



**artesian**<sup>TM</sup>

How To Breathe Life Into Your Sales Pipeline

## Overview

Long sales cycles and slow velocity affect many businesses, particularly those with a complex product, service or sales process. Companies targeting large businesses where there is a complex ecosystem of stakeholders also tend to feel the strain.

Every day waiting for a sales opportunity to be signed off costs revenue and leaves you exposed to the competition.

Of course, there may be several reasons why your organisation has protracted sales cycles, and each will have different solutions. But let's start with why deals stall in the first place.

## Why do deals stall?

### Macroeconomics

Macroeconomic factors such as political, economic and environmental issues can cause unavoidable disruption to the sales cycle. These issues are usually out of your control but that doesn't mean you should give up on the deal or treat it any differently.

Macroeconomic conditions are invariably temporary and your organisation needs to continue to deliver the best experience and stay front of mind in anticipation of the moment that the deal gets back on track.

### Organisational goals

Changes in organisational priorities can really hit your pipeline hard. It could be a strategic change or simply different departments' priorities competing with one another.

Frame your proposal against the company's overall strategic goals and be prepared for the deal to stall if it is not considered a priority for the organisation.

### People changes

The biggest reason for stalled deals is when your champion within the prospect moves on. Businesses move fast and people change roles in a long sales cycle. It's important to research the ecosystem and develop several relationships and champions in anticipation of staff changes.

Management changes often lead to a change in direction or prioritisation but current projects are rarely halted without a significant and compelling reason.

Building a solid business case early can be time consuming but can be an invaluable tool for bringing new members of the ecosystem up to speed, gaining credibility and buy-in.

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Artesian Solutions

## Business priorities

Businesses often change priorities at the end of a quarter or fiscal year. Be aware that your proposal can be relegated from top priority to insignificant following unexpected news. Maintain close working relationships with your champions, understand what is important to them and be prepared to adapt your proposal as required to remain relevant in the overall picture.

## Mergers & acquisitions

It's common during a merger or acquisition event for the buyer to defer a decision until they've seen what the new landscape looks like. As with macro-economic factors, uncertainty is usually temporary and prospects will appreciate a vendor that remains in the picture and is flexible to the new timescales.

## Deals go dark

After a promising start, your contact has stopped answering your calls. Even with the best intentions, they may not have had the time to push forward your proposal or the necessary influence within the business. You are only as good as your champion at selling into the company so it is important to understand the spheres of influence in the account and build the right relationships early.

## Holidays

It can be tough getting hold of people during the holiday season, particularly when several stakeholders are involved. By sending over discovery questions and calendar reminders, however, these periods can be planned around.

## Budget

Changing budgets can derail your deals. If you know the economic buyer, decision maker and procurement process, budgets pose less of a risk to your sales opportunity. Be aware that your pricing proposal if high, may scare off stakeholders or if low, may not win their confidence.

## Competitors

When a key stakeholder recommends an evaluation of competitive solutions, deals can sometimes stall. It's important to map out all stakeholders, the buying process, incumbent providers and potential competitors so you can position yourself as the perfect partner, with a differentiated solution that only you can deliver.

Don't discount internal factors to the business such as inefficient sales processes that may be contributing to long, drawn out cycles. Commercial teams need tools to research their prospects, stay abreast of current news and track potential opportunities and risks to their portfolio of opportunities.

They also need to get used to new technology to manage their opportunities, keep records and send timely communications. Training is essential to ensure technology is adopted and that commercial teams are at peak productivity.

## When do deals stall?

Most deals stall in the middle of the funnel, after they have been identified but before the signoff process.

It's also quite common to find a target prospect with a business pain and interest but lacking the authority, buy-in, resources to build a business case, prioritisation against company goals or budget. It's fine to allow part-qualified deals into your funnel as long as there is a detailed action plan with owners and timings against each stage.

## What can you do to reinvigorate your pipeline?

### Re-evaluate

It pays to continually evaluate each opportunity. If any of the parameters have changed, does the deal have a chance of moving forward? What have your customers told you about the opportunity? What are their needs and interests?

Segment your pipeline into 3 sections:

- Opportunities that are progressing
- Opportunities that are stalled but could progress in the short or long term
- Opportunities that are unlikely to progress

Next, do your research! Don't rely on direct communication from your contacts for all your insights – there may be valuable information in the public domain that helps you assess each opportunity and any risks.

Invigorate your pipeline with customer curiosity. The customer curious business puts the customer before their sales targets and takes time to understand the market, the company and their contacts implicitly.

**Interest** – understand the business goals and have a genuine interest in helping your customer to achieve them.

**Relevance** – Make sure your outreach aligns with the company's business goals. Be prepared that your current offering may not be the best fit, right now.

**Timeliness** – Use your knowledge of your customer's agenda to engage at the right time. Work to their agenda and timescales – not yours.

**Context** – Build on your knowledge by researching the marketplace and put your proposition in context with the wider picture.

With customer curiosity, you can build a trusted relationship and potentially open yourself to new information about the opportunity that you wouldn't otherwise have.

Aim to have every opportunity in your funnel continually moving forward and be open to the fact deals may move slowly and close in a different timescale.

You'll expose gaps between your pipeline and targets using this approach but your pipeline will be alive and realistic.



## How can Artesian help you breathe life into your pipeline

Artesian is a software solution that gives you contextual, relevant insights about your customers and helps you to get to know them better, giving you a competitive edge when it really matters.

Artesian brings together information and news on your prospects, customers and competitors from multiple sources and filters it down to actionable insights that are delivered direct to your inbox, mobile or browser.

A recent survey of Artesian customers showed that customer curious businesses delivered 33% more credibility, 15% faster deal velocity and 14% increase in revenue.

### Market News

Stay up-to-date with a weekly market news digest featuring all the top news stories.

### News Feed

Follow prospects, customers and competitors with an up to the minute news feed prioritised by relevancy.

### Triggers

Use colour coded triggers to spot business opportunities, engage with clients and manage risk. Share commercially valuable insights directly from the platform or through the Ready mobile app.

### Engagement Scoring

Track adoption and foster best practice customer curiosity with engagement scoring and powerful analytics.

### Integrations

Artesian can be accessed through either Salesforce.com or Microsoft Dynamics CRM solutions.

### Fully managed service

Artesian's dedicated onboarding team and academy learning management ensure organisations get the most out of Artesian. Training, technical support and customer enablement are available throughout the lifecycle.

### Give Artesian a try

The best way to understand how Artesian can help is to see it in action.

[Book an online demo >>](#)

