

## Sales Operation Orientation Questions

- Revenue last year? How are you tracking for this year? Objectives met?
- Profits?
- Market share?
- Goals for upcoming year? Marketshare? Growth? Competitive advantage? Successful new product launch?
- How are you organized (e.g., regionally, by product line, direct/channel)?
- Percent of sales through direct? Channel?
- Key products and services?
- What CRM/SFA app do you use? How is it used? Effectiveness?

## Sales-Related Questions

### A. Account Planning

- Tell me about your account planning process?
- Do AE's make their goals?
- Do plans become shelfware?
- Are they able to achieve trusted advisor status?
- Is there a gap between planning and execution?
- Do they proactively identify opportunities?

### B. Lead Generation

- What do sellers do today to develop new business?
- Do salespeople allocate enough time to generate leads?
- Before they pick up the phone, do salespeople have a clear understanding as to what to say when they prospect?
- Do sellers "lead with product" when prospecting?
- Do sellers depend too much on responding to RFP's?
- Generally, does the competition get in first?
- Do sellers generate enough quality, high-level leads?

### C. Need Development

- Do sellers tend to "lead with product" when developing needs? If so, do opportunities falter?
- Do sellers know how to get buyers to *consistently* admit their critical business issues?

- Can sellers develop a solution in the mind of a buyer that differentiates you?
- If your sellers encounter a buyer who already has a solution in mind, what generally happens? Is there a competitor who got there first? Do your sellers end up in a “feature/function” war, which they lose? Can they change a pre-existing solution to favor your offering?

#### **D. Qualification**

- Do sellers generally call on buyers who really do not have the power to buy (i.e., below the “power line”)?
- Do sellers know how to get a buyer who is “below the line” to give them access to higher level buyers?
- Will they walk if they are calling too low?
- Do sellers have the ability to determine if there are multiple buyers (i.e., a committee) and quickly gain access to those buyers?
- How do sellers determine whether to stay involved with a prospect or disengage?
- What question(s) do sellers ask to determine whether they are talking to someone who can or cannot make the buying decision?
- What method do your sellers use to get introduced to decision-makers?
- If a customer asks for a demonstration or other “proof”, do sellers bargain to get something in return?
- Are your salespeople comfortable calling on the IT/IS buyer but uncomfortable calling on Senior Managers?

#### **E. Sell Cycle Control**

- Do your sellers and their buyers agree to a sequence of events that spells out the buying process so that the buyer can evaluate you and you can evaluate the buyer?
- Do sell cycles drag on?
- Do buyers elect “not to buy” at the end of a generally long sell cycle?
- What percentage of your sales opportunities are not in the seller’s control?
- Do sellers deliver proposals too early? How much control do they have in those situations?
- How do sellers minimize the probability of various departments (i.e., legal, technical, administrative) within the buyer’s organization delaying the closure of an opportunity?
- How do your sellers handle buying committees? How do they keep the committee moving through the buying process as a “group”?
- How do your sellers deal with internal adversaries who sit on buying committees?

#### **F. Responding to RFP’s**

- If an RFP is received which you did not participate in the creation of, do sellers attempt to change the rules of the game to better qualify the buyer?
- What is your success rate when responding to RFP's?
- Is responding to RFP's a drain on your company's resources?
- Do you have a person or department dedicated to responding to RFP's?
- How frequently do your sellers respond to RFP's influenced by your competition?
- How do you respond when you "don't want to play in this one?"

## **Management-Related Questions**

### **A. Proactive People Management**

- How long does it take for you to get new sales people "ramped up" and productive?
- Are you able to quickly determine which skill or skills a seller is deficient in?
- If a deficiency is identified, are you able to put a "surgical" action plan in place to help the seller?
- Are you able to measurably see if the seller improves a selling deficiency?

### **B. Opportunity Assessment**

- Are you able to determine quickly and early whether key parameters which will drive a sell cycle to conclusion are missing or poorly defined by sellers?
- Do sellers forecast many opportunities which they subsequently lose?
- Do close dates slip? Are sell cycles too long?
- Do you find out late in the sell cycle that you could not have won a particular opportunity?
- Does the competition set the rules in a game you could not have won?

### **C. Pipeline Management?"**

- Are seller pipelines imbalanced?
- Do sellers clear their pipelines at quarter-end and year-end, and begin the new period with minimal to no pipeline?

### **D. Measuring and Tracking results?"**

- Are forecasts inaccurate?
- Is it difficult to measurably track progress (on skills such as prospecting or calling high enough in the buyer organization or pipeline balance?)
- Is it difficult to effect long-term measurable change and performance improvement?

## **E. Consistent Review Process**

- Do you have a consistent, periodic method to accurately assess the performance of your overall operation, and tune it accordingly?
- Do you see inconsistent communications when it comes to the status of opportunities, pipeline, and forecasting opportunities?

## **Reseller-Related Questions**

- Do resellers:
  - Call too low?
  - Understand how to sell solutions?
  - Sell to technology people?
  - Miss larger deals by selling at a transaction level?
  - Tend to “lead with product” when developing needs? If so, do opportunities falter?
- Can resellers develop a solution in the mind of a buyer that differentiates you?
- Do your resellers end up in a “feature/function” war, which they lose? Can they change a pre-existing solution to favor your offering?
- Do resellers generally call on buyers who really do not have the power to buy (i.e., below the “power line”)?
- Do resellers know how to get a buyer who is “below the line” to give them access to higher-level buyers?
- Are your resellers comfortable calling on the IT/IS buyer but uncomfortable calling on Senior Managers?
- Do sell cycles drag on?
- Are resellers able to execute complex sell cycles?
- How do your resellers handle buying committees? How do they keep the committee moving through the buying process as a “group”?
- Do you and your resellers use the same sales methodology?

## **Channel Management-Related Questions**

- Do your channel managers have real visibility into reseller opportunities?
- Are your channel managers able to uncover problems on opportunities?
- Are you channel managers able to help resellers improve their effectiveness through “leading by example”?
- Are your CM’s able to balance their pipelines? Forecast accurately?
- Do CM's rate/tier partners?
  - If so, do they manage them according to tier?
- Do CM's know whether or not they have enough partners to make their objectives?

- Are they aware of where their gaps are?
- Do they utilize re-engagement strategies?
- How well do CM's sell your company to new partners?
- How well do CM's express your value proposition?

## **HR Development Questions**

- What programs are in place today to develop sales people?
  - Are they skills-based?
- What programs are in place today to develop sales managers?
  - Are they skills-based?
- What is your retention rate?
- Describe seller/sales manager comp plans
  - Are your comp plans aligned with skill development?

## **Marketing-Related Questions**

- Are you able to capture mind share?
- Is your product training effective?
- Do you provide knowledge tools to empower your sellers/resellers to call high?
- Do you provide knowledge tools to help sellers/resellers prospect? Develop needs?

## **Support-Related Questions**

- Do support personnel participate in too many unqualified calls?
- Are calls generally ineffective?