



## Buyer Roadblocks

Welcome to this lesson on buyer roadblocks. To understand the major internal issues that can get in the way of a sale. It may come as a surprise to you that you aren't simply competing against competitive offerings in the sales process. But you are competing for "mind share" and resources against a vast spectrum of alternative priorities.

These include buying group conflict, status, implications and self-interests. Buyers justify their position on a decision—any decision that requires change—by putting up roadblocks.

When opening up a sales opportunity, you are always competing.

- Competing for "mind share" (5 Why's).
- Competing for resources.
- Competing against alternatives, including the Status Quo.
- Competing against internal buyer roadblocks (the silent stages).

Obstacles are different from roadblocks. Obstacles or objections in the sales process are mainly external. e.g. Pricing. While roadblocks are internal, the behind-the-scenes, private, internal stuff you don't see. Roadblocks are always present but usually become visible at the "present value" or "closing" stage. When the buyer group has formed, and the more serious yes commitments need to be given.

Let's take a look at these silent stages. During the facilitation stages, we get very little visibility into any internal roadblocks. We get yes commitments; however, they don't tie the buyer to make a purchase. As the buyer or buying group leaves the consensus stage and enters the curious stage, roadblocks become more visible as group conflict and priorities kick in. This is why so many sales opportunities disappear deeper into the sales process. The bigger the yes commitments, potentially bigger roadblocks will appear.

### Why do roadblocks appear.

Well, research shows that today, the buying process can be characterized as a "conflict" situation. Salespeople too often trying to solve the wrong problem, because customers actually do "get it," they just don't buy it. They don't buy it due to roadblocks and indecision.

*To overcome roadblocks, we need to understand that the Decision-Making Journey relies on active decision making, with a focus on cognitive and behavioral influence and engagement.*

So, buyer roadblocks have many internal moving parts, including individual needs and concerns. Implications and roles. Communication and ownership. Politics and Status. Historic relationships between members of the buying group, etc. This means Buyers are looking at multiple things that they could invest in. You have to overcome the many implications that a potential customer must consider before purchasing any offering.

These implications include concerns about change, risk, cost, ROI, implementation, user- training, etc. The many internal tangible and intangible factors that are associated with the actual adoption of

a new offering. You also have to contend with buyer group member status and self-interest. Members of the buying group will risk as little as possible in case their status is at risk, so they act cautiously.

You are competing for “mind share”, and resources when buying group members may have conflicting self-interests. Well, the good news is that roadblocks can be removed from the buying situation.

#### *Dealing with Roadblocks.*

Let's look at the buying situation. We already stated that buying is a conflicting situation. Roadblocks are removed if the total force (buyer group agreement) towards buying becomes greater than the opposing forces (disagreement).

Stanford University research shows that there are four major roadblocks that need to be addressed. The buyer's roadblocks are.

1. Buyers prefer stability.
2. The anticipated regret.
3. The perceived cost of change. and,
4. Selection difficulty.

#### *Preference for stability.*

The first is that buyers prefer stability. They will use words such as *"We are going to stick with our current solution for now. But we are grateful for your effort with this. Let's stay in touch."* When buyers prefer stability, it's because change represents the disruption of the status quo in unknowable ways. Members of the buying group defend themselves by resisting change, decisions, new purchases, etc. when feeling threatened.

Status quo is a challenging roadblock because every business needs to maintain a level of status quo, or they cannot run their business. Status Quo is 'Just is. To become different—Just is, would require change. And change means disruption, potentially a breakdown, or interruption of normal operating. Although a natural occurrence (we take on new jobs, etc.), we won't substantially change unless we are assured that we will avoid disruption, confusion, and uncertainty.

#### *WHEN IS A BUYER READY TO OPEN UP TO CHANGE?.*

When their stable preference for the status quo is recognized, that they cannot fix any problems with known or internal resources. And the “force towards,” meaning the buying group, is prepared to change in a way that won't cause irreparable disruption to the business.

In order to facilitate moving away from the status quo, it's necessary to get an agreement and a recognized path forward. The path to moving out of the status quo is the same for all systems. It begins when someone within the organization recognizes something is awry. There must be a thorough understanding of all the moving parts (i.e., you can't get where you're going until you know where you're at).

To move the status quo, you must get in early, be prepared to stick it out, and firstly, be a change agent. To find and facilitate the journey with those who really need your solution but haven't shifted from the status quo yet. You need to think of this investment as a way of helping the customer create and, most importantly, own a compelling need to change. Your sales messaging has to be crafted to move the buyer to destabilize their preference for the status quo. Introduce the concept of “unconsidered needs” to the conversation, addressing unforeseen or hidden issues with staying at the status quo.

You must help the customer create a vision of a new future and how they will get there. A vision they own!! It hinges on whether the reasons to consider change are more compelling than any reason to stay put, or whether "just is" will not be an option anymore. You must connect with everyone involved in maintaining the OK, as they must have a hand in defining the elements and understanding how change would affect them. To facilitate buying, we must enter earlier, as servant leaders, and be willing to first be change agents. We must think of this as a way of helping the customer create, and own, a compelling need to change.

#### *Anticipated regret.*

The second buyer roadblock is anticipated regret. The buyer will use words such as *"We are going to put this project on hold, as we need to rethink what solution we actually need."* What is the major stumbling block to anticipated regret? Critically, it's whether senior executives are committed to change!! The buyer (or buying group) is missing a sponsor who evangelizes the initiative, removing any internal roadblocks. Plus, they neutralize the forces opposed to moving forward while securing commitment from the C-suite to the buying group.

Anticipated regret is the experience of regret that someone in the buying group thinks they may feel in the future about decisions they are currently considering making. You must anticipate overcoming two core components of buyer decision-related regret.

- A. The (comparative) evaluation of the future outcome and its impact. and,
- B. The feeling of self-blame for having made a poor choice.

In sales conversations, you can challenge anticipated regret by painting a negative picture of the future that is linked to the buyer's current plans, situation or inaction. Then, you can reframe this for anticipated pleasure when they adopt your suggestions instead. In your own sales activity, beware of the paralysis that anticipated regret can bring to buyers. Think instead of real probabilities and your ability to solve problems and build relationships. The trust switch is important to overcome regret feelings. B2B buyers, not just consumers, can have buyer's remorse before they buy. The role of sales is to show the buyer how other people have succeeded. Feel. Felt. Found.

They are the heroes in the story!! You also need to identify and support a champion. plus help the buying group as a whole achieve consensus around your option.

#### *Cost of change.*

The next roadblock is the perceived cost of change. So, they use words such as, *"We have reviewed your proposal, but as our current supplier has offered us a similar deal, we will stay with them for now."* The big question about the perceived cost of change is:. Are the buyers ready to sacrifice? To overcome the perceived cost of change, the buyer and buying group need to move the "force towards acceptance to buy. This means the buyer is comfortable with, and in fact, wants or needs change. This is a change from what they are currently doing to something better.

So, you need to understand "what the buyer provides" in the sales process. While what they receive is a benefit or outcome,. whereas what they provide in the sales process is a cost or sacrifice for doing business with you. The key to success here is that the benefits (force towards) must outweigh the cost or sacrifice (force opposed) to the change. Because any purchasing decision is a change management issue!!

Switch the sales conversations to perceived cost of value. Think of the evidence switch. This is the quality of the solution, and the results delivered to customers to meet their goals, compared to price and other sacrifices to obtain the services. As you network with each buyer in the group about the

future outcomes, you need to create buyer tension. No tension means that buyers think there is nothing wrong with the present.

*'The gap between vision (where we could be) and current reality (where we are now) is a key source of force, either for or against. If there were no gap, there would be no need for any action to move towards the vision. This gap is what we call tension.'*

Researchers have identified three core dimensions that make the "force towards" outweigh any perceived cost of change. The 3 are:

- A. Aggravation. – Fear of things getting worse.
- B. Assurance. – Confidence of mind, freedom from doubt. and,
- C. Trust. – They trust the solution to deliver.

So, you also need to leverage loss aversion by helping your customers recognize all the potential current threats to their business performance.

#### *Selection difficulty.*

The fourth and last roadblock is selection difficulty. They use words such as *We are still weighing up our options as to the best fit for our business. Can you call me next month?*

To overcome this final roadblock, ask yourself: Can you get into the advantage position?

The typical buying group for a complex B2B solution involves six to 10 decision-makers, each armed with their own information and opinions. These dynamics make it difficult for customers to make purchases. Leading to selection difficulties. In fact, more than 75% of customers in a B2B survey described their purchase as very complex or difficult.

Selling psychology tells us that the more we're exposed to something, the more likely it is that we'll develop a preference for it and decide to buy it. Plan and prepare to spend twice as much time winning buy-in from multiple decision-makers. Because you also need to be aware that the set of solutions buying groups can consider is expanding as new technologies, products, and suppliers emerge.

The aim is for you to get buyer group to think, 'All things being the same, these one or two things really stuck out for me.' The goal here is to have content and sales messaging that present a more powerful reason to select your company. To have Two or three key messages that showcase your company's strengths move the "force" in your favor. The evidence switch tactics can be powerful to put you in an advantage position.

Also, don't forget the connected switch. The earlier you can make an emotional connection, the better. Once buyers have decided that they like a particular option or person, it's difficult for them to backpedal. To overcome selection difficulty, the Trust Switch can come into play. According to buyers, the top thing vendors can do to speed up purchase decisions is to be more transparent about product capabilities and limitations.

In fact, researchers have devised a formula for successfully removing roadblocks and tipping the "force towards" enacting change. The combination of D, V, and F must be greater than R. The formula is.

- D. = dissatisfaction with how things are now. multiplied by V.
- V. = the clarity of the future vision for how things could be.
- F. = Identifying the first concrete steps towards the vision.
- R. = the resistance, (sacrifice, tension, and cost) of moving forward.

So, D multiplied by V multiplied by F, must be greater than R to remove roadblocks.

Internal roadblocks are always lurking in the sales process. So, you need to plan for them and recognize their attributes when things stall in your sales conversations, or difficulty in gaining commitments to move forward. So, work on D., the dissatisfaction with the present. To get the buying group moving, you'll need to convince them that the future destination is far better than the here and now. You'll need to build a compelling vision, or V, that captures the imagination, heart, and minds of the buying group in order to overcome internal roadblocks. And finally, but critically, they also have to be able to see the beginnings of a path before them. A viable way to proceed before it starts to move. This is F, the first concrete step in the formula for removing roadblocks in your sales process.

If the combination of "dissatisfaction, vision, and identifying" (the factors that will drive the sale over) is greater than "resistance" (the perceived cost of change), then the change is likely to succeed. And roadblocks will be removed. So, in the age of digital buying, the role of the salesperson may no longer be to "sell" at all but rather to act as a solution sherpa.

Internally, confusion and complexity are the two principal hurdles holding organizations back from buying. Time efficiency, resource efficiency, convenience, and operational velocity are the principal reasons why organizations overcome internal roadblocks. This is where you need to focus your sales efforts when meeting internal resistance.

Research shows that significant challenges faced by salespeople when selling into an organization include the lack of urgency of the part of senior management to implement new technologies, as well as the necessary budget to move forward with these initiatives.

In contrast to the salesperson, the prospective buyer does not share the same focus on just one offering. They are looking at multiple even overwhelming numbers of things that they could invest in. Salespeople have to overcome the many implications that a potential customer must consider before purchasing any offering. Implications include concerns about change, risk, user-training — the many tangible and intangible factors that are associated with the actual adoption of a new offering.

## Do they have a buying process?

Ask yourself, does the customer have an actual process – purchasing, sourcing, etc. – within their organization set up expressly for the acquisition of your product or service. During the facilitation stages, be tuned to the fact that a buyer's concern (roadblock) could simply come down to the fact that there is no process for acquiring your offering, or that the process is too onerous for the buyer to face.

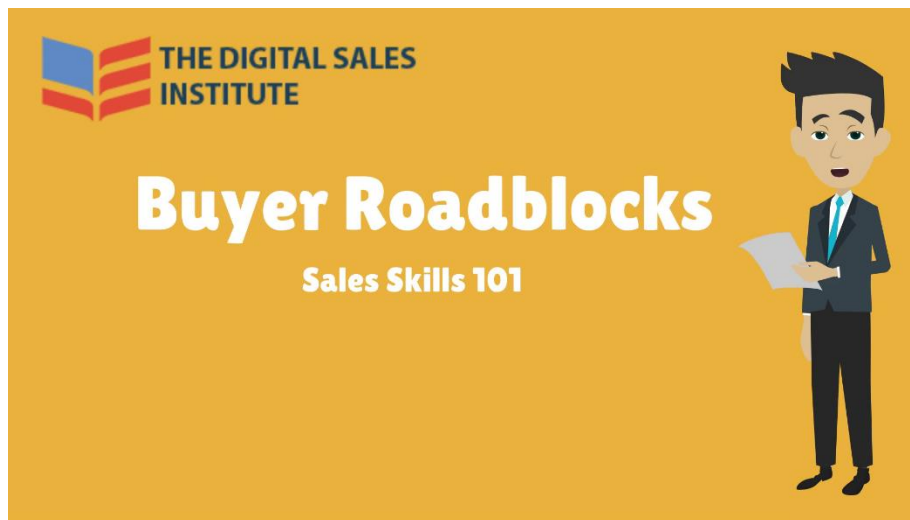
## Are you really a priority?

When talking to buyers, many salespeople fail to clarify if the buyer believes what they sell would bring value, but is it a Priority now?

Buyer priorities be changed, however only if some unanticipated major event (trigger selling) or influence (buying group dynamics to overcome a roadblock) acts upon the buyer. Certainly not a wishful or helpful buyer within the company, or a hungry salesperson outside. This is why we sell to a buying group and not just one single contact.

## Can you rattle the “status quo”

Change can be deal killer; this is potential deal-breaker territory. This buying roadblock has to do with the change that will occur, or even the *perception* of change that will occur on acquisition *and adoption* of the offering. It doesn't matter if the reasons are valid or imaginary, proven, or perceived—the change that an organization thinks it will have to endure is the buying concern that can most significantly slows or stops the buying journey.



**It may come as a surprise to you, that you aren't simply competing against competitive offerings, but you are also competing against a vast spectrum of alternatives.**



**Including buying group conflict, status, implications and self-interests.**

**Buyers justify their position on a decision by putting up road**

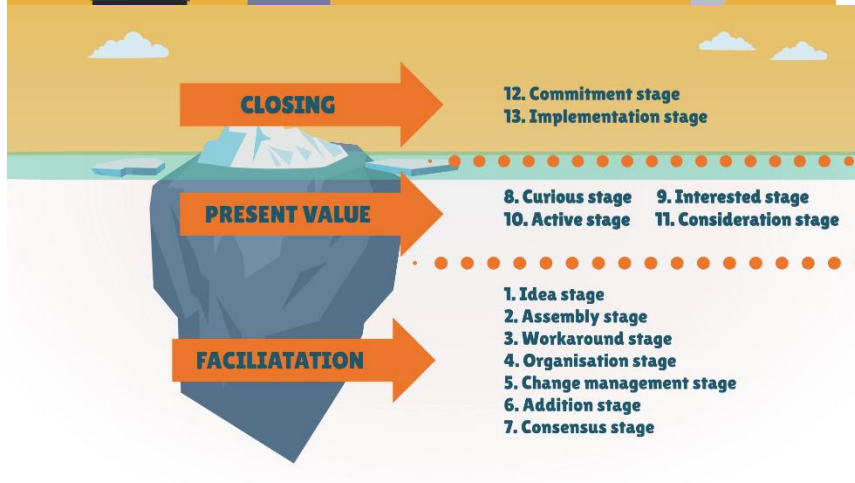


- Competing for "mind share" (5 Why's)
- Competing for resources
- Competing against alternatives including The Status Quo
- Competing against internal Buyer Roadblocks (The silent stages)

Obstacles in the sales process are mainly external. e.g Pricing

Roadblocks are internal, the behind-the-scenes, private, internal stuff you don't see

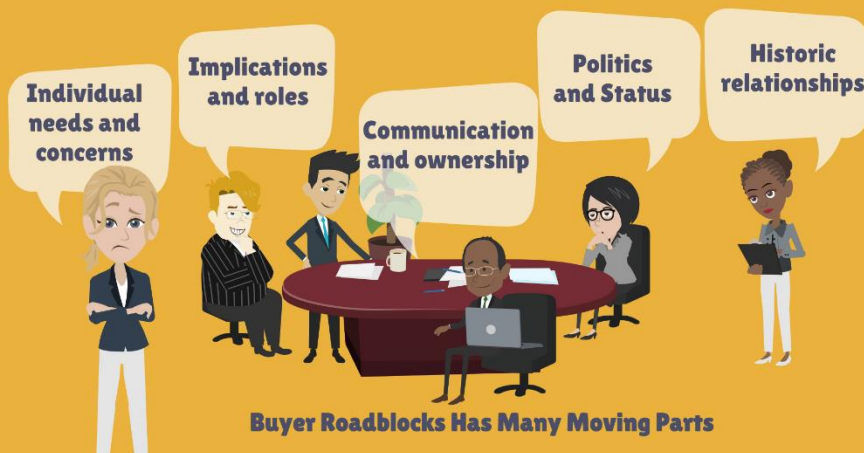
Roadblocks are always present, but usually become visible at the "Present Value" or "Closing" stage







**The Buying Process can be characterized as a "Conflict" situation**



**Buyer Roadblocks Has Many Moving Parts**





**Buyers are looking at multiple things that they could invest in. You have to overcome the many implications that a potential customer must consider before purchasing any offering.**

**Implications include concerns about change, risk, user-training etc. The many tangible and intangible factors that are associated with the actual adoption of a new offering.**

### **Status and Self Interest**

**Members of the buying group will risk as little as possible in case their status is risked, so they act cautiously.**

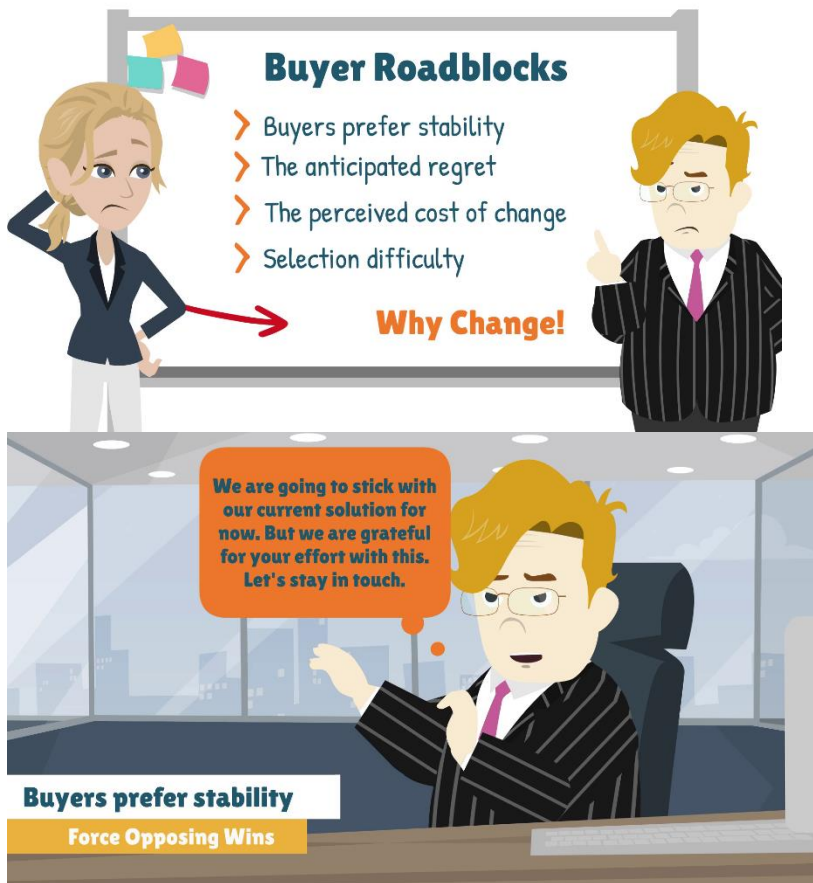


**You are competing for "mind share" and resources when buying group members may have conflicting self interests**



**GOOD NEWS**

**Roadblocks can be removed from the buying situation**



## Buyers prefer stability



Because change represents the disruption of the status quo in unknowable ways, members of the buying group defend themselves by resisting when feeling threatened.



Every business needs to maintain a level of status quo or they couldn't run their business.

Status Quo is 'Just is'. To become a different 'Just is' would require change. And change means disruption, potentially a breakdown or interruption of normal operating.

Although a natural occurrence (we take new jobs etc), we won't substantially change unless we are assured, we avoid disruption, confusion, and uncertainty.

### When is a buyer ready to leave "Stability"

When their stable preference for the "OK" recognizes it cannot fix any problems with known or internal resources.

And the "force towards" is prepared to change in a way that won't cause irreparable disruption to the business.



In order to facilitate moving away from the status quo, it's necessary to get the agreement, and a recognized path forward.

The path to moving out of the status quo is the same for all systems. It begins when someone within recognizes something is awry.

There must be a thorough understanding of all the moving parts (i.e. you can't get where you're going until you know where you're at).





**To move the status quo, get in early, be prepared to stick it out and firstly, be a change agent.**

**Find and facilitate the journey with those who really need your solution but haven't shifted from the status quo yet**

**Think of this investment, as a way of helping the customer create and own a compelling need to change.**



**Sales messaging has to be crafted to move the buyer to destabilize their preference for the status quo.**

**Introduce the concept of "unconsidered needs" to the conversation – addressing unforeseen/hidden issues with staying at the status quo.**

**Help the customer create a vision of a new future and how they will get there – a vision they own!!**



**Connect with everyone involved in maintaining the OK, as they must have a hand in defining the elements and understanding how change would affect it.**

**To facilitate buying, we must enter earlier as a Servant Leader and be willing to first be a change agent.**

**We must think of this as a way of helping the customer create and OWN a compelling need to change.**



**Whether senior executives are committed to change !!.**

**The buying group is missing a sponsor who evangelizes the initiative, removing roadblocks.**

**Plus, they neutralize the forces opposed to moving forward while securing commitment from the C-suite to the users.**

**What is the major stumbling block in anticipated regret?**



**Anticipated regret is the experience of the regret that someone in the buying group thinks they may feel in the future; about decisions they are currently considering making.**

**You must anticipate overcoming two core components of buyer decision-related regret.**

- A. The (comparative) evaluation of the future outcome.**
- B. The feeling of self-blame for having made a poor choice.**







**You can challenge anticipated regret by painting a negative picture of the future that is linked to the buyers current plans.**

**Then, you can reframe this to anticipated pleasure when they adopt your suggestions instead.**

**In your own sales activity, beware the paralysis that anticipated regret can bring to buyers.**

**Think instead of real probabilities and your ability to solve problems and build relationships.**



**B2B buyer's not just consumers can have buyer's remorse before they buy. The role of sales is to show the buyer how other people have succeeded.**

**The tone of your message and content needs be from the stance of you as the mentor/guide/advisor. They are the HERO!!.**

**You need to identify and support a champion, plus help the buying group as a whole to achieve consensus around your option.**





**To overcome the perceived cost of change, the buyer and buying group need to move the "force towards" – Acceptance to Buy.**

**This means the buyer is comfortable with, and in fact, wants or needs change.**

**This is a change from what they are currently doing, to something better.**

**Are the buyers ready to sacrifice?**



**You need to understand "what the buyer provides" in the sales process.**

**While, what they receive is a benefit, or outcome, whereas what they **PROVIDE** is a cost or sacrifice.**


**The benefits (force towards) must outweigh the cost or sacrifice (force opposed) to change.**

**Switch the sales conversations to – Perceived cost of value. Think – Evidence Switch.**

**This is the quality of the solution and the results delivered to customers to meet their goals, compared to price and other sacrifices to obtain the services.**

**Create buyer tension – No tension means that buyers think there is nothing wrong with the present.**





- 'The gap between vision (where we could be) and current reality (where we are now) is a key source of force – either for or against.
- If there were no gap, there would be no need for any action to move towards the vision. This gap is what we call tension.'

Researchers have identified three core dimensions that makes the "force towards" outweigh any perceived cost of change.

A. Aggravation – Fear of things getting worse

B. Assurance – Confidence of mind, freedom from doubt

C. Trust – They trust the solution to deliver

So, you also need to leverage loss aversion by helping your customers to recognize all the potential current threats to their business performance.



We are still weighing up our options as to the best fit for our business. Can you call me next month?

**Selection difficulty**

**Force Opposing Wins**

**The typical buying group for a complex B2B solution involves 6 to 10 decision makers, each armed with their own information and opinions.**

**These dynamics make it difficult for customers to make purchases.**

**In fact, more than 75% of customers in a B2B survey described their purchase as very complex or difficult.**

**Can you get into the advantage position?**



**Selling psychology tells us that the more we're exposed to something, the more likely it is that we'll develop a preference for it and decide to buy it.**

**Plan and prepare to spend 2X more time winning buy-in from multiple decision-makers.**

**Be aware, the set of solutions buying groups can consider is expanding as new technologies, products and suppliers emerge.**

**The aim is to get the buyer group to think, 'All things being the same, these one or two things really stuck out for me.'**

**The goal here is to have content and sales messaging that present a more powerful reason to select your company.**

**Two or three key messages that showcases your company strengths, that move the "force towards" in your favor.**





**The Connected Switch.** The earlier you can make an emotional connection, the better.

Once buyers have decided that they like a particular option, it's difficult for them to backpedal.

**The Trust Switch.** According to buyers, the top thing vendors can do to speed up purchase decisions is to be more transparent about product capabilities and limitations.

$$D \times V \times F > R$$

The formula to successfully removing roadblocks and tipping the "force towards" to enact change



- **D** = Dissatisfaction with how things are now
- **V** = The clarity of the future vision for how things could be
- **F** = Identifying the first concrete steps towards the vision
- **R** = The resistance (sacrifice, tension and cost) of moving forward.

$$D \times V \times F > R$$



**D** – dissatisfaction with the present. To get the buying group moving, you'll need to convince it that the future destination is far better than the here and now.

You'll need to build a compelling vision – **V** – that captures the imagination and the heart, in order to overcome internal roadblocks.

They also have to be able to see the beginnings of a path before it – a viable way to proceed – before it will start to move. This is **F**, the first concrete steps in the formula.

**If the combination of "Dissatisfaction, Vision and Identifying" ( the factors that will drive the sale over) is greater than the "Resistance" (the perceived cost of change) – then the Change is likely to succeed.**



**So, in the age of digital buying, the role of the salesperson may no longer be to "sell" at all, but rather to act as a solution Sherpa.**

**Internally, confusion and complexity are the two principal hurdles holding organizations back from buying.**

**Time efficiency, resource efficiency, convenience, and operational velocity are the principal reasons why organizations overcome internal roadblocks.**