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7 Steps to Win Buying Group Consensus and Cut Deal Slippage

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Published 26 Jun 2025 Read time 7 min read

Key Points

- Most late-stage deal slippage is caused by stakeholders who were never aligned on the problem, not stakeholders who objected to the solution.
- Align the buying group on the cost of inaction before presenting any solution. This is the step most sellers skip.
- Know your champion's real influence before relying on them to carry the deal internally.
- Surface sceptics early through direct questions. Hidden opposition found late costs far more than opposition found in discovery.
- A group call framed as a joint problem review, not a sales meeting, brings in stakeholders who would otherwise decline a pitch.
- Close every group conversation with two questions: is this worth solving, and should we prioritise it now?

What is buying group consensus?

In B2B sales, buying group consensus is the point at which all the relevant stakeholders on the customer's side have agreed that the problem is real, that it's worth solving, and that now is the right time to act. It isn't the same as one person saying yes. It's the buying group as a unit reaching alignment on those three things.

Most B2B deals above a certain size involve more than one decision-maker. Research consistently puts the average number of stakeholders involved in a mid-market or enterprise purchase at six to ten. Each of those stakeholders has their own definition of the problem, their own priorities, and their own tolerance for change. A deal can look solid when the sponsor is enthusiastic and fall apart at the final approval stage because someone who was never properly engaged objects at signature.

Winning buying group consensus is the work of making sure that doesn't happen. It's done before the proposal, not after it.

Why deals fail without it

The most common cause of late-stage slippage isn't price, not competition, and not budget. It's a buying group that never reached alignment. One stakeholder wanted to solve a different problem. Finance wasn't involved until the number landed on their desk. Procurement had requirements the champion didn't know about. Legal had a process that no one had mapped.

Sellers typically discover this at the point of negotiation or legal review, when reversing course is expensive and momentum has stalled. By that point, a deal that looked like it was on track for the quarter has a 50/50 chance of closing at all.

The root cause is almost always the same: the seller worked the champion and assumed the champion would handle the rest. The champion, with the best intentions, may have oversold their influence, underestimated the opposition, or simply not had the conversations they said they would have.

What it actually costs

The direct cost is close date slippage. A deal that misses the quarter costs the seller and the business a 90-day delay in recognised revenue. Across a pipeline, even three or four deals slipping by a quarter changes a forecast materially.

The less visible cost is what sellers do while they wait. Pipeline reviews become focused on stalled deals rather than progressing ones. Managers spend time diagnosing why a deal is stuck rather than coaching the deals that could still close. The team's best opportunities get less attention because the stuck deals consume the most airtime.

What good looks like

In deals where buying group consensus is managed well, the proposal is almost a formality. By the time a document is written and sent, every relevant stakeholder has already confirmed that the problem is real, that it's funded, and that the decision timeline is agreed. There are no surprises at final approval because none of the relevant conversations are happening for the first time.

Good also looks like a champion who has been tested rather than assumed. The seller knows the champion's real level of internal influence, knows who the potential opponents are and what their concerns might be, and has helped the champion navigate those conversations before they happen

in a room the seller isn't in.

Seven steps to win buying group consensus

1. Quantify the cost of inaction before proposing anything. Build a one-page summary of the business problem, the current state, and what it is costing the organisation to leave it unsolved. Put the number in pounds or hours or deals lost, not in abstract risk language. Stakeholders who see the price of doing nothing become allies. Stakeholders who only hear a pitch remain sceptical.

2. Map every stakeholder beyond your main contact. Ask your champion directly: who else will be involved in this decision, formally or informally? Who in Finance, Legal, Procurement, or IT needs to approve? Who might oppose it, and why? The answers to these questions should be in your CRM before you advance the deal past discovery.

3. Test your champion's real influence. Ask them to arrange a meeting with the economic buyer. Ask them to share the cost-of-inaction summary with Finance. Their ability and willingness to do those things tells you more about their real influence than anything they say about their own position. A champion who can't or won't make those introductions isn't a champion in the commercial sense.

4. Surface sceptics through direct questions. Ask your champion: who in the business sees this differently, and what would they say? Then, in the group meeting, ask the same question of the room. The goal is to find and address opposition while there is still time to respond to it. Opposition that surfaces at contract review costs a quarter. Opposition that surfaces in discovery costs an hour.

5. Write the champion's internal email for them. Most champions want to carry the message internally but don't know how to frame it. Draft a short, problem-only email they can forward to the relevant stakeholders. Leave out product language and pricing, and include only the problem, the cost of inaction, and an invitation to a joint problem review. The story stays accurate and moves without you needing to be in every conversation.

6. Host a group meeting framed as a joint problem review, not a sales meeting. Send a scheduling invitation that describes the purpose as: reviewing whether this problem is worth solving, and what it would take to address it. Not: a demonstration of our solution. Lower the stakes and you get the attendance. Frame it as a pitch and the people who matter will decline.

7. Close with two questions and log the answers. At the end of the group call, ask two things: Is this a business problem worth solving? And: Should we prioritise it now? Get each stakeholder to answer directly. Log any absent stakeholder as a gap in the consensus. Both questions need clear, confirmed answers before the deal moves to proposal stage.

Common mistakes

Pitching the solution before pain is shared. If the buying group hasn't yet agreed that the problem is real and the cost is material, a detailed proposal is premature. It invites scope objections rather than buy-in. Hold the proposal until the group has confirmed the problem together.

Over-relying on a single champion. A champion who is the only person advocating internally for the deal is a single point of failure. If their priorities change, if they leave, or if they lack the political weight to carry the decision, the deal stalls. Aim for at least two internal advocates before advancing to proposal.

Skipping the silence after asking for disagreement. When you ask a group whether anyone sees the problem differently, the instinct is to fill the pause. Don't. The silence is where the real opinions come from. Wait five full seconds. What gets said in that silence is often the most important thing said in the meeting.

Treating consensus as a one-time event. Buying groups change. Priorities shift. A stakeholder who was aligned in January may have a different view in April. Check in with your champion on the state of the internal conversation before every significant meeting, all the way through the process.

How to tell if it's working

Late-stage slippage falls. Deals that reach proposal stage are closing at a higher rate because the group was aligned before the document was sent. Close dates are more accurate because the surprises are being found earlier. Pipeline reviews spend less time on stalled deals and more time on deals that are progressing. And when a deal does stall, the team can identify precisely which stakeholder conversation didn't happen, rather than explaining it as a general market slow-down.

Further reading

Enterprise Sales: What Changes When You Move Upmarket How the buying process, the stakeholder map, and the qualification standard all change when deal sizes grow.

MEDDPICC, Explained How the MEDDPICC framework structures multi-stakeholder qualification and deal inspection.

From Revenue Surprises to Early Intervention How to surface deal risk before it becomes a missed quarter.

Related terms

- Cost of Inaction: The quantified business cost of a prospect not solving their problem.
- Deal Inspection: A structured review of a deal's health, risks, and next steps.
- Buying Process: The steps a prospect organisation follows when evaluating and selecting a vendor.
- Economic Buyer: The person with budget authority and final sign-off power in a deal.
- Buyer Evidence: Proof points and documentation that validate a buyer's decision to purchase.
- Buying Group: The set of individuals who collectively influence or make a purchase decision.
- Deal Stall: When a deal stops progressing and the buyer goes quiet or delays decisions.

- B2B Sales: The process of selling products or services from one business to another.

Related service: Live Deal Coaching

Source: https://www.closingfoundry.com/insights/7-steps-to-win-buying-group-consensus-and-cut-deal-slippage