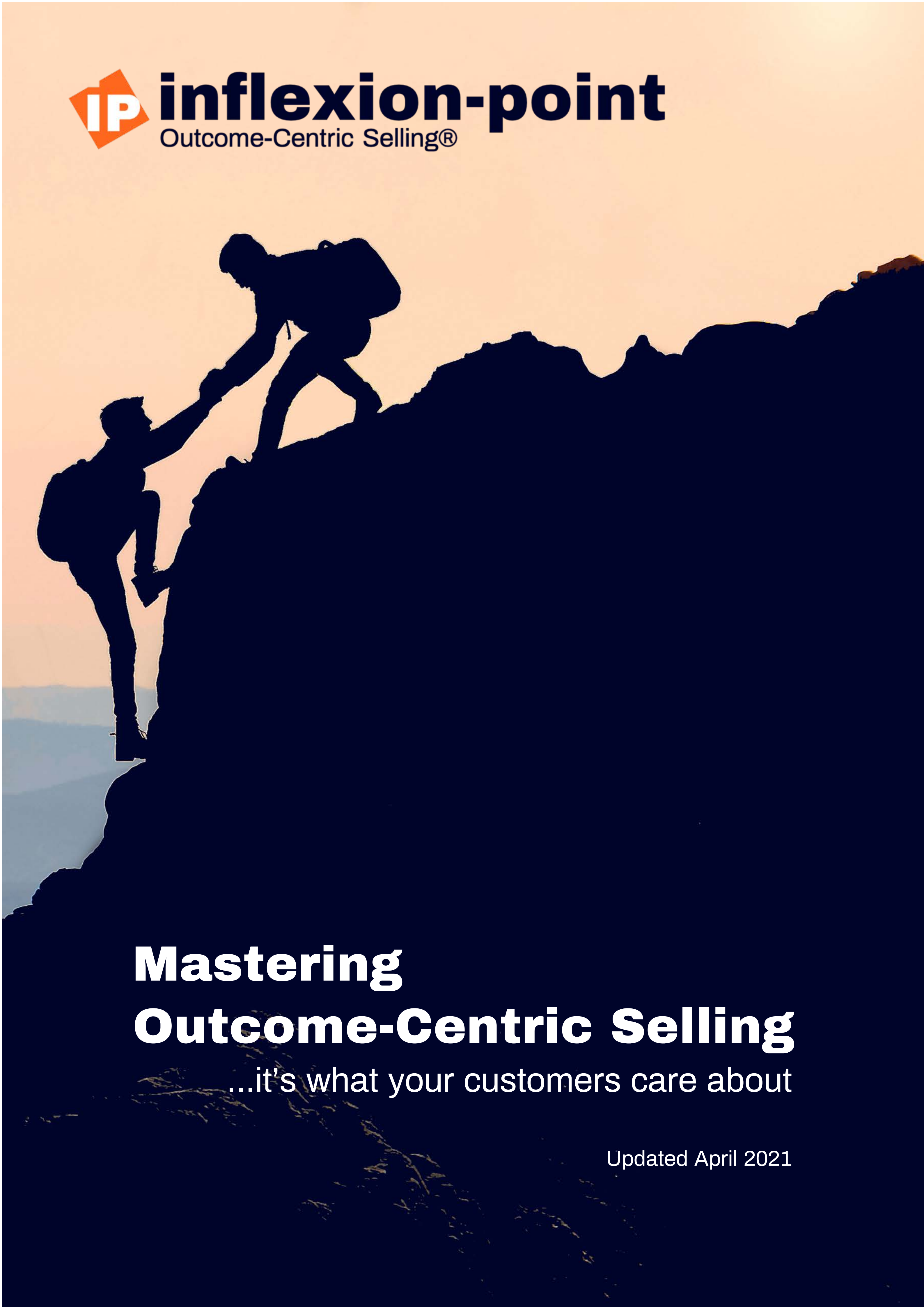
inflexion-point
Outcome-Centric Selling®



Mastering Outcome-Centric Selling

...it's what your customers care about

Updated April 2021

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 have been compounded by the coronavirus pandemic. 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 their sales process, we must also seek to **facilitate the prospect’s buying journey**.
>
> We must establish a **consensus for change** before we promote the benefits of our solution.
>
> And we must measure our progress in terms of tangible, measurable **advances in our prospective customer’s decision process**, rather than by the sales tasks or activities we have completed...

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 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.

Focusing on outcomes rather than needs

It’s worth making a distinction between the “**needs**” that most solution-centric methodologies encourage salespeople to uncover and develop and the business outcomes that today’s customers looking for.

Needs are often expressed 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, and if so **what** to change to and **when**. Outcomes represent tangible positive changes between the customer’s current situation (their **status quo**) and a **better future** state. The actual achievement of these business outcomes is usually the most significant factor in determining whether or not a project has been a success, and whether to continue using the vendor’s solution.

Decision-makers care about outcomes

There are other significant reasons why focusing on **business outcomes** is a far more effective sales strategy than only focusing on 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 think in terms of business outcomes that must be achieved.

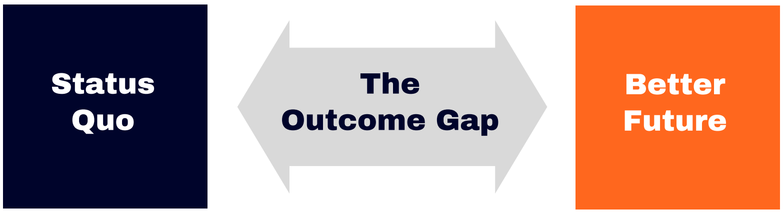
If your current contact is unwilling or unable to talk about business outcomes, they are unlikely to be the decision maker

If we cannot get our primary contact to 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 the vendor’s “solution”, they are far less likely to renew or extend the relationship - and they will almost certainly **never become profitable**.

Stretching the outcome gap

That’s 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**. But when the outcome gap appears 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 needs: they educate the customer as to the full scope of the unconsidered **impacts** 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 impacts.

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 our potential solution until our prospective customer has acknowledged - with our help - that they have a compelling need to change...

02

Every customer has a unique value story

The primary mechanism for establishing this Outcome Gap is our prospective customer's unique value story. This provides answers to the four critical questions that every potential customer asks before they are prepared to commit to action:

1. **Why** do they need to **change** (*rather than stay on their current path*)?
2. **Why** should they choose **us** (*rather than any other option*)?
3. **Why** do they need to act **now** (*rather than later*)?
4. **Who** will **benefit** from the change (*and how*)?

Whenever there are weaknesses, gaps, or inconsistencies in the answers to any of these questions, our prospective customer's value story will remain weak and incomplete and the probability that they will decide to take decisive action will decline dramatically.

That's why Inflexion-Point has chosen to place the creation of a customer-specific unique value story at the very heart of our Outcome-Centric Selling® toolkit, and why our approach is centred around guiding salespeople to progressively co-create action-driving compelling value stories with their prospective customers.

Let's address each of these questions in turn...

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

If our prospective customer is not completely convinced of the need for change, 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 story, 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 costs and consequences of inaction) and their **gain metrics** (the 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 **change**, 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.

[2] Why should they choose us (rather than any other option)?

The second layer of the value story involves giving our prospective customer the confidence that we are offering 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 this 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 [SINGLE UNIQUE DIFFERENTIATOR]"

Needless to say, we then need to translate this differentiation into a set of clear and **specific benefits** to their organisation. These must build upon 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 unique valuable differentiation, we run the risk that our prospective customer - faced with 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.

[3] 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 and even if we have persuaded them that our approach offers them their best option, 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 of the journey.

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 this 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 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 the prospective customer confidence that their better outcomes will actually be achieved on time, within budget and with the minimum of disruption.

[4] Who will benefit from the change - and how?

Most successful buying decisions depend on establishing a **consensus** across the stakeholder community, which typically consists of a core **decision making group**, the **ultimate approvers**, and the **key users**.

Whenever significant change is involved, decisions tend to **slow down** or **stall** without broad support across these various stakeholder groups, the members of which are likely to have different and sometimes conflicting perspectives and priorities.

And as many organisations have learned to their cost, the **failure rates** of buying decisions that are imposed from the top without the active involvement and buy-in of the people who will be using the solution on a day-to-day basis are **unacceptably high**.

> Every stakeholder needs to see the benefit of implementing our proposed solution

That's why it is so important that our sales proposal seeks to build a solid **consensus** for **change** by establishing the benefits of our proposed solution for the organisation as a whole, for the affected functions and departments and for each of the key stakeholders.

In order to achieve this, we must first understand what each of these key constituencies need to **fix**, **avoid** or **achieve**, and that we clearly communicate what our proposed solution means for each of them, and how they will benefit.

These benefits cannot and must not exist in isolation: research published by Gartner has shown that fragmented over-tailored individual benefit statements that fail to clearly relate to the overall benefits to the organisation make it significantly more **difficult** to win approval for the project.

In other words, **each stakeholder** needs to see the related individual, departmental and organisation-wide benefits in supporting the proposed approach. It is vitally important that the executive summary of any proposal clearly articulates “what's in it for them”.

This becomes even more important when we recognise that - according to the latest research from Gartner - the typical significant B2B buying decision now involves an average of **10-12** actively involved stakeholders.

Given this, it's perhaps no wonder that so many apparently well-qualified opportunities end with the prospect deciding to “**do nothing**” and stick with the status quo.

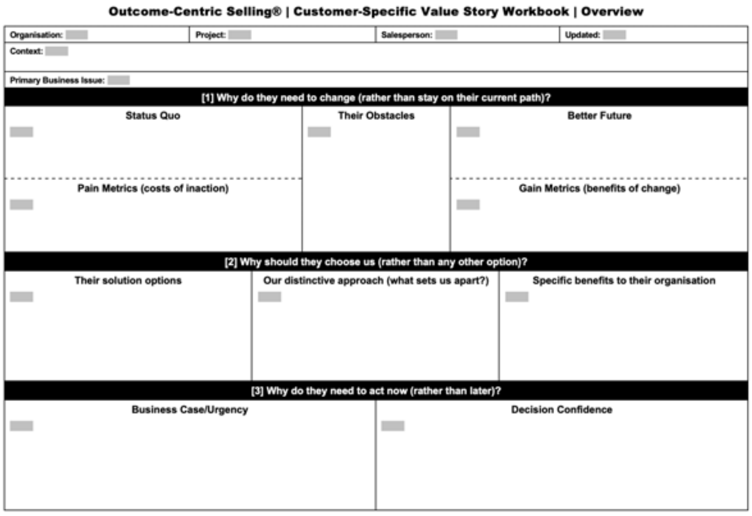
Pulling their value story together - a progressive process and a collaborative exercise

The crafting of each customer's unique value story 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 story at the very heart of the sales process, 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 first page of this framework - one of many available to clients of Inflexion-Point's Outcome-Centric Selling® Academy - covers the first three questions:

1. **Why** do they need to **change** (*rather than stay on their current path*)?
2. **Why** should they choose **us** (*rather than any other option*)?
3. **Why** do they need to act **now** (*rather than later*)?



Outcome-Centric Selling® | Customer-Specific Value Story Workbook | Overview

Organisation:
Project:
Salesperson:
Updated:
Context:
Primary Business Issue:

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

Status Quo
Their Obstacles
Better Future
Pain Metrics (costs of inaction)
Gain Metrics (benefits of change)

[2] Why should they choose us (rather than any other option)?

Their solution options
Our distinctive approach (what sets us apart?)
Specific benefits to their organisation

[3] Why do they need to act now (rather than later)?

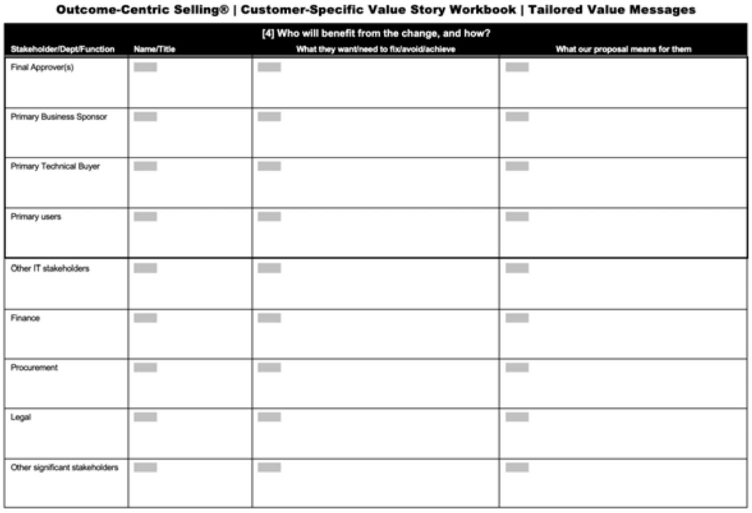
Business Case/Urgency
Decision Confidence

The "**why change**" section focuses on establishing and amplifying the **outcome gap** between the prospective customer's **status quo** and **better future**, identifying the **obstacles** that are holding them back, and contrasting their **pain** and **gain** metrics.

The "**why us**" section guides you in identifying their alternative solution options, establishes your distinctive approach and captures the specific benefits to the organisation of implementing your proposal.

The "**why now**" section seeks to develop the strongest possible business case, establish urgency, and give your prospect confidence in the decision you are asking them to make.

The second page of this framework addresses the fourth critical question - **who** will **benefit** from the change, and how?



Outcome-Centric Selling® | Customer-Specific Value Story Workbook | Tailored Value Messages

[4] Who will benefit from the change, and how?			
Stakeholder/Dept/Function	Name/Title	What they want/need to fix/avoid/achieve	What our proposal means for them
Final Approver(s)			
Primary Business Sponsor			
Primary Technical Buyer			
Primary users			
Other IT stakeholders			
Finance			
Procurement			
Legal			
Other significant stakeholders			

This section guides us in identifying all the key members of the decision making, approval and user communities, capturing what they each need to fix, avoid or achieve, and summarising how our proposed solution benefits each of them.

Perfecting their value story

As you will have gathered, perfecting each prospective customer's value story is both a progressive process and a collaborative exercise.

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

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

03

Facilitating our customer’s buying journey

The recognition that complex B2B customer decision journeys are inherently non-linear 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.

Without strong internal leadership of the buying journey, stakeholder consensus is unlikely.

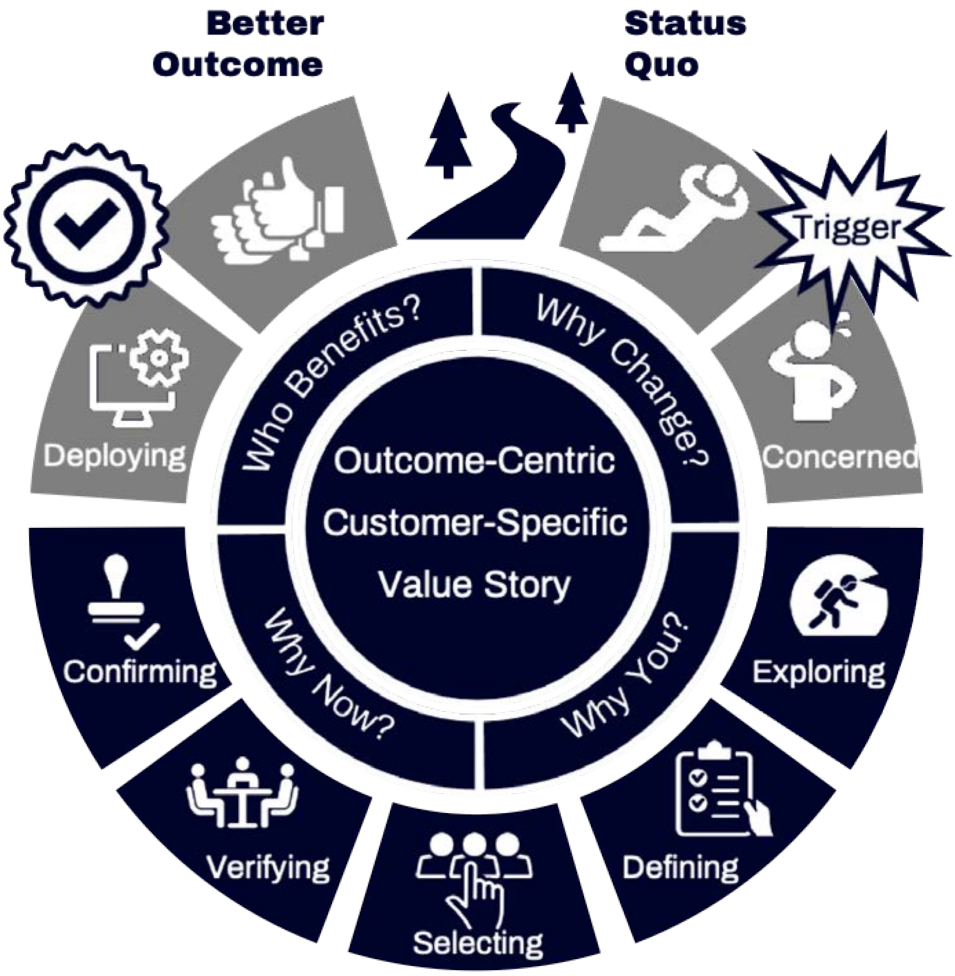
And without stakeholder consensus, action is unlikely.

Having a compelling and coherent customer-specific value story is a powerful and critical foundation, but this is not enough...

Key phases in the journey

We need to acknowledge that for any complex or complicated situation, our prospective customer's **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. But we also need to believe that we have the capacity to influence their journey.

One of our critical roles as an outcome-centric salesperson is to accurately **diagnose** where our prospective customer currently is in their journey, and to collaborate with them to eliminate the obstacles to moving forward together to the next phase.



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:

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.

> Salespeople that successfully engage and influence the customer during the **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

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 change, why you, why now and who benefits? 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.

Recycle and revisit

The likelihood of a positive decision and a successful outcome declines whenever a customer bypasses or rushes one or more of these phases - this behaviour typically 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 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 the obstacles** that may be holding the customer back.

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

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 a toolkit that combines the collective learning of their colleagues combined with the emerging best practices of other successful sales organisations.

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 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.

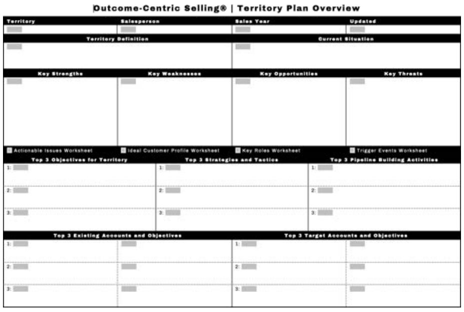
Guidelines, checklists and one-page plans

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 **smart 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.

Territory and account plans

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.



Outcome-Centric Selling® | Territory Plan Overview

Territory	Salesperson	Sales Year	Updated

Territory Definition	Current Situation

Key Strengths	Key Weaknesses	Key Opportunities	Key Threats

☐ Actionable Issues Worksheet ☐ Ideal Customer Profile Worksheet ☐ Key Roles Worksheet ☐ Trigger Events Worksheet

Top 3 Objectives for Territory	Top 3 Strategies and Tactics	Top 3 Pipeline Building Activities
1:	1:	1:
2:	2:	2:
3:	3:	3:

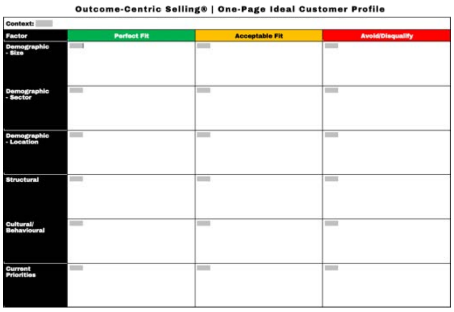
Top 3 Existing Accounts and Objectives		Top 3 Target Accounts and Objectives	
1:		1:	
2:		2:	
3:		3:	

That’s why our 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.

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, the **roles** that are most likely to want to deal with them, and the **trigger events** that draw their attention to the importance of the issue in the first place.



Outcome-Centric Selling® | One-Page Ideal Customer Profile

Context:

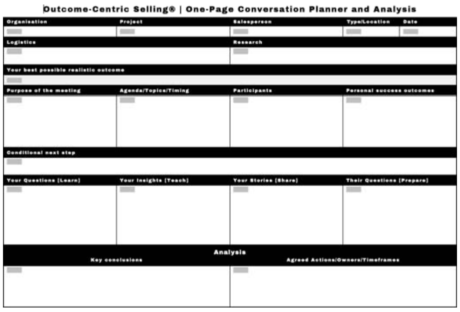
Factor	Perfect Fit	Acceptable Fit	Avoid/Disqualify
Demographic - Size			
Demographic - Sector			
Demographic - Location			
Structural			
Cultural/ Behavioural			
Current Priorities			

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.

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® | One-Page Conversation Planner and Analysis

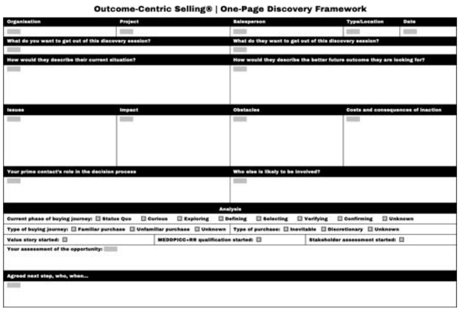
Organisation
Project
Salesperson
Type/Location
Date
Logistics
Research
Your best possible realistic outcome
Purpose of the meeting
Agenda/Topics/Timing
Participants
Personal success outcomes
Conditional next step
Your Questions (Learn)
Your Insights (Teach)
Your Stories (Share)
Their Questions (Prepare)
Analysis
Key conclusions
Agreed Actions/Owners/Timeframes

That's why Inflexion-Point's Outcome-Centric Selling® toolkit includes simple **conversation planning frameworks** that prepare salespeople to achieve the best possible outcome from every significant customer interaction, including agreeing next steps that will serve to advance the customer's buying journey.

Discovery guides and checklists

Good discovery is the essential foundation for successful sales opportunity management, and yet many salespeople rush the process and cannot resist the "**itch to pitch**" the moment a potential customer acknowledges a need that the salesperson believes could lead to a sale.

That's why Inflexion-Point's Outcome-Centric Selling® toolkit includes customised **discovery guides** that equip salespeople to have deeply diagnostic conversations with potential customers, ensuring that they uncover not just the customer's issues but also their aspirations and all the associated implications.

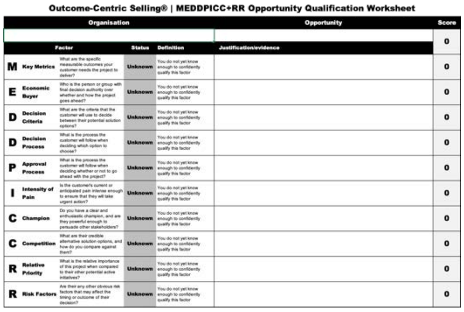


Outcome-Centric Selling® | One-Page Discovery Framework

Organisation
Project
Salesperson
Type/Location
Date
What do you want to get out of this discovery session?
What do they want to get out of this discovery session?
How would they describe their current situation?
How would they describe the better future outcome they are looking for?
Issues
Impact
Obstacles
Costs and consequences of inaction
Your prime contact's role in the decision process
Who else is likely to be involved?
Analysis
Current phase of buying journey: ☐ Status Quo ☐ Curious ☐ Exploring ☐ Defining ☐ Selecting ☐ Verifying ☐ Confirming ☐ Unknown
Type of buying journey: ☐ Familiar purchase ☐ Unfamiliar purchase ☐ Unknown
Type of purchase: ☐ Inevitable ☐ Discretionary ☐ Unknown
Value story started: ☐
MEDDPICC+RR qualification started: ☐
Stakeholder assessment started: ☐
Your assessment of the opportunity:
Agreed next step, who, when...

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.



Outcome-Centric Selling® | MEDDPICC+RR Opportunity Qualification Worksheet

Organisation					Opportunity	Score
						0
Factor			Status	Definition	Justification/evidence	
M	Key Metrics	What are the specific measurable outcomes your customer needs the project to deliver?	Unknown	You do not yet know enough to confidently qualify this factor		0
E	Economic Buyer	Who is the person or group with final decision authority over whether and how the project goes ahead?	Unknown	You do not yet know enough to confidently qualify this factor		0
D	Decision Criteria	What are the criteria that the customer will use to decide between their potential solution options?	Unknown	You do not yet know enough to confidently qualify this factor		0
D	Decision Process	What is the process the customer will follow when deciding which option to choose?	Unknown	You do not yet know enough to confidently qualify this factor		0
P	Approval Process	What is the process the customer will follow when deciding whether or not to go ahead with the project?	Unknown	You do not yet know enough to confidently qualify this factor		0
I	Intensity of Pain	Is the customer's current or anticipated pain intense enough to ensure that they will take urgent action?	Unknown	You do not yet know enough to confidently qualify this factor		0
C	Champion	Do you have a clear and enthusiastic champion, and are they powerful enough to persuade other stakeholders?	Unknown	You do not yet know enough to confidently qualify this factor		0
C	Competition	What are their credible alternative solution options, and how do you compare against them?	Unknown	You do not yet know enough to confidently qualify this factor		0
R	Relative Priority	What is the relative importance of this project when compared to their other potential active initiatives?	Unknown	You do not yet know enough to confidently qualify this factor		0
R	Risk Factors	Are their any other obvious risk factors that may affect the timing or outcome of their decision?	Unknown	You do not yet know enough to confidently qualify this factor		0

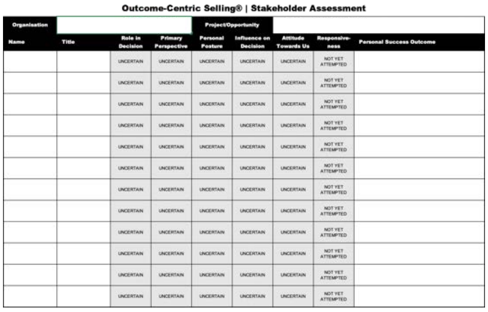
That's why inflexion-Point's Outcome-Centric Selling® toolkit incorporates an advanced version of today's most popular qualification framework for complex B2B sales (**MEDDPICC+RR**), including enhancements such as the identification of key risk factors and the relative importance of the project compared to the customer's other potential investment priorities.

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 **stakeholder profile** that enables salespeople to identify, engage and assess the perspective, role, attitude, and influence of all the key members of the customer's stakeholder community.

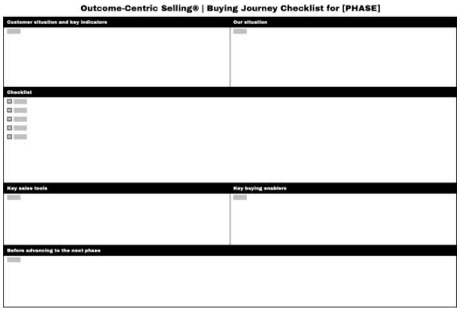


Outcome-Centric Selling® | Stakeholder Assessment

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	

Facilitating the customer's buying journey

In complex B2B sales environments, one of the other key factors that differentiates today's most effective sales organisations from the rest is their recognition that their salespeople need to flexibly facilitate each customer's buying journey rather than insisting that they all adopt a single rigidly defined "one size fits all" sales process for every opportunity.



Outcome-Centric Selling® | Buying Journey Checklist for [PHASE]

Customer situation and key indicators

Our situation

Checklist

☐
☐
☐
☐
☐

Key sales tools

Key buying enablers

Before advancing to the next phase

That's why Inflexion-Point's Outcome-Centric Selling® toolkit includes simple "**page-per-stage**" guidelines that help salespeople to accurately assess the current phase of their customer's buying journey, enables them to identify and access the relevant sales tools and buying enablers and reminds and guides them about what they need to know and do to advance the decision process.

Customer-specific value stories

We've already established the central importance of each customer's unique value story 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 change**, **why you**, **why now** and **who benefits**?" questions through the evolution of the opportunity.

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

Outcome-Centric Selling® | One-Page Customer-Specific Value Story Framework

Organisation
Project
Salesperson
Updated
Primary Business Challenge:

Why do they need to change (rather than stay as they are)?
Current Situation
Better Outcome
Obstacles
Consequences of Inaction

Why should they choose you (rather than any other option)?
Solution Options
Your Distinctive Approach
Their Specific Benefits

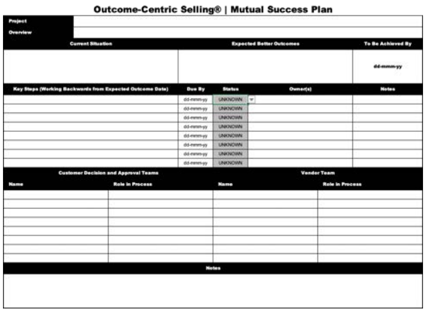
Why do they need to act now (rather than later)?
Business Case/Urgency
Evidence/Decision Confidence

As we have seen, the ability to craft compelling customer-centric value stories 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.



Outcome-Centric Selling® | Mutual Success Plan

Project	
Overview	

Current Situation	**Expected Better Outcomes**	**To Be Achieved By**
		dd-mmm-yy

Key Steps (Working Backwards from Expected Outcome Date)	**Due By**	**Status**	**Owner(s)**	**Notes**
	dd-mmm-yy	UNKNOWN		
	dd-mmm-yy	UNKNOWN		
	dd-mmm-yy	UNKNOWN		
	dd-mmm-yy	UNKNOWN		
	dd-mmm-yy	UNKNOWN		
	dd-mmm-yy	UNKNOWN		
	dd-mmm-yy	UNKNOWN		
	dd-mmm-yy	UNKNOWN		

Customer Decision and Approval Teams		**Vendor Team**	
Name	**Role in Process**	**Name**	**Role in Process**

Notes

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.

If you're a **salesforce.com** user, many elements of the Outcome-Centric Selling® toolkit can be directly integrated into your existing instance - and we also offer the option to deploy the ready-to-implement Outcome-Centric Selling® edition of **Membrain**'s award-winning sales effectiveness platform - the only CRM solution that has been developed from the ground up with complex B2B sales environments and a guided selling philosophy at the centre of its design goals.

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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 interaction with their teams
- Regularly assess your progress and adapt and evolve your framework in the light of the lessons learned

Four key phases

We believe there are four key phases in your change management journey. Each can be accomplished relatively quickly, and they are designed to deliver the earliest possible impact on revenue and time-to-value whilst ensuring that the improvement is sustained:

[1] Assess and evaluate

Our approach starts with a rapid and efficient 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, leading to clear recommendations about organisational and individual development priorities. You can learn more about OMG's approach here:

  http://stats.objectivemanagement.com/498
- 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.

[2] Adapt and develop

In this next phase, we take the agreed recommendations from the first phase and use them to customise key elements of our Outcome-Centric Selling® toolkit so that they reflect your specific priorities, circumstances and sales environment.

Once again, subject to access to the appropriate people and a suitably rapid approval cycle, this can be accomplished in a couple of weeks - and just a little longer to rebrand the look and feel (particularly if we can leverage your existing resources).

We are now ready to turn to encouraging, equipping, and enabling your sales organisation to adopt outcome-centric selling...

[3] Adopt and train

Armed with a set of customised outcome-centric selling tools and processes, we can now focus our attention on ensuring that your entire sales organisation enthusiastically and successfully adopts your new approach.

In our experience, this should start with training, equipping, and motivating your sales management team (and particularly the frontline sales managers) to reinforce the approach in their day-to-day interactions with their teams. This is probably the single most important success factor in any significant change programme, and we believe that it is vitally important that this critical stage is not missed.

We'll then conduct a phased launch and roll-out of your customised outcome-centric selling programme, typically involving a combination of:

- Live on-site instructor-led sales training workshops (when circumstances permit) - typically spanning 2-4 days
- Live on-line instructor-led training workshops - each subject typically lasting 90-120 minutes
- Pre-recorded on-demand video modules - each segment typically lasting 15-30 minutes

These are all based on the same core syllabus. Many clients choose to mix-and-match different delivery modes - for example, using on-demand materials to reinforce themes taught in the live workshops. The core Outcome-Centric Selling® curriculum covers:

- An introduction to outcome-centric selling
- Planning to Win
- Systematic Targeting
- Proactive Prospecting
- Compelling Conversations
- Customer Value Stories
- Qualifying Opportunities
- Assessing Stakeholders
- Managing Opportunities

... with additional modules being added on a regular basis. You can download a copy of the latest syllabus here:

www.inflexion-point.com/hubfs/2021_Downloads/Outcome_Centric_Selling_Syllabus.pdf

[4] Reinforce/Sustain

The last and most important phase in the process is focused on ensuring 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.

But, of course, it’s not just about the salespeople: sales management (and in particular the first level sales managers) has a critical role to play in ensuring that the organisation gets the most out of its investments in Outcome-Centric Selling®.

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.

Find out more

To find out more about putting the principles of Outcome-Centric Selling® into practice 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...

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About us

Inflexion-Point Strategy Partners are a UK-based 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.

Many of our clients are **technology-based businesses** in the all-important **scale-up phase** between having been a successful start-up and behaving like a slow-moving established corporate.

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

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