



Winning Paid Workflow Assessments: Strategic Selling

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by Greg Buschman

In a [recent blog for Workflow magazine](#), we began learning the importance of being relevant to business leaders. Not only must we use language they understand, but we must also engage in topical conversations in which they are interested. The highest level of selling is not focused on the salesperson, their product, services, price or their company. Take a look at the graphic below. On the left side of the center line, on the lower level, product- and price-oriented sales skills are required. However, if your desire is to advance into large and strategic accounts, where the real money and sales stability can be found, you must learn the skills on the right-hand side of the graph: strategic selling skills.



Transformative strategic selling

When selling a business assessment of any kind, your primary strategic position is that of a business analyst. This position can be applied to any aspect of a company's business, from finance to IT to manufacturing. The second strategic sales position is that of a continuous improvement expert. In the imaging/printing industry, this position is critical. The importance of taking a continuous improvement position is demonstrated by the fact that, from 2000 to roughly 2010, nearly one-third of all commercial printers closed their doors, and in 2015 industry net profit margins were only [5.2 percent](#). Although this is an increase from 1.4 percent in 2011, it is still a statistic that indicates an industry that has a significant need for improvement.

The good news is that whether we are selling through problem-solving or helping our clients transform their businesses back into cash cows for the 21st century, if we can raise a company's net profit by just 1 percent we may be increasing their net earnings by 20 percent! What CEO or business owner wouldn't listen to a business analyst with a history of increasing their customers' net earnings by 20 percent? In addition to profit margin shifts, the shift toward digital and inkjet printing is continuing:

“The relative cost position of analog and digital printing is continually changing as new equipment comes on to the market, and the volumes of toner and inkjet grow while prices fall. This is generally making digital print more cost-effective against traditional analog printing at ever higher run lengths. There is a continuing trend of falling run lengths as print buyers act to make sure their content is up to date and there is pressure to reduce the amount of inventory and work-in-progress. The result is a continuation of the analog-to-digital print transformation,” ([Smithers Pira, 2017](#)).

Structuring a business analysis

So what does this mean in regard to selling workflow assessments? Tying industry and market trends to the impacts they may have on a prospective client’s business helps open leaders’ minds to embracing the need for improvement and change. To help accomplish this, a good assessment should, in essence, be thought of like a map for success. Your map to their success will need three sections:

- Current State: Origin
- Future State: Destination
- Strategy Map: Map the steps and/or stages needed to get from point A to point B.

Start with documenting the company’s current state; this is your point of origin. From there you must do investigative on-site and off-site research on how to improve their current state and provide them a future state. The future state, of course, being the destination. The rest of the assessment will simply be how you will get to the destination.

People buy your “why”

The most important aspect, however, of the entire process is being able to explain why you take this approach, ([Simon Sinek, 2013](#)). No matter what your client produces, whether it is printed products, some other type of product, or if your client sell services, the “why” is that when you are done, their business will be able to produce the most amount of products/services with the lowest amount of waste, and at the highest quality their equipment can achieve, all while controlling or lowering costs. You must be able to convince them that the cost of your analysis is worth the knowledge and strategies they will gain, and this starts and ends with “why.”