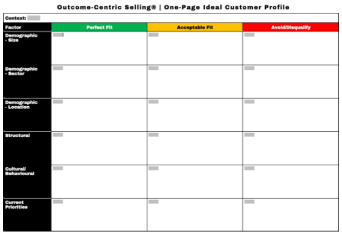
Inflexion-Point's Outcome-Centric Selling® toolkit brings together thoughtful guidelines, situational checklists, and simple plans to equip and encourage intelligent salespeople to think clearly and make **intelligent choices** before, during and after every interaction with their customers.

It recognises that even the most highly trained professions - pilots, surgeons and so on - benefit from using **checklists** to remind them of what they need to know and do when performing complex tasks - and that every salesperson, no matter what their experience level, can also benefit tremendously from situationally relevant checklists, guidelines, and sales tools.

Proactively targeting the right opportunities

Unless you happen to be the undisputed brand leader in your sector and are enjoying a limitless stream of high-quality inbound enquiries, your salespeople **cannot afford to wait** for prospective customers to come to them.

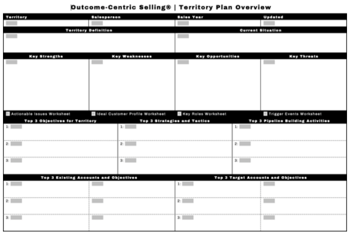
Salespeople need to have a crystal-clear understanding of the actionable **business issues** their company is best at addressing, the **organisations** that are most likely to suffer from them (i.e., their **ideal customer profiles**), the **roles** that are most likely to be responsible for dealing with them, and the **trigger events** that draw their attention to the importance of the issue in the first place.



That's why Inflexion-Point's Outcome-Centric Selling® toolkit includes **simple targeting frameworks** that enable salespeople to clearly identify and pursue the issues, organisations, roles, and trigger events they should be targeting.

Planning to win

It's hard for organisations to strike a happy medium: **territory** and **account planning** is often either not done at all or ends up being a lengthy and complicated exercise that is rarely referred to or revised as the sales year evolves. Neither extreme is satisfactory.

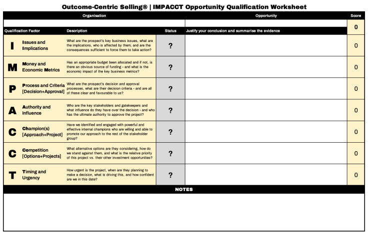


That's why Inflexion-Point's Outcome-Centric Selling® toolkit includes simple one-page territory and account planning frameworks that stimulate salespeople to think about how their **time** and **effort** should be **prioritised** and enable them to establish and monitor the appropriate strategies and tactics - and to update them on a frequent and regular basis.

Consistent opportunity qualification

Another profound difference between top sales performers and the rest is that they recognise the value of systematically **qualifying** every opportunity against a set of consistent criteria and are unwilling to invest their time in pursuing poorly qualified opportunities they are unlikely to win - whilst their less effective colleagues continue to throw resources at lost causes.

That's why inflexion-Point's Outcome-Centric Selling® toolkit incorporates a significantly evolved version of the widely-adopted MEDDPIC framework (**IMPACCT**), including important enhancements that redefine factors like **issues**, **metrics**, **authority**, **decision criteria** and **process**, **champions**, **competition**, and - particularly important - **timing**.

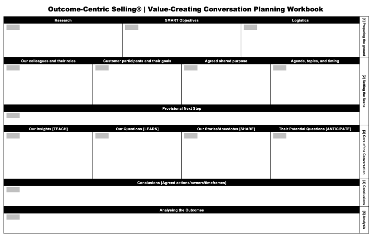


inflexion-point
Outcome-Centric Selling®

Preparing for every significant sales conversation

One of the most profound behavioural differences between today's top sales performers and the rest is that they recognise the value of **planning** and are willing to invest in **preparing** for every significant conversation.

This involves doing the appropriate **research**, anticipating what each prospect is likely to be interested in, being aware of what their most successful outcome would look like - and **preparing** the insights they want to share, the questions they want to ask, and the questions they anticipate their prospect may ask.


Outcome-Centric Selling® | Value-Creating Conversation Planning Workbook

Research | SMART Objectives | Logistics — [1] Preparing the ground

Our colleagues and their roles | Customer participants and their goals | Agreed shared purpose | Agenda, topics, and timing

Provisional Next Step — [2] Setting the Scene

Our Insights [TEACH] | Our Questions [LEARN] | Our Stories/Anecdotes [SHARE] | Their Potential Questions [ANTICIPATE] — [3] Core of the Conversation

Conclusions [Agreed actions/owners/timeframes] — [4] Conclusions

Analysing the Outcomes — [5] Analysis

That's why Inflexion-Point's Outcome-Centric Selling® toolkit includes a one-page **value-creating conversation planning framework** that prepares salespeople to achieve the best possible outcome from every significant customer interaction, including setting the scene, the core of the conversation, and agreed next steps that will serve to advance the customer's buying journey.

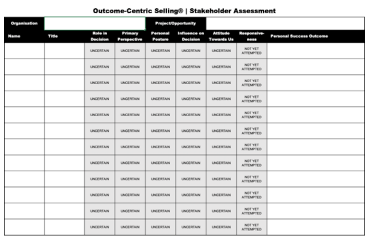
In addition to the planning framework, we also guide and train salespeople to share important **insights**, to ask compelling **questions**, tell powerful customer **stories**, and to **anticipate** and prepare for their prospective customers tough-to-answer questions.

Identifying and engaging key customer stakeholders

Today's buying decisions involve multiple customer **stakeholders -** often many more than might be initially apparent to the salesperson. And whilst they all may have a say in the decision, the two critical roles are usually those of ultimate economic buyer and executive project sponsor.

Both they and the other stakeholders will each have personal **perspectives**, **priorities** and **motivations** that need to be understood and addressed as well as satisfying the collective needs of the decision making and approval groups.

That's why Inflexion-Point's Outcome-Centric Selling® toolkit includes a simple one-page **stakeholder profile** that enables salespeople to identify, engage and assess the **perspective**, **role**, **attitude**, **influence**, and **accessibility** of all the key members of the customer's stakeholder community **-** including some that are not necessarily immediately obvious.


Outcome-Centric Selling® | Stakeholder Assessment

Organisation			Project/Opportunity					
Name	Title	Role in Decision	Primary Perspective	Personal Posture	Influence on Decision	Attitude Towards Us	Responsive-ness	Personal Success Outcome
		UNCERTAIN	UNCERTAIN	UNCERTAIN	UNCERTAIN	UNCERTAIN	NOT YET ATTEMPTED	
		UNCERTAIN	UNCERTAIN	UNCERTAIN	UNCERTAIN	UNCERTAIN	NOT YET ATTEMPTED	
		UNCERTAIN	UNCERTAIN	UNCERTAIN	UNCERTAIN	UNCERTAIN	NOT YET ATTEMPTED	
		UNCERTAIN	UNCERTAIN	UNCERTAIN	UNCERTAIN	UNCERTAIN	NOT YET ATTEMPTED	
		UNCERTAIN	UNCERTAIN	UNCERTAIN	UNCERTAIN	UNCERTAIN	NOT YET ATTEMPTED	
		UNCERTAIN	UNCERTAIN	UNCERTAIN	UNCERTAIN	UNCERTAIN	NOT YET ATTEMPTED	
		UNCERTAIN	UNCERTAIN	UNCERTAIN	UNCERTAIN	UNCERTAIN	NOT YET ATTEMPTED	
		UNCERTAIN	UNCERTAIN	UNCERTAIN	UNCERTAIN	UNCERTAIN	NOT YET ATTEMPTED	
		UNCERTAIN	UNCERTAIN	UNCERTAIN	UNCERTAIN	UNCERTAIN	NOT YET ATTEMPTED	
		UNCERTAIN	UNCERTAIN	UNCERTAIN	UNCERTAIN	UNCERTAIN	NOT YET ATTEMPTED	
		UNCERTAIN	UNCERTAIN	UNCERTAIN	UNCERTAIN	UNCERTAIN	NOT YET ATTEMPTED	
		UNCERTAIN	UNCERTAIN	UNCERTAIN	UNCERTAIN	UNCERTAIN	NOT YET ATTEMPTED	

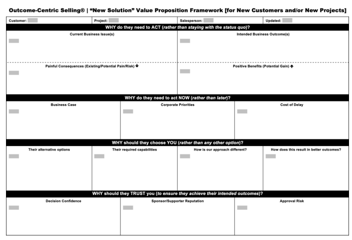
The framework also encourages and enables salespeople to summarise each stakeholder's **most important priority** as it relates to the current project, and how they can **deliver** the **greatest value** to **each stakeholder**.

inflexion-point
Outcome-Centric Selling®

Customer-specific value propositions

We've already established the central importance of each customer's unique value proposition in complex B2B sales environments, and we believe that every salesperson should be equipped, enabled, and encouraged to progressively develop the answers to their customer's "**why act**, **why now**, **why you** and **why trust**?" questions through the evolution of the opportunity.

That's why Inflexion-Point's Outcome-Centric Selling® toolkit includes a simple value proposition framework that ensures all the necessary information has been collected, collated, and understood. The resulting customer-specific value proposition then provides the perfect foundation for the all-important **executive summary** of the subsequent proposal.

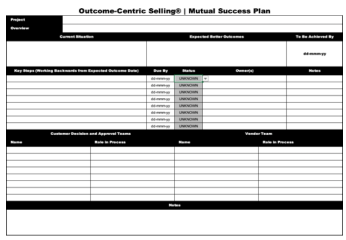


As we have seen, the ability to craft compelling **customer-specific value propositions** is perhaps the most important skill underpinning Outcome-Centric Selling®.

Mutual success plans

Our customer's expected outcomes are much more likely to be achieved when they reflect a **shared understanding** between customer and salesperson as to what is expected and how those better outcomes can be most effectively accomplished.

That's why Inflexion-Point's Outcome-Centric Selling® toolkit includes a simple, sharable **mutual success plan** framework that encourages both parties to work backwards from the customer's expected outcomes and identify what needs to be done (and by whom) in order for those objectives to be met.



Customising these guidelines, checklists and plans

Whilst these guidelines, checklists and plans reflect the emerging best practices being adopted by today's most effective B2B sales organisations, they are most effective when they are **customised** to reflect your unique business environment and the experiences of your best salespeople and are part of every salesperson's daily working routine.

That's why our approach to outcome-centric selling involves **customising** and **optimising** the key elements of the framework to match your **specific requirements**, and why each element is designed to be included in your CRM and sales enablement systems.

inflexion-point
Outcome-Centric Selling®

05

Putting these principles into practice

The full benefits of Outcome-Centric Selling® will not be realised if you think of it - like so many conventional approaches to sales training - as a one-off exercise.

You need to regard the project as you would any other change management exercise - as an ongoing process leading to sustained performance improvement.

If you are to achieve lasting impact and get the best possible results, we believe that you need to:

- **Evaluate** your existing **people**, **systems**, and **processes** as a first step
- **Embrace** the latest **best practices**, but **tailor** them to your environment
- Focus on **changing habits** and **behaviours** as well as developing skills
- Concentrate on achieving the **best outcomes** for your customers
- Embed the **principles** into your **core sales systems -** particularly your CRM and sales enablement platforms
- Use **multiple training delivery modes -** typically a combination of **on-site**, **on-line** and **on-demand**
- Equip, encourage, and enable your **frontline sales managers** to reinforce the principles into their **day-to-day interactions** with their teams
- Regularly **assess** your **progress** and continue to **adapt** and **evolve** your framework in the light of the lessons learned

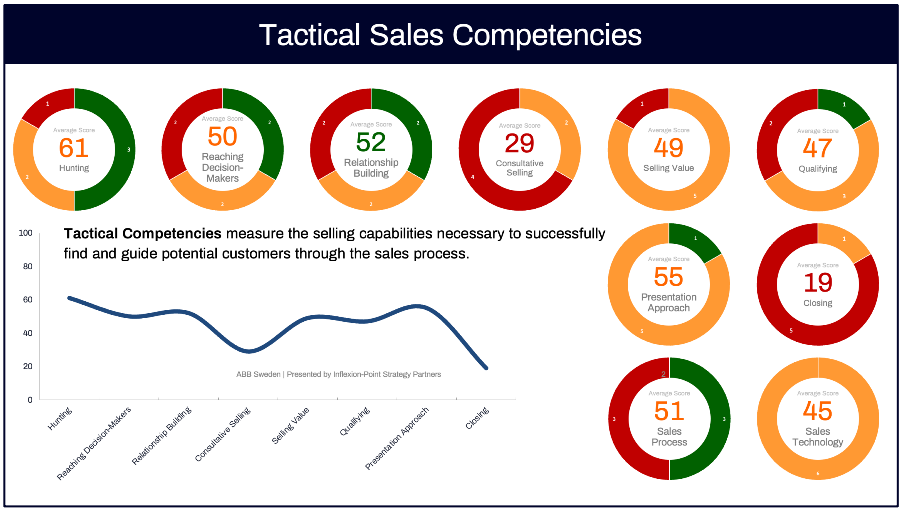
Three key phases

There are **three key phases** in your Outcome-Centric Selling® journey. Each can be accomplished relatively quickly, and are designed to deliver the earliest possible impact on revenue and time-to-value whilst ensuring that improvement continues on an ongoing basis:

Phase 1: Evaluate

Our approach starts with a rapid and efficient assessment and evaluation of your existing **people**, **systems**, and **processes**. This typically involves:

- Using **Objective Management Group's** world-leading Sales Effectiveness and Improvement Analysis programme to evaluate your existing sales organisation's **Will to Sell**, **Sales DNA** and **Tactical Sales Competencies**, leading to clear recommendations about organisational and individual development priorities (sample report below)



- **Interviewing** a representative cross-section of your sales organisation and management team
- **Reviewing** your existing sales systems, processes, tools, messages, and materials, including:
  - Pipeline stages and definitions
  - Opportunity qualification criteria
  - Current CRM implementation
  - Existing sales methodologies and training programmes
  - Sales slide deck and sales tools and associated messages

This exercise can be completed - subject to access to the key players from your side - in a matter of a **few short weeks**, and results in a set of recommendations.

inflexion-point
Outcome-Centric Selling®

Phase 2: Train

Taking into account what we have learned in the initial assessment, we will work with you to come up with an agreed **training and development programme** that reflects your organisation-wide development priorities and incorporates the appropriate modules from our **Outcome-Centric Selling Academy** syllabus. The formats include:

- **Live on-site** instructor-led sales training workshops covering multiple topics or themes - typically spanning 2-4 days
- **Live on-line** instructor-led training workshops covering single topics or themes - each topic typically lasting 90-120 minutes
- **Pre-recorded on-demand** video modules, each covering one specific aspect of the chosen topic - typically lasting 15-30 minutes

These different training formats can be combined in order to get the maximum impact and return-on-investment.

The **Outcome-Centric Selling Academy** syllabus spans 10 courses and over 30 modules and covers:

- Establishing the Foundations
- Proactive Targeting
- Planning to Win
- Opportunity Qualification
- Compelling Conversation Framework
- Value Creating Conversational Skills
- Stakeholder Management
- Customer-Specific Value Propositions
- Putting Outcome-Centric Selling into Practice
- Building Outcome-Centric Sales Organizations

You can download a copy of the detailed syllabus here:

These courses are supported by a wide range of simple sales tools that can be easily customised to your organisation's specific sales environment - examples of many of these tools have been included in section 4 ("the **Outcome-Centric Sales toolkit**").

In addition to encouraging the use of these sales tools on a day-to-day basis, the concepts taught in the courses can be reinforced through group workshops in which the participants can ask questions and share examples of their use of the tools.

Phase 3: Enable

The last and most important phase in the process seeks to ensure that the principles of outcome-centric selling are enthusiastically and successfully embraced by your entire sales organisation.

Without regular reinforcement, any sales training or change management programme is likely to see diminishing returns - but with a systematic programme of reinforcement, adoption and impact will inevitably be significantly higher.

The key elements and principles of our Outcome-Centric Selling® toolkit are designed to be used on a day-to-day basis by your sales organisation to guide your salespeople and to reinforce their desired habits.

Sales management (and in particular the first level sales managers) has a critical role to play in ensuring that their organisation gets the most out of its investments in Outcome-Centric Selling® through their coaching interventions.

That's why many of the elements of Outcome-Centric Selling® include manager's guides to ensure that their coaching activities have the maximum possible impact.

We also work closely with many of their clients to help them embed the principles of Outcome-Centric Selling® into their CRM and Sales Enablement systems.

Find out more

To find out more about implementing Outcome-Centric Selling® in your own sales organisation, book a call here: https://www.inflexion-point.com/book-a-call

We look forward to learning more about what you're trying to accomplish, and exploring how we can help...

inflexion-point
Outcome-Centric Selling®

6
About us

Inflexion-Point Strategy Partners are a sales effectiveness consultancy with a **global client footprint**, and we are proud to be one of the pioneers in enabling forward-thinking sales organisations to adopt an outcome-centric approach to selling.

Our clients include both **technology-based businesses** in the all-important **scale-up phase** as well as the **entrepreneurial business units** of more established corporates.

As we hope this document demonstrates, we have a great deal of **practical experience** in the strategies and tactics that are needed to support an outcome-centric selling approach.

If you like what you have read in this guide, if you believe what we believe about the future of B2B selling, and you are curious enough to want to **find out more**, please drop me a line at bob@inflexion-point.com or book a call at https://www.inflexion-point.com/book-a-call.

Regards

Bob Apollo
Chief Outcomes Officer
Inflexion-Point Strategy Partners
Poole, UK and Jávea/Xàbia, Spain
bob@inflexion-point.com