



## Beat your main rival to the deal

**In sales, two things can set your product or service apart from the competition: the quality of your product and how good a 'fit' it is for your potential customer.**

### ***Pre-call information gathering***

Bettering the competition starts before you even pick up the phone with thorough research. On a basic level, you'll need to know what you can offer that is better than the opposition, but you'll also need to trawl through information about the potential client to glean an understanding of their particular needs so that you can tell them what it is about your product that makes it the best choice for them.

### ***In-call information gathering***

Once you get on the phone with the customer for the first time, don't be afraid to ask questions. A good first call should elicit what the customer's current position is, which products or services they are currently using and who their current suppliers are.



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If a face-to-face meeting has been set up for you by another member of the organisation, you might think that you've missed your chance to ask questions, but this is not so. Pick up the phone prior to the meeting and ask some pertinent questions about the client that will help you shape your pitch, such as the potential size of the project or what they like and dislike about their current supplier.

### ***Competing based on risk***

When considering any purchase, people generally make their decision in an attempt to avoid the risk T.R.A.P: Technology (will it work?), Relationships (are they reliable and will we work well together?), Arguments (how will I justify this to my colleagues and what if something goes wrong?), Price (am I paying over the odds?).

As early as possible, you need to discover how each of these risks is influencing your potential client. Once you understand your client's decision-making process, you are at a distinct advantage over your competition who will be facing the same problems, but may not have taken the time to understand the client's concerns as fully. But to make this knowledge valuable, next you need to address those risks in your pitch.

### ***Technology***

For technological risk, you should consider what your customer needs and whether your product serves that need well or better than your competitors. If it doesn't offer everything a competitor offers,

or offers different things, you will need to explain why the difference makes it a better fit or better value for the client. For this argument to hold water, you may need to produce evidence such as real return on investment figures to support your claims.

### ***Relationships***

If your potential client already has a good existing relationship with one of your competitors, this could prove the biggest hurdle for you to overcome since they are unlikely to want to leave the relative security of a familiar business relationship. The key here is to prove that you can offer a good relationship from the outset. This means arriving to meetings on time, sending information promptly, and appearing well-prepared and personable at meetings. You could also prepare testimonials and case studies to show how well you have worked with others in the past.

### ***Arguments***

To allay fears of risk surrounding arguments, you should look to give the potential client information that makes them feel they have made an informed decision. This again means highlighting why your offering is the best fit for the client and giving examples which illustrate how they will benefit. The more relevant information you can arm them with in support of the purchase, the more confident they will feel in going back to their boss with a recommendation for your firm.

### ***Price***

When comparing your offering to your competitors, price will always be a leading factor in the decision-making process of potential clients. This means that showing that your product is better equipped or delivers better results is not enough, you also need to show that it is a fair price. If you are able to undercut the competition, you'll be at a strong advantage, but if you can't, it will be all the more important to show what it is about your offering that better allays the fears addressed above and therefore makes it better value for money, despite the higher cost.

Ultimately, beating the competition means identifying and communicating key strengths to customers, offering a tailored pitch, and building a relationship that will improve your chances of repeat business.

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