**Overcoming Objections and Sales Roadblocks**

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*Objections vs Excuses*

Jason: One of the things I think that's important is that we clarify the difference between an objection and an excuse. And I think that it really needs to be identified as best we can before we move forward. Thoughts, Adam?

Adam: Objections are legitimate concerns that your prospects are voicing to you that may either keep them from buying from you or appear to keep them from buying from you and you need to deal with them respectfully and directly. We'll talk about that a lot today. Both excuses and objections do slow down your sales process, and there are things that you confront. Excuses are a little different though aren't they?

Jason: Yes - it's a really fine line, but excuses are more just invented reasons, if you will. However, there will be a more intricate, detailed excuse delivered to you if they're still considering buying. Right? So while it may not be an objection, it's still a roadblock, and it’s still slowing down the process, but it might be more intricate than just saying, "I'll think about it."

Adam: The objections that my clients and FRONTLINE Selling sales people come up against typically have to do with price, some sort of feature or capability that is either in or not in your products or offerings. Something to do with expectations on whether somebody will work or not, and whether the implementation would be too long or difficult. But there are definite things that come up in these conversations and we need to anticipate them and have a way of dealing with them.

Jason: Excuses are typically trivial, right? They're very vague like again, "I will think about it." And they traditionally lack specificity. So there won't be a really solid painpoint to overcome.

Adam: If you get a vague response from your prospects or your customers, don't let them off the hook. Ask them some questions to make that vague comment more specific or focused. Another thing is practice your active listening. When you hear an objection, acknowledge that it's something that is important to your prospect. Ask them questions around it. And then dig into your company's history, your personal history, stories, any metrics you can use to show how you can overcome those objections.

Meredith: **My prospect thinks we're too expensive versus the competition, and quite honestly, we are. So what do I say?**

Adam: This is a good thing, not a bad thing, that you're starting to talk about price. Once you hear that you're too expensive versus your competition, the first thing out of your mouth should be a question, "Oh, does that mean you've completed your evaluation, and except for price, you’ve selected us?” Then it's a good time to not say anything additionally and see what the prospect says. See if there are other things that they haven't gone through in their evaluation to lead them to either work with you or not. If they say, "Sure, but you guys are the same as ..." and they name another competitor, get equal first and then get different. Figure it out what it is they like about the prospect. What they like about the competition versus what you have to offer and then use a cost benefit analysis between what you have that justifies your higher price.

Jason: The traditional response has always been focus on value. If you've done that, and you should've done that throughout your sales cycle, Adam's right: get equal first and then different. What is the outcome that they hope to achieve? Show how you can get there. Concern with price tends to fade as long as you're proving that you can position the outcome and you can fulfill it.

Adam: Another way to approach this is by lining up the total cost of ownership between their status quo and your offering or the total cost of ownership of a successful implementation of your solution, vs. how it's going to be with your competitor. If they're comparing price, you should know your differentiators and whether the value is in that differentiation.

Adam: It could be as simply as your track record. That you deserve a premium price because you implement your customers successfully versus some competitor who might not.

Jason: Perfect example of this is a software platform that publishes downtime. If they were up 98.9% of the time and the competitors were up 88.9% of the time, this is a huge differentiator. “How much does interrupted service cost you? 10% more interrupted service might cost you the difference in our price versus their price, and that would make sense, right?”

Meredith: **Is this next roadblock an objection or an excuse? “ I've never heard of you and we only work with people we know.”**

Jason: That is more excuse-driven but it’s kind of an objection and excuse at the same time. At some point they didn't know everybody they worked with! You can overcome this one. I always view that as an opportunity to share information. An opportunity to open the conversation a little bit and say, "Okay. Well, let me tell you about us. That's one of the reasons I was calling. Let me show you what we've done. Here's some people we've worked with." You have a couple different paths you could go down there.

Adam: Yeah, it's interesting this objection and this question comes up at this stage of our webinar series. Usually we would get this question in the first part of the sales cycle. The initial conversation. "Well, I've never heard of you. Why should I give you 15 to 30 minutes of my time," or, "We've talked for 15-20 minutes, I still don't know who you are." At any rate, if this does come up later on in the sales cycle it's probably because you've been introduced to a new player or a new person that's your prospect. This really isn't that hard. “I understand how you'd want to work with someone who you know or you're familiar with. Can I have a few minutes and describe who we are?” Then go to your metrics. How many people have you served? How many people have you helped? What other metrics you have that show that you're thoughtful and know what you're doing in this business? And then a success story that is tied to a person at one of your customers who has a similar title as the person that you're talking to.

Meredith: **A prospect says "I have an internal team so I could implement the solution by myself." Is that an excuse or is that an objection?**

Jason: That's an objection. It’s not an excuse because I believe that they believe that. They're saying it and in their heart of hearts I think they believe that they can absolutely implement this themselves. Overcoming this particular objection focuses on mitigating risk. There's a lot of risk in what you don't know. And if they've never done it ... I mean, I'll take it in an instance of FRONTLINE Selling. We provide supplemental pipeline development, and there's a lot of folks that don't have an inside development team. Whether it's a BDR or SDR, trying to build that yourself on the surface appears very easy. But you have to understand that there is employee attrition, the shear ratio that you have to hire in order to find one successful person.

Jason: When people say this they firmly believe, to us, "Well, we'll just build an inside team." Well, they also believe that they can hire five people, they're all 6' 3", can run a 4:40, and throw the ball like Tom Brady. That's not the case, right? You're going to end up with a third of those people that stick around and work out. One-third of them will typically fall out after five to six months and then the other third will typically go inside that 6 to 12 months. So to be positive you got to hire three people. That's a tremendous amount of expense when you talk about onboarding, training, salary, benefits, vacation, 401K, etc..

Jason: Here’s what I would say; "I get that. We understand that. We get that a lot." And then go into the mitigation of risk. If you went to do this yourself, how would you do it? Try to figure out their process and uncover what their mental model is and why they said that. And I'll give you a personal example. My wife wants a organizer in the pantry, and I raise my hand, which I do a lot. I can do that. And then three weekends later it's not done. I've got 75 different cuts of wood, 15 nail holes. And I'm like, "You should've hired somebody to do this. It would've been a lot easier."

Adam: If your prospect thinks they can do it themselves, the question becomes, "Hey, do they have the expertise to do it?" And if they think they do, well let's line up our expertise versus your expertise, and then our successes in doing it before versus your successes doing it. A second approach might be, “Do you have the *opportunity* to do it yourself?” Early on I realized, "Sure, I can mow my lawn as well a contractor to do it, but I don't have time to do it because we have three young kids and I want someone else to do it. I can bet I have a better use of my time elsewhere."

Adam: So oftentimes when you want to implement your offering or someone wants to implement if for you and do it themselves, the final word is that yes, they may have the expertise, but if they had the time to do it, they would've done it already.

 You could ask: How many times have they done it? What will failure look like and when will you know what failure looks like?

Adam: So mitigating risk, do they have the opportunity, and do they have the expertise are three things to look at when coming up upon this objection.

Jason: And speed to value. Speed to value a really big thing, right? So how quickly can they do it? I think that's the other key. And you can monetize all of those, by the way.

Meredith: **So, what if a prospect has had bad experiences with similar products and services? Jason, I know you hear that a lot, that they've had bad experiences. I'm sure everyone has. So, is that an objection or is that an excuse and how do you deal with it?**

Adam: I think it's an excuse because I still have the underlying problem. We call this burn victims. So they've been burned before by people like you. It's very common in the software or SaaS industry for buyers to say, "Yeah, we tried to implement that software. It didn't work." Or the previous regime bought that software, it sat on the shelf somewhere and we ended up spending a lot of money for a lot of nothing. Go back to the original question. Why are we here? What are the goals or objectives that the prospect is trying to accomplish or reach, and what are the challenges and issues that'll keep me from getting there? Yes, we can provide it. You don't trust me. How are you going to do it yourself?

Adam: The first part of that is, trust me. Let's talk through that. Acknowledge first that being a burn victim is a realistic, real and a reasonable emotion to have. Yeah, I get it. Totally understand. We have a lot of customers who came to us after being burned before by others like us.

Ask some questions. So what happened? Don't just gloss over the fact that they've been burned before. It's as if you're not even listening to them and you don't care. What happened? Tell me what happened before because we don't want to make those mistakes with you when we implement our offering.

Adam: And once you've got that, recap it to them. “So here's what you're saying, in the past you've tried to implement our sort of offering and it didn't work because...” and show that you were listening by recapping. Once they say, "Yeah, that's what happened." Say, "Well, can I explain how we would work with you?" And go through your proven process for how you deal with your customers and tell them "I'm going to do everything I can to make sure that you don't have another bad experience."

Adam: So, acknowledge the emotion situation, ask them clarifying questions, give feedback, ask if you can share how you handle it so you don't repeat the same mistakes again.

Meredith: **So, what about the prospect who tells you that we do not sign long-term contracts.**

Jason: Understand the hesitation. First and foremost, the biggest thing is have to understand what it is about long-term contracts. And I would say that this is an excuse if it's just thrown out there. But it's an objection if it's company policy. That's two different things, right? If you're talking to the decision maker and he says, "We're not authorized to sign long-term contracts." We deal with this a lot. We do quarterly contracts. We'll do six month contracts. Those are the types of answers we'll get. If it is policy, then try to be flexible. If it's not policy, then it may just be this person doesn't want to commit, right? So find out why that is. It may be that the whole reason they are not signing a long-term contract is because they’ve been burned before. Then you have to overcome two objections.

Adam: There's nothing wrong with this objection. This is very similar to too expensive objection. I want to hear this ... objection, because you're at least are thinking about us. So, we're ready to move forward as long as we can figure out the terms of the relationship? That's the question I would ask.

Adam: Everything else is done. You're ready to move forward as long as we can figure out when you pay us and for how long. This becomes a leverage situation. How badly do they need what you have? How badly do you need what they have?

Adam: It now becomes part of a negotiation, So all things considered, are you saying that once we figure out how long our term of contract is, we're moving forward?” That's fantastic. Get an agreement on that before you move forward on negotiating the terms of your relationship.

Adam: When you get this objection, oftentimes over email or voicemail, take a breath. You don't have to answer right away. First figure out if we negotiating or are they still evaluating? Where are they in their buying process? Where are we in our sales process? And then move forward.

Jason: I would highly recommend trying to overcome these objections or negate these excuses verbally instead of on email, which can be ignored.

Meredith: **So if you're a sales rep, and you're speaking with a key player who tells you that they need a little bit more time because they need to talk to their team, how would you handle that?**

Adam: So how does talking to the team fit into the overall evaluation of your company? Remember from our last webinar we talked about documenting the evaluation process with a sequence of events? What's the project plan for moving forward? So, if a prospect were to say to me or one of my clients, "I need to talk to the team." Is this a last look? Is this because you need to bring other people into the conversation to get their perspective? Or is this just going back and checking a box on budget to make sure it all works fine? How does this fit into the overall project plan moving forward to get to implementation?

Adam: Try to understand all that and try to insert yourself to get those perspectives from the other team members. Are they someone who's helping select you? Are they someone who's helping fund you? Are they someone who'd be helping implement you? Which ones are they? Ask your key player these questions.

Jason: We've all heard the statement of the saying, "Don't kill the messenger." So, don't put that weight on them. Try and shoulder that responsibility yourself and taking something off of their plate. You want accountability for this. I've had numerous times where I've said, “Look, I'll take this to so-and-so.” I've been on the reverse side. And one of the best things a rep ever said to me was, *"I believe that you can deliver the message. I don't believe you can deliver the value."* And I love the straightforwardness and I said, "You're probably right because I've got 75 other things I'm doing and this is a sliver of what I'm trying to do. I'm not solely responsible or myopically focused on this, and you're right." And we set up a series of calls to get in front of other key players.

Jason: Again, this shouldn't be a last minute surprise. This should be something that has been identified. You should know the other key players. You know that there will be other people that need to be presented this solution. So, why not try to identify that up front and ask if is there anyone else that needs to be involved in these conversations?

Meredith: **All right. So we spent a little time talking about objections and excuses, and the next handful of questions. Then we'll directly address the challenges with moving a deal along or retaking control when things have gone off the rails a little bit. So as we're talking about who needs to be involved in these decisions, this question is how do I handle request for excessive extra calls with this additional decision maker? So for example, they keep delaying their decision until we have one more call with this person. So you're in a long cycle here.**

Adam: When you feel you’re getting jerked around, you have to identify ‘when is it over?’ And putting that stake in the ground and asking your prospect, "Help me understand when we will start implementing our offering to get you the value you need to help you reach your goals and objectives and overcome the challenges and issues that are facing your company." And we go backwards and document everybody that we need to talk to to get this done. We hear sales reps being told, "Well, now you need to do this. Well, now you need to do that." And they're being led around by their noses. And that's got to stop.

Adam: So part of being a professional sales person is asking the hard questions. “What else do you need from me in order to make a buying decision? And when would that occur”? After a while when it gets to be too much, it's okay to say, "It doesn't seem like you're going to be buying from me anytime soon because you keep on saying, ‘I need to talk to extra people or have another conversation with you about something having to do with our offering.’” And go negative. It's hard. It's very hard to say, "I really don't believe you're ever going to buy from me because you keep on asking for extra information from me. Tell me how we get this done."

Jason: Yeah. So a wise man once told me that stop being the poodle with the skirt. And those who have listened to Adam before will know where that came from.

Adam: Jumping through the hoop of fire.

Jason: Yeah. Don’t be the poodle jumping through the hoop of fire. The absence of no doesn't mean yes. So evaluate the sale before you start getting handed off to other people. I think it's important to say, "Look, can we lay this out. This is what we said initially, now this has been introduced. And this has been introduced, and this has been introduced." Recap the chain of events and say, "I just want to know what else to expect if we're going to move forward so that I can maximize your time and use it as efficiently and effectively as I possibly can."

Meredith: **So, I'm guessing that someone that's joining us today is actually dealing with this particular issue right now with it being summer. But the question here is around I have a good promising deal that seems to be losing steam with the lengthy delays with summer vacation and such, and before the vacation there was a board meeting. So, it's really just stalling out a little bit. So, what are some strategies to deal with that?**

Adam: So, I actually had this happen this morning in my business. Gentleman went on vacation, then he had his own team meeting, then I got an email saying, "Hey, why don't we talk next week?" That's a little too vague for me, as you'd expect. I'm lucky in this opportunity that I am talking to a decision maker and he has an administrative assistant. I didn't know that, but I did call up his office number. Of course, I didn't get him. I got to someone who said his admin was Jackie. So I said, "Well, I've been trying to get on John's calendar for a while. Can you transfer me to Jackie and let's see if we can make that happen?" "Sure. I'd love to." I got to Jackie, who said, "Well, how about Monday or Tuesday?" I said, "How about Monday? What's better for John?" "9:00 or 10:00." We now have a call scheduled for 9:00 on Monday. And John doesn't even know it yet because he hasn't seen his calendar. This is the situation where John is not used to being a buyer, but he knows that he's the decision maker.

Adam: Inexperienced buyers are okay with, "Hey, call me next week." Then they get busy and now it's two weeks, three weeks down the road. Vacations, life, other things get in the way. See if the person that you're talking to has someone to manage their schedule and work with them. If they don't, if they manage their own schedule, start throwing out some ideas on dates and times, or even send them a meeting invitation. They'll either accept it or decline it. It doesn't mean they don't like you, or you're being rude.

Jason: I think that that's a great point. We always say send meeting invites with the assumption first, right? But there's a lot of things that will play into how and when to reach out based on absences, vacation, PTO, whatever you want to call it, meetings, sales giveaways, whatever it may be. Look at your original timeline, the urgency of the project. The urgency of implementation and let that decide your aggressiveness and delivery. I always say that if we've known that vacation is going to take place and there is a key player out of the office and we know that is going to be two weeks, it's going to drag on, then that's built into our cycle. We know that, but stay relevant because the last thing you want to have to do is start from scrath, right? So, this is a perfect opportunity to engage socially. Engage on LinkedIn or Twitter, or share relevant articles and certainly about the industry or vertical, but most importantly about your company. If there's new articles being produced or new blog posts or if you've won an award or you've been mentioned.

Jason: Certainly find things that you can share that are relevant that continue to drive you to the top of that funnel in their mindset because I don't think anybody totally unplugs these days. So people are constantly checking things getting all different kinds of notifications. My phone has been buzzing ever since I sat down and it's all different kinds of notifications like it's LinkedIn, Twitter, email, text, or a phone call. if you've done your homework and identified timeline and urgency of project all those different things, you'll be able to determine your aggressiveness of outreach.

Meredith: **So the next scenario actually goes right along with the delays and vacations, but this one's more about the dreaded ghosting. So, you've got a good deal, things are going, and then it just goes dark.**

Adam: I thought they were into me.

Jason: Yeah. They just weren’t that into you. Haha!

Adam: It's really hard to fight the urge to think that the person who ghosts you is just rude. And you think you would never do that to someone, but things come up in life. Not only do things come up in life, this person might not even be in this job anymore. So you need to understand, how long has it been? Has it been an hour? You're not ghosted. Has it been a day? You're not ghosted. Has it been a month? You're ghosted.

Adam: As Jason knows, I suggest you have ready a stale proposal letter, which says, "Hey, all conversations we've had before, I'm sorry. I must not understand you enough and what your goals and objectives, challenges, and issues. So, I am rescinding my proposal to you, but I would like to schedule a refocus meeting." Hey, this person may have won the lottery. (I don't like to say hit by a bus. They may have won the lottery and they're no longer there. They're on a boat somewhere. Well, call someone else at that company. Call the switchboard, call that person who you would perceive to be their manager or boss and say, "Hey, I haven't heard from so-and-so in a while. What's going on?” May get some answers.

Adam: They haven't talked, contacted you, or responded to your emails in over a month and you're worried about that they might not like you for going over their head and seeing what's going on? You probably weren't getting that deal anyway before. At least now you would know.

Jason: Again, depends upon the steps you've taken before that will determine your aggressiveness on outreach or detour. And hopefully you've been introduced to other people in the buying process as we've stated before. You identify all the key players or most of the key players that you can to try and get in front of them. This goes back to being single-threaded verse multi-threaded into an account. In a single thread it drives no accountability. There's no negative response for saying ‘no’. So, try and avoid that. And if you do then you have other outlets. And you'll find from somebody, "Oh, his father is sick," or, "He did hit the lottery and he left. Yeah. We have to find him to fire him."

Adam: Or getting transferred to another job.

Jason: Yeah, or he has different responsibilities. Try and do as much homework as you can on LinkedIn; obviously if somebody's changed jobs and they update LinkedIn that should appear to be noticeable on LinkedIn, or you could have a tool that would notify you when someone changes jobs, which we have.

Adam: Yeah.

Jason: Every deal has a sell by date. And and if you've surpassed that date, then be as aggressive as you want. I mean, the downside is that you get it out of your funnel and your sales leader will be extremely thankful that this something's no longer sitting out there aging at the tone of a month or two months at a time.

Meredith: **We are up against our time almost. We are down to our last question. So here's a good one. I don't want to seem like I'm arguing with prospects who don't share my sense of urgency in moving this deal forward. So what's a good way to be more conversational when they continue to be noncommittal?**

Jason: I always go for the approach if you can get in front of them, get in front of them. I think we probably all heard the, "Hey, I'm going to be in your area." That's a tired one and nobody responds to that anymore. So just insert yourself in their day-to-day, "Hey, I'm coming by the office on Monday to drop something off. Can I see you?" I think again, this is a great opportunity to stay socially engaged with them. No one's ever going to be as urgent as you are, right? No one's ever going to have the sense of urgency that you do. It doesn't matter what it ever is in life, personally, professionally, it doesn't matter. So, I would say that during the process, try to transfer as much urgency as possible. Try to drive what the negative impact of not doing this is. What the negative impact of waiting is.

Jason: "Hey, Adam, I know that we said when we talked, I get that you've got a lot going on, but you said that you had to solve this within the next three to four months or it was going to be a big problem rolling into 2019. We're butting up on two and a half months since we first talked. Is this still a priority for you?" Try to get an answer.

Adam: Let me add that ... let's think about the words that the person asked this question used. I don't want to seem like I'm arguing, I want to be conversational. When you're arguing with someone, for the most part unless you're asking rhetorical questions, you're making statements, they're making statements and you're butting heads. That's not a conversation. That's an argument. That means you're not asking questions, you're not engaging, you're not telling stories to generate an emotional responses to. If you want to keep your sales processes and sales encounters more conversational rather than arguing, I would suggest you load up on your stories, load up on your transparency as well. Explain why you're having this conversation now. What it is you're trying to get out selfishly from the conversation? And how it will help what's in it for them. How will it help the person you're talking to. And then ask questions and make sure that yeah, is that reasonable? Is that fair? Making it so there's not an argument but instead it's a dialogue where you're asking questions, they're asking questions and they understand fully where you are and where you're coming from.