



7-POINT CHECKLIST TO WIN EXECUTIVE BUY-IN

You only get one shot with executive buyers, and the stakes are high. One misstep could send your entire deal out the window. That's because few sellers know how to sell to senior executives.



Follow these steps to boost your success rate in the most important meeting(s) in your pipeline:

1. Don't confuse role with title

- If you don't know people's roles, you'll operate based on their titles. And that leads to incorrect assumptions about who has decision-making power.
- Action: Talk to people inside the buyers org to figure out two things: 1) Who is close enough to the problem to do something about it, and 2) Who is involved in the decision making process.

Here's how: Ask the key questions below to uncover pivotal data.

- How do you currently make decisions?
- Who plays the role of decision maker?
- What do they experience in that role (pressure from leadership, a lot of independence around finding solutions, frustration from reps, etc.)
- How have you made purchasing decisions in the past?

2. Maximize their time

- Wasting time is the fastest way to lose trust with executives. The first three to five minutes in your meeting are critical. You never want them to wonder, "Why am I here?"
- Action: Immediately clarify why this meeting matters to this person. You'll earn the right to influence them for the rest of the meeting.

Here's how: Use the messaging framework below.

- Offer a unique point of view: Show how your solution solves a problem in a new, different, or better way.
- Provide provocative industry insights: Introduce a new trend or issue the exec hasn't even considered.
- Competitive benchmark: Offer them a benchmark comparison against similar companies.

3. Keep the conversation flowing with targeted questions

- Do that by asking strategic sales questions that focus on vision, growth, market differentiation, pressures, and productivity. That's what the C-suite cares about. It's what holds their attention.
- Action: Prepare 3-4 insightful questions that focus on the customer's high-level goals.
- Here's how: Ask questions like the ones below.
 - How do you want to position your company in the market three years from now?
 - What does this issue cost you in terms of resources, quality, output, revenue, employees, time, etc.?
 - What do you see as the biggest challenge that would prevent you from reaching [name their strategic goal]?
- Caution: If you ask discovery-level questions or too many questions, your win rate will drop. Why? Because senior decision makers have discovery fatigue. Don't ask standard questions, ask them strategic questions no one else can answer.



- c. Here's how: Talk about your solution in a way that connects with their high-order business problems and strategic opportunities. Maybe that's competitive differentiation and opportunities that are still undetected, or top-of-line revenue goals and scaling the business. Here's an example of how we think about this at Gong:

What *strategic* topic can you tie your solution to?

Coaching (Tactical)

- Attracts mid-level managers
- Not frequently discussed at executive-level meetings
- Thought about "every now and then" as "something we should do"

Competitive Differentiation (Strategic)

- Attracts VP-level
- Discussed frequently at executive meetings
- Thought about every day at a visceral level

4. Solve for external factors

- External factors include anything outside the control of your C-level decision maker. That might be industry issues (e.g., regulations, competitive dynamics, business models) or company issues (e.g., differentiation, stock price and performance). This is the stuff that scares execs. And it's where you can communicate the most value — where both the problem and the solution are unknown.
- Action: Reference specific external factors early in the conversation to demonstrate that you understand their business and establish your credibility.
- Here's how: Increase your industry knowledge before your meeting. Read press release statements, thought leadership posts, and social media, and leverage intelligence through your contacts elsewhere in the organization.

5. Mention their strategic initiatives

- Are they trying to increase market share, grow revenue, cross-sell/upsell, or expand into new markets through mergers and acquisitions? Identify their upcoming strategic initiatives, then talk about how you'd support them.
- Action: Understand which initiatives are essential to their growth plan. Make the connection between those initiatives and your solution, and show your prospect the impact you'd have on the initiative (as well as their department's credibility and their professional standing).

6. Uncover their hidden needs

- Executives are always looking for an edge. Alert them to threats they haven't foreseen or opportunities in hiding, and you'll unlock a powerful persuasion method: loss aversion, which drives urgency.
- Action: Discuss an external trend that threatens their status quo.
- Here's how: Talk about what the market is doing, then tear down their status quo (respectfully). Executives become urgency-driven when you show them why their status quo is no longer viable.

Focus your message on "tearing apart the status quo"



The real power is focusing your message on how unsustainable Point A is.

Most sellers focus their pitch on "getting you to point B" (i.e. benefits)

- Caution: If Point A is your status quo and Point B is the result of implementing your product, focus on reshaping their view of Point A more than on building up Point B.

7. Paint their desired future state

- a. Pull your solution story together. Include the external factors that shape their strategic business initiatives, and how you help them resolve their hidden needs. Make the path from their current state to their future state clear.
- b. Action: Build a business case with relevant before and after customer stories.
- c. Here's how: Start with the before, making sure they see themselves in it. Then build the after story — what happens once they implement your product or service. Make sure it's targeted and relevant to their business use case.
- d. Caution: Don't lead your future state discussions with ROI. The buyer will focus on evaluating your formula and assumptions, and that's not productive. Instead, use ROI to introduce your before and after stories, or co-create the ROI with the buyer, using their numbers.

Before and After Case Study

Before

- Won 20% of competitive deals
- Average discount rate: 13%

After

- 2.5x increase in competitive win rates
- From 20% and 70% competitive win rate
- Average discount rate: 8%

Want to equip your team to deliver better C-suite meetings?
Game on.

But first you need to see what's happening inside your sales process — and what's really driving sales.

That's easy... if you have Gong's Revenue Intelligence Platform.

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