

# **THE CANYON & THE CRUCIBLE:** ..... **The Competitive Evaluation**

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## In Competitive Selling, Second Place Pays Zero

### **Competitive selling of big-ticket items usually results in comparative evaluations.**

Several vendors are invited into the process, quite often with a request for proposal. In the initial screening process, several competitors are evaluated in detail by a committee of buyers from different departments.

Usually, only one competitor emerges victorious. There are no silver medals; second place pays zero.

### **It's an all-or-nothing game.**

Based on excerpts from The Complex Sale CEO Rick Page's acclaimed best-selling book, *Hope Is Not A Strategy: The 6 Keys to Winning the Complex Sale*, this eBook provides you with **insights on how to win opportunities and dominate accounts in the complex selling environment when issues shift, divided camps break out, and momentum begins to fade.**

If you are in sales or sales management and would like to learn more about how The Complex Sale, Inc. can help you win the sales you can't afford to lose, contact us today at [info@complexsale.com](mailto:info@complexsale.com) or call us at 770-360-9299.

“Unlike the process of qualification, which is predominantly rational, logical, and based on facts, **the selection stage is mostly intuitive, personal, and based on impressions.**”

**DAVID H. MAISTER**  
*Managing the Professional Service Firm*

## The Death Valley Sales Cycle

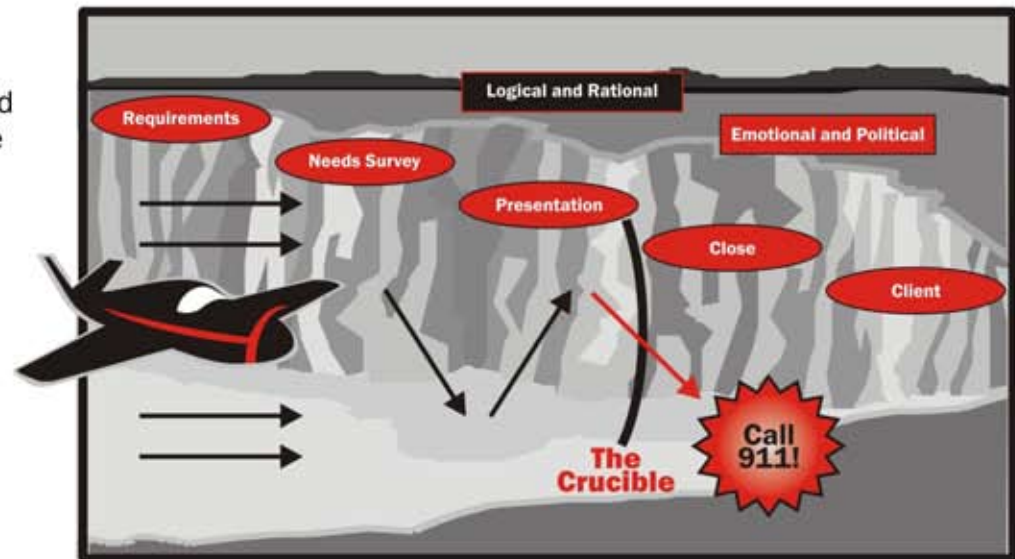
Although evaluations begin in a logical mode, there is a point at which they often turn from a logical and rational information-gathering process into an emotional and political selection process.

This happens at the point when the buying committee has to make a decision.

For years, sales managers have used the analogy of a funnel to describe the flow of leads to prospects to closed business. But gravity alone will not cause a certain number of opportunities to become clients!

Instead, we use the canyon metaphor, which implies that the salesperson, like a pilot, can choose where to navigate, and he or she can influence events to emerge successfully. Likewise, salespeople have sensors (questions) that can detect obstacles and give them insight.

**They have the power to know where they stand at all times and can correct their course to keep from hitting the canyon walls.**



## The Crucible

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**At some point, the canyon narrows. This is what we call the decision-making crucible.**

In chemistry, a crucible is where things heat up (like politics), things melt down (like the decision-making process), and if a lid is put on it, pressure builds and it often explodes into a power struggle. Likewise, political pressure rises when a client must make a decision when multiple stakeholders have not yet reached a consensus.

We have seen multi-million dollar deals turn in 24 hours during this emotion-packed period.

The client often starts under the illusion that, because of the committee involvement in gathering information and analysis, everyone will reach a happy consensus for a single vendor. This seldom happens.

As the evaluation approaches the crucible, the client typically has:

- some people on the committee who want one vendor for some reasons,
- others who want other vendors for other reasons, and
- some who want no change at all.

But, regardless, they must make a decision. Or, as one of our clients said, **"They don't decide how to decide until they can't decide."**

In the crucible of a buying evaluation, there are three typical scenarios: issues shift, there are divided camps, and there is a loss of momentum.



## Scenario #1: Issues Shift

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**In this situation, several vendors have a solution or product that *could* do the job.**

At that point, the issues in the evaluation change in importance. Product functionality declines as an issue, and the client turns to non-product differentiators such as:

- Company Strength
- Price
- Service
- Relationship

A savvy salesperson can use this turbulent time to refocus the issues on their strengths and off of their weaknesses. Someone less savvy can be blindsided by these changes and caught selling the wrong things to the wrong people.



## Scenario #2: Divided Camps

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**In this case, no one has everything the client needs.**

- One vendor has some needed functionality.
- Another has some attractive features.
- A third has some things the client likes.

The client can't get it all from one vendor, so a power struggle often erupts.

You had better be riding the right horse into this battle, because at this point, the power of your capability is only as good as:

- the political power of the client sponsor who wants it, or
- the magnitude of the business problem it solves.

You must have either powerful people or urgent business problems working for you or plan to lose.



## Scenario #3: Loss of Momentum

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### Our biggest competitor is often that of “no action.”

Some companies lose one third of their forecast pipelines to companies that evaluate and don't buy anything from anybody. The result is a monumental waste of resources.

Opportunities stall because:

- neither business pain nor power sponsors are present to drive the opportunity into a sale.
- no one inside the client organization can sell the proposal internally and deliver a value proposition strong enough to cause anyone to take action.
- the risks of changing begin to rise.
- no one can sell the chief financial officer or the decision makers.

### The result? **Stalemate.**

Often in this scenario, salespeople don't realize what is happening until it's too late. Without good information from inside the buying committee, salespeople often cruise along until they get the bad news too late to do anything about it. This is often when the deal spirals out of control.

## Gaining Control

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**The first step to gaining control is to get control of ourselves as salespeople. We must build our sales team with the right talent in the right jobs for each account.**



## About The Complex Sale, Inc.

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Rick Page, author of the #1 sales bestseller *Hope Is Not A Strategy - The 6 Keys to Winning the Complex Sale* as well as *Make Winning a Habit - 20 Best Practices of the World's Greatest Sales Forces*, founded The Complex Sale, Inc. (TCS) in 1992. TCS is a sales methodology and consulting firm with proven approaches for business-to-business complex selling. We offer client-tailored training programs and workshops to help companies implement consistent sales processes and methodologies, improve selling skills and competencies, and develop world-class sales managers and leaders. Our approaches are designed to leverage your company's value through a superior sales force. Around the world, TCS has taught over 50,000 salespeople in hundreds of companies the processes and skills they need to Make Winning a Habit®. Through training and coaching, tools and speeches, to total sales force transformation, **we can help you win the deals that you can't afford to lose.**

For more information, call (770) 360-9299  
or visit [www.complexsale.com](http://www.complexsale.com).

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