



# Adding Engineer to Sales Call Can Improve Outcome

The Engineer/Sales Person Combination Can Be an Effective Team  
by Eric R. Baron

## **Adding engineer to sales call can improve outcome**

High-Technology increasingly ask that engineers and salespeople go on sales calls together because of the complexities customers face integrating new hardware and software. But asking engineers to play salesperson demands they muster skills that most of them have not used before. It also goes against the nature of what engineers do best—create solutions by considering every angle of a problem.

Companies can't expect engineers to jump into sales situations cold. They must train the engineers to work with salespeople as a unit, or risk failure. Yet most companies don't do this.

Consider this scenario. A chief information officer plans to upgrade his company's computer equipment and software, and is concerned about how the old and new equipment will work together. To make the sale, the salesperson needs an engineer to help problem-solve with the client. The salesperson has an explanation for the client's every reservation. The engineer, on the other hand, is cautious and in some cases not enthusiastic about the software or hardware. They leave with no sale after creating the impression they were at cross-purposes.

## **Team selling is a multidiscipline effort requiring new approaches and skills**

Few companies have learned to make team selling work. Most share the limited view that it involves adding people both before and during the sales call. In fact, team selling is a multidiscipline effort requiring new approaches and skills.

Companies that succeed with team selling can dramatically improve sales, because an engineer/salesperson team is more powerful than either person alone.

Team selling often fails because: Engineers aren't trained to sell; both the engineer and the salesperson need to be better consultants and problem solvers; and salespeople and engineers don't understand the value of joint sales calls and lack the skills required to sell together.

The high-tech sale can be improved if the team trains together and sells in three phases. In phase one, the salesperson and technical expert listen to customers and their needs. In phase two, the team brings this information back to the office for a solution, which is where engineers can shine. Going back to the client in phase three, they have a coherent resolution.

Before going on a call the two specialists must plan their presentation and how to resolve potential objections. Salespeople who approach customers without probing for the hidden needs and unspoken agendas will fail. The salesperson will rarely have the technical know-how customers' demand. The engineer must be seen as a key element in the sale and must learn how to work with the salesperson. There must be mutual respect.

A good salesperson is a cock-eyed optimist. Engineers, knowing how badly things can go, tend to be the opposite. Training the two as partners is a critical challenge facing high-tech companies.

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