

**BUILDING YOUR**

**ZEBRA**

Based on the award winning book  
*Selling To Zebras*



Are you experiencing any of the following sales related business issues?

- Longer sales cycles
- Trouble finding worthwhile prospects
- Heavy discounting
- Trouble competing

If your answer is “yes”, you need a ZEBRA.

This eBook will show you how to start closing all of the sales in your pipeline 90% of the time. All you have to do is commit to building your ZEBRA Profile, a tool which helps you recognize the perfect prospect every time.

## What is a ZEBRA?

I think it's pretty safe to say that there isn't a salesperson in the world who wouldn't love to finish each quarter with a 90% closure rate. The answer isn't working harder, or cold calling day and night until your fingers turn blue. Improving your close rate is about targeting customers who fit perfectly with the solutions that you offer.

"But what does this all have to do with zebras?" you might ask.

Well, the funny thing about a zebra is that it can never be mistaken for any other animal. When you look at a zebra those black and white stripes let you know exactly what you're dealing with.

In business, a ZEBRA is a prospect that is simply unmistakable, just like zebras in the wild. All you have to do is look at a ZEBRA and you know that the deal will close. It is a prospect whose operational philosophy, technological needs, and service attributes are identically suited to your ability to deliver. If you want to start closing more deals, you don't need to work harder, you need to start selling to ZEBRAS.

A prospect may be a ZEBRA for you, but not for another company. What makes them a ZEBRA is their particular suitability to your ability to deliver. Finding a ZEBRA is a very interactive process which requires that you already know what to look for. In order to be able to do this, you need to build a ZEBRA profile; a set of characteristics that all of your best clients have had in common. This involves reviewing your best sales and taking careful note of their shared characteristics.

Once you figure out what your ZEBRA profile looks like, you'll be able to instantly recognize your ZEBRA. Before you even begin the sales cycle you'll determine if your prospect is actually worth pursuing. If the prospect matches your ZEBRA profile, you'll either go for it, or continue looking for a prospect that does.

## Why Do I Need a ZEBRA Profile?

Your organization has a limited number of resources. Sales people should do their part to maximize the organizations time spent on quality prospects. The sad truth is that most sales people actually use the bulk of their resources following leads that never result in a deal. Even the deals that do close, aren't at their full potential if you're not focused on the right prospects. This problem is why even the hardest working sales people, the ones who put their heart and sweat into their work, actually produce the least sales and the slimmest profits.

The average company only closes fifteen percent of its forecasted sales pipeline. That means sales people spend eighty-five percent of their time following leads that will never produce a sale. They are expending more energy than ever before, and yet they are closing fewer deals. This phenomenon is based on legacy thinking, which assumes that the only way to increase sales is to cast a wider net, chasing every opportunity. This results in people spending most of their energy on endeavors which were destined to be fruitless from the beginning.

This problem affects sales people in every market, whether they sell complex technology services, cars, or kazoo's! This is the classic sales funnel; find one hundred prospects to cold call in order to get twenty-five appointments, which leads to twelve or so prospect surveys, which turn into six or seven actual proposals, leading to one sale. This status quo thinking is so pervasive, sales people who go through this cycle feel grateful when they finally get that one sale, as if it's a major victory. This sales philosophy is outdated and inefficient. It's time to start selling to ZEBRAS.

## Chase ZEBRAS and Nothing Else!

The old, activity-driven philosophy, tells you to chase anything that looks remotely like business. This leads sales people to spend long hours with prospects whose needs rarely line up with the value that the seller has to offer. These salespeople put hours upon hours into prospects who have little to no chance of buying from them. They're chasing warthogs when they should be chasing ZEBRAS!

Imagine you're a hunter, tracking one kind of animal, a zebra. It doesn't make sense for you to spend your time chasing anything else. If you spend three quarters of your day distracted by all the other crazy animals on the safari, you'll never bag the zebra. You may have worked hard, but it was a complete waste of time. As crazy as it sounds, this is exactly what most salespeople are doing in today's market. They're staying very busy doing things that get them no closer to their goals.

Chasing ZEBRAS means that you don't waste any more time on unlikely prospects. If you concentrate only on the prospects who fit your ZEBRA profile, they will end up buying from you 90 percent of the time. In addition to closing a higher percentage of deals, you will also discover the compounding effects; a much shorter sales cycle, and an increase in average deal size. This is because ZEBRAS see the need for your product. You will find their specific needs match almost perfectly to your ability to deliver. These prospects are unmistakably ZEBRAS; chase only them and your sales cycles will be shorter, more consistent, and your average closing price will be higher than ever.

BY FOCUSING ON  
ZEBRAS, YOU CAN  
CLOSE AS MUCH AS 90  
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BUSINESS IN YOUR SALES  
PIPELINE.

## Zebra Building is Cross-functional

Sales should be supported by finance, engineering, post sales customer service, business development and if you are a manufacturer, manufacturing should be

included. Each brings a different perspective of what makes a perfect customer. And one of the huge business benefits of this process is getting everyone using the same language and solving the same problems for customers.

## It's Time to Identify Your ZEBRA

In order to find your ZEBRA, you must identify its key characteristics. In this eBook, you will learn exactly what it takes to identify your ZEBRA.

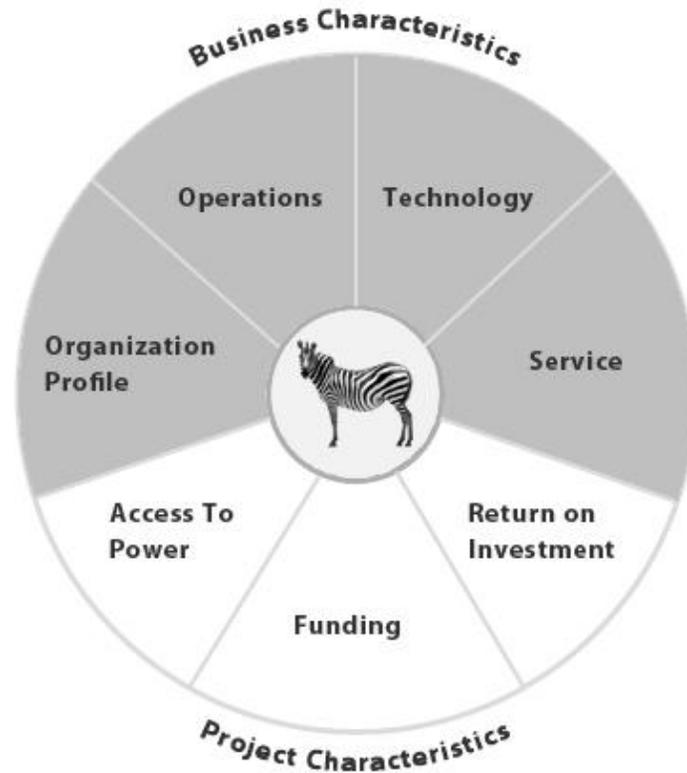
Gather all the files and information on:

1. The last five deals that actually closed.
2. Your three very best customers.
3. Three or more deals that you've lost.

You'll need some way to incorporate all of this information into a format that you can use to identify ZEBRA prospects in the future. This is what we call a **ZEBRA Profile**. A ZEBRA Profile is a list of characteristics that you normally find in your best clients. Think back to the sales you've made in the past that were the most rewarding.

What did they all have in common?

There are seven major categories of characteristics that you should be looking for in your ideal prospect. These qualities converge to form your ZEBRA



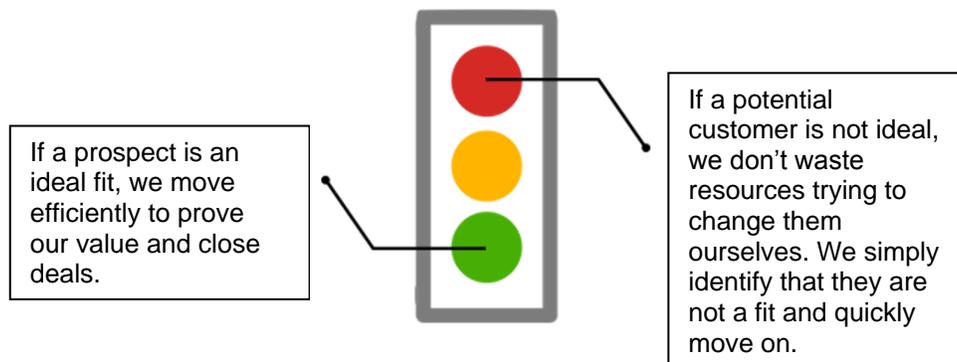
In this guide, we'll go through each of these categories and try to figure out what led to a deal. For example, when we look at the **Funding**, we will try to find out which funding characteristics each of your successful sales had in common. Once we've gone through each of these categories, you will have a full profile telling you exactly what your ZEBRA looks like. Focusing time on the most qualified prospects, will put you on track to close 90 percent of your sales. This is what finding your ZEBRA is all about!

# The ZEBRA

Your ZEBRA profile is as simple as seven attributes, outlining the most commonly shared characteristics of your very best clients. We've created software to make the process of building your ZEBRA Profile even easier. It's called the **Selling to Zebras™ software**, and it will act as a compendium of information about your most successful sales deals.

It's important to note that ZEBRA scoring is dynamic throughout the sales process. You must prove the prospect is initially worth going after by using the first two ZEBRA attributes to qualify the deal. As you penetrate the account, the third Zebra attribute - Power, will reveal the answers to remaining characteristics and only then will they be scored. If the person you are talking to does not have access to funding, or doesn't relate to the ROI, you may not be at Power. This is where the ZEBRA helps identify holes in the deal and allows corrective measures to be taken to save it, or invest resources elsewhere. By the end of the process you will be able to use the total ZEBRA Score to determine whether that deal should be pursued and if it ever will be in the forecast.

## Total Score

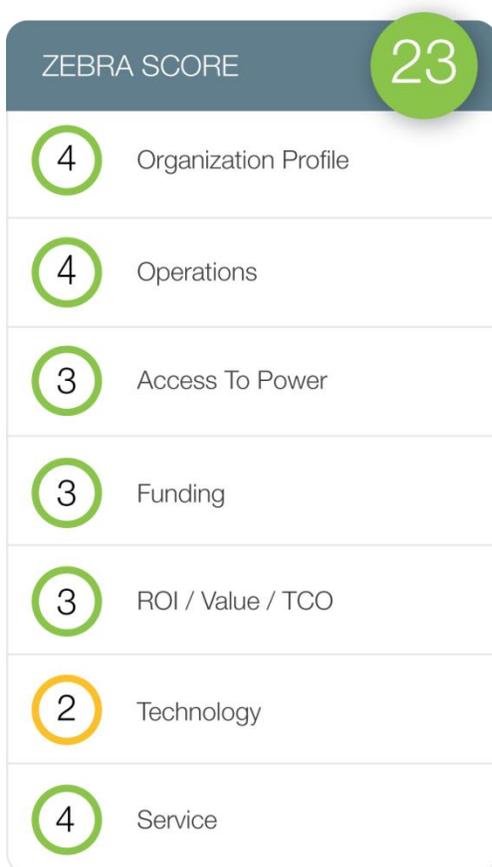


You will be able to use the ZEBRA Profile for three things:

**Qualifying deals-** Score the first two characteristics: Organization Profile and Operations can be scored based on preliminary research and initial conversations with the prospect. Here you will be looking to see if they fit your ZEBRA Profile based on things like size, industry, location.

**Identifying holes in deals-** Use the characteristics like Funding and ROI, to determine if you actually have Access to Power. Power may agree if the problems can be solved, the solution will be funded. What are the next steps to prove that value? Keep the deal moving, if you can prove it, can they buy?

**Forecasting deals-** After meeting Power, if your prospect is scored 17 or higher continue to pursue and close the holes in your deal. Once your prospect is scored 23 the deal can be counted on to produce revenue that quarter with a 90% probability of it closing. You will find an increase in accuracy when you forecast deals that have been ZEBRA scored.



The image to the left is what a ZEBRA Profile will consist of. Now let's go through the process of creating your ZEBRA Profile so you can start qualifying deals, identifying holes, and forecasting with greater accuracy. We will start by digging into your greatest deals and identifying their positive characteristics as defined in the following areas:

**Organization Profile**

**Operations**

**Access to Power**

**Funding**

**ROI**

**Technology**

**Service**

## 1st Attribute: Organization Profile

First we'll look into the organizational profile that describes your best customers. You've already gathered the information on your three best customers, your five most recent sales, and three deals that you've lost. Why customers you have lost you might ask. Psychological testing has taught us that looking at the opposite (anti-Zebra that we don't want) can help us more clearly see what we do want (Zebra). Now ask yourself the following questions about each of these customers:

How did these companies behave during the sales cycle? Were they easy to communicate with, or were they closed off and distant? When you negotiated with these customers, were they pleasant and easy to work with, or rough and testy? Did these customers give you a chance to really show them what you had to offer, or were they simply looking for a single quality?

- **Size**

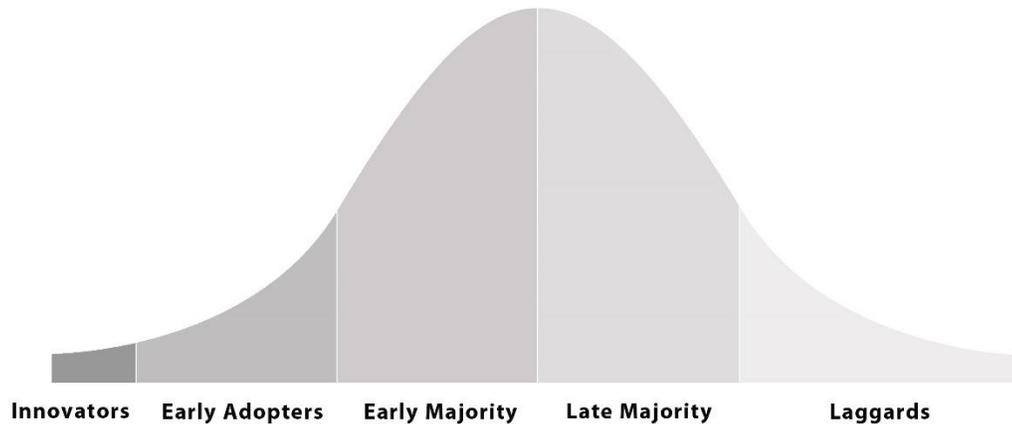
Take a look at the size of the companies in your sample. Do they tend to be large, medium, or small companies? There may be no pattern at all, but this is still important to take note of. If there is a pattern, make a note of the average annual revenue. If most of the companies you deal with are fairly large, note whether they tend to deal with you at the corporate level or at the division level.

- **Philosophy**

What types of business philosophies are employed by your best customers? Are they more concerned with quality or quantity? In other words, do they buy from you because you deliver a quality that they can't get anywhere else, or broader depth of capabilities or more complex solutions? Take careful note of these characteristics.

- **Product-Adoption Life Cycle**

Each company has a different philosophy when it comes to how they buy. These different philosophies tend to fit into what is called the "Product-Adoption Life Cycle" as pictured in the graph below. Customers who fit into the innovators and early adopters categories tend to buy products that are



newcomers in the market. Sometimes these products are not even completely functional when they are purchased by innovators and early adopters because these groups simply want to stay as far ahead of the competition as possible. These types of clients are relatively rare. Most customers will fit into the early majority or late majority groups. They will buy products once they are functional and have already been tested on the market and proven to work. The last group of customers would be laggards. Laggards are customers who will only buy a product once it has been used over and over again and when they are forced to buy due to outside pressure such as survival. Look at all of your best customers, especially the most recent, and take careful note of which phase in the product-adoption life cycle they tend to fall into.

- **Market Position**

How do your best customers fit into their industries? Are they leaders in their respective markets, or are they mainly second tier players competing for business in specialized niches?

- **Location**

Do your customers tend to come from a specific geographical location or more global?

- **Industry**

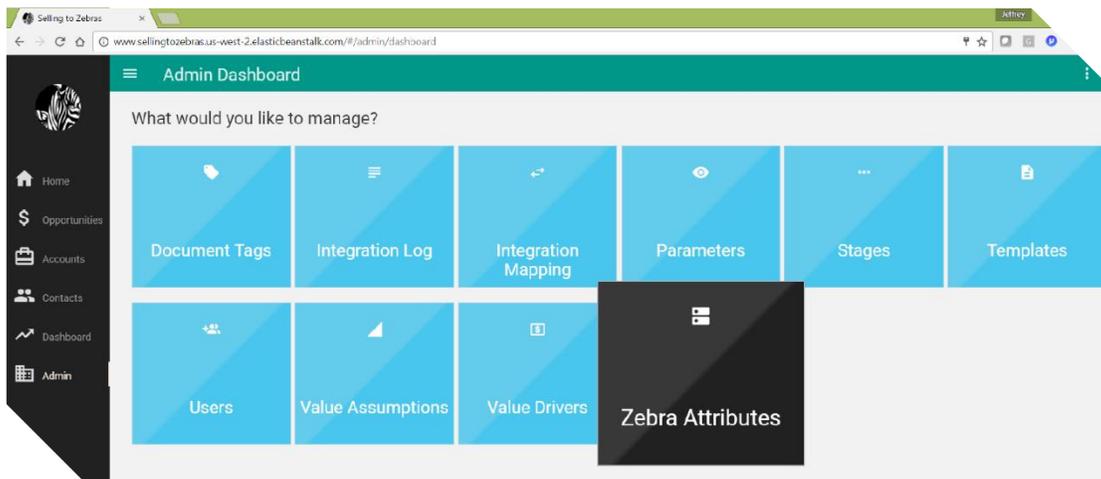
Is there one specific industry that your customers usually fit into? It is best to be as specific as possible about this, which you can easily do by using the Standard Industrial Classification (SIC) codes, or the National American Industry Classification System (NAICS) codes. If there are one or two classifications that your best customers tend to fall into, this is definitely worth noting.

Finally, also take some time to note down how all of your worst deals seem to fit into these categories. It may be painful to revisit deals that have gone sour, but by noting the characteristics they have in common, you will not only avoid these

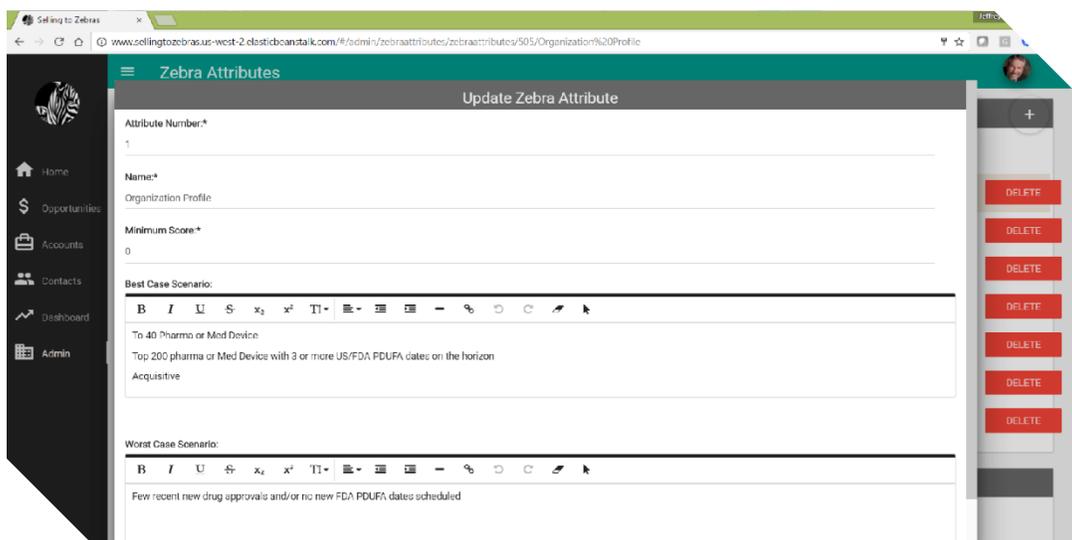
types of prospects in the future, but will more clearly see the best characteristics of our Zebra.

Here is a secret tip to Zebra creation. Don't try to define the characteristics of every deal you ever won. The goal of Zebra creation is to identify the characteristics of your perfect customer. Then in the future measure all prospects against the perfect customer so you can close 9 out of 10.

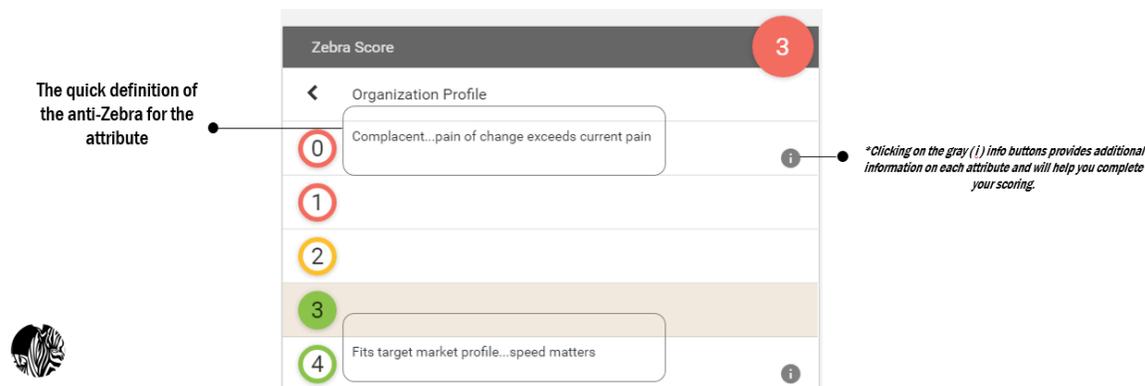
Now you can go to Zebra Attributes section under Admin in the Selling to Zebras™ software (pictured below) and enter the **Organization Profile**.



Now enter in the organization profile of your ZEBRA under the column labeled "Best Case Scenario" and the Organization of your "anti-ZEBRA" in the column labeled "Worst Case Scenario." These later characteristics should be similar to those governing the very worst deals that you've lost in the past.



Below is a sample of how the Organizational Profile portion of YOUR Zebra will present when finished and you are ready to score your Zebra.



## 2nd Attribute: Operations

ZEBRA SCORE		23
4	Organization Profile	
4	Operations	
3	Access To Power	
3	Funding	
3	ROI / Value / TCO	
2	Technology	
4	Service	

Every company has a unique operational structure which dictates how it gets work done. This structure may be relatively simple in a small company, or it may be a hierarchical complex of functioning units in a large company.

Taking a look at your best clients again, what types of operational characteristics do they have in common? Do they tend to have very simple organizational structures, or are they large companies with several different managerial levels and multiple branches and locations? Are your best customers domestic, international and global, single location or multi-location? Finally, do your best clients tend to be privately held or public? Do you do well with acquisitive companies, i.e. organization that buy other companies?

Try to figure out if there are specific patterns in your customer's work processes. Do they tend to have labor issues? What is their equipment usage like?

Try to find any patterns related to how your clients interact with their own customers. Note whether they tend to sell products directly to their customers or if they sell to suppliers who then sell to the general public. Are they a high-end, or high-quality

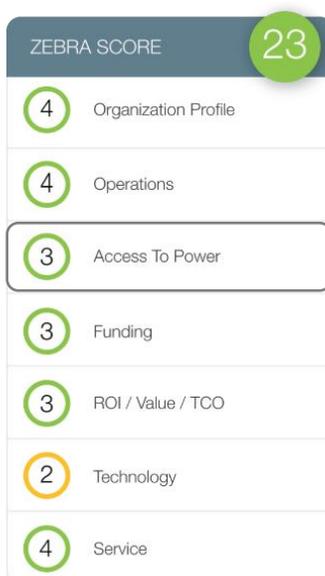
supplier? Perhaps they use a two-step distribution process in which they sell to a distributor who then sells to a retailer who finally sells to the final customer.

What critical business issues (CBIs) do you solve for these customers? Business issues when solved create value in one of four key areas. Solving them either produces more revenue, lowers cost, improves productive or increases compliance. CBIs are a foundational piece of the Zebra approach. CBIs are what keeps POWER awake at night. As established these are the big issues that drive value at an organization and when addressed these issues create value and:

- Earn the right to meet with POWER
- Preempt objections
- Create the basis of your value proposal
- Increase deal size

If there are any other unique qualities about your client's operational characteristics, make sure to make note of these as well.

### 3rd Attribute: Access to Power



We define **Power** as somebody who can purchase without a budget. Chances are that every deal you've made in the past has been affected by your access to Power within your customer's organizational structure. In any sales deal, there is ultimately one decision maker who makes the final call on the deal. In smaller deals or repeat projects this may be an operations-level individual or someone in middle management. In large deals, Power may be someone much higher up in the organization, generally a VP or someone who reports directly to the CEO. Power plays a crucial role in Zebra Scoring because you must have access to Power in order to score most of the other attributes. If you don't have access to Power you can't score Funding, ROI, Technology, or Service. You can't honestly predict the scores in these sections until you have a conversation with power. And you won't be able to predict if the deal will close.

Look at your past deals to see what position Power has held in your best and most recent deals. Now ask yourself these related questions about this person's role in the sales cycle:

Was this person well respected within the organization? Was Power willing to take risks or were they more conservative? In your best deals, was Power typically a strategic, operational, or tactical thinker? How did this affect the trajectory of the deal? Within your best deals what was Power's title? Do you typically sell to a C-level, VP or a middle manager?

Finally, you need to assess your own ability to access Power in your best and more recent sales deals. Were you able to access and share your ideas with the decision maker, or were you constantly shut out? How about in your worst deals? How much access did you have to Power in the deals that went horribly wrong or ended in non-decision? (Don't worry if you have identified Power and have difficulty getting there, we have techniques and solutions to help with this sales related business problem as well.)

Now try to write down everything you know about who was Power in your best and worst deals and about how much access you had to this person. Once you've done this, transfer the most important points regarding access to Power into your ZEBRA profile in the **Access to Power** section.

## 4th Attribute: Funding

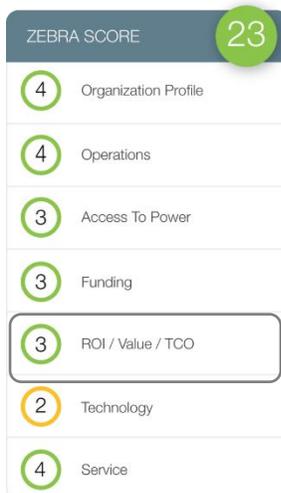


The importance of funding in the sales process cannot be overestimated. Every organization has a different process by which it decides when and whether to spend money on a given project. Look at your best and most recent deals and note the characteristics they share in relation to funding.

Did funding require authorization from a single person or were there multiple layers of management to get through before a deal could be put through? Did the operations individuals have the power to fund the deal or did they have to make an appeal to the finance department, or even the CEO?

Ultimately, the most important thing that you need to figure out is whether or not funding has acted as a major obstruction in your past deals. If you've lost a lot of deals because your customer's finance department refused to fund the project, this is definitely something that you need to take note of. Write down the answers to all of the questions above as well as any other observations about your customers' funding issues in order to create a sketch of the type of funding structure you should be looking for in a new prospect. Once you've done this, transfer this information to your ZEBRA profile just as you've done for the other attributes.

## 5th Attribute: Return on Investment (ROI)



Now it's time to address the overall return that your solution generally provides. If you don't yet have some sort of ROI projection tool for your business, you may have a difficult time fully understanding some of the questions that we will ask in this section. You should also consider immediately starting to use a value-based discussion. Having a conversation about your solutions return on investment and being able to defend it is a key factor in earning the right to speak with an executive. Reserving a spot in the boardroom is about solving a business problem that keeps an executive up at night.

Collecting together the documentation for your best, worst, and most recent clients one last time, try to identify the specific type of value that you were able to deliver to each one them. Did this value tend to be direct, or indirect?

Direct value is when your solution directly affects your customer's bottom line. This can either be by cutting costs or by increasing revenue. For example, one direct value may be if your product has labor saving capacity. Let's say that it reduces the labor cost for a specific necessary activity by twenty percent. If this labor cost is usually \$100,000 per year, your solution will directly save your client \$20,000 every year.

Indirect value on the other hand might be when your solution increases productivity but doesn't produce a quantifiable savings. Perhaps your solution will make one of your customer's employees twenty percent more productive, but the company will still have

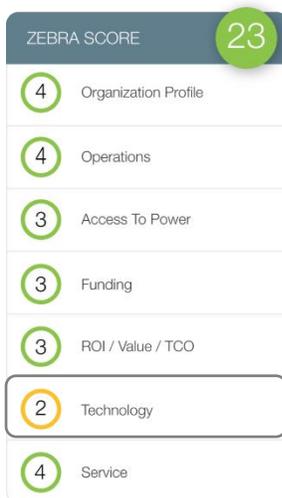
to pay this individual the same amount as before. Some finance departments do not take this type of indirect value into account when making funding decisions.

In the deals that you have pushed through successfully, which type of value have you delivered to your customers? Did your customer's generally expect a specific return on their investment? If so, what do the figures for this return tend to look like? How long are your customers generally willing to wait before the solution generates a return on their investment?

Finally, ask yourself what type of proof your customers have generally demanded of your projected ROI. Are they content with anecdotes about one or two customers, or do they want hard and fast statistical information for a company just like them? Did they prefer to have you base your ROI predictions on their situation alone, tailoring your research to their specific needs?

Write down the answers to as many of these questions as you can and enter them as comments in your ZEBRA profile.

## 6th Attribute: Technology



How your clients use and interface with technology also greatly influences their decisions to buy from you. This is because technology plays roles on very different levels from one company to the next. Consider this real example of an excavation company using GPS technology on all of their heavy machinery. At the time of implementation, GPS technology was not yet the standard in this industry. This company is a prime example of leveraging new technologies in order to gain business. Their GPS system allowed them to market themselves to their customers as a company who can offer cutting edge service that cannot be found anywhere else.

Your customers may be ones with cutting edge technology as we have discovered, or they may be more conservative technologically, preferring to purchase only those technologies that are standard within their industries.

Do your customers tend to have an employee who is dedicated to technological matters? If this person's title is something like "manager of information technology," it's not likely that the company places an extremely high premium on new technologies. However, if your customers have a CIO (Chief Information Officer) or CTO (Chief Technology Officer) they are probably more open to innovative technology.

You should also take note of whom in the company the highest ranking technologist reports to. If they report directly to the CEO, this shows that this customer is deeply invested in staying abreast of the newest technologies. If this person reports to the CFO (Chief Financial Officer) this indicates that the company sees technology less as an opportunity and more as a financial expense to be curbed and regulated.

Finally, think back to your negotiations with your best customers. Now try to remember what part technology played in these negotiations; were cutting edge technologies deal breakers, or generally unimportant, were your customers concerned with whether or not your technologies would give them an edge over their competitors or with whether or not these technologies were reliable, having been used by many other companies in the past? Write down the answers to these questions and any other information relating to how your customers regard and use technology so that you can use it in your ZEBRA Profile. Once you've done this, transfer the most important information into your Push-Button ZEBRA

## 7th Attribute: Service



All companies strive to deliver an amazing service experience, but there is still a unique dynamic between your solution and support after the sale. Go back to the files you've collected on your three best customers and your five most recent successful sales. On average, how did these customers view the role of service in the sales process? Were they customers who expect to be able to use your product all on their own without any additional help, or were they clients who need and expect to have 24/7 on call service for any solution they purchase? Were they willing to pay extra for contracted service?

Chances are that your clients will fit in somewhere on a range from wanting to do everything for themselves to needing dozens of hours of contracted service. Write down as much information as you can find in your files regarding how your best clients fit into this schema. As always, you should also take a few notes on how your worst clients have viewed service. Once you've finished writing, transfer the most important points into your ZEBRA profile so that you can use them later to evaluate future prospects.

## Conclusion

Your ZEBRA profile should now be completely filled in with your own information. Each attribute should be accompanied by descriptions of your ZEBRA and your Anti-ZEBRA. You are now ready to use the ZEBRA to qualify new prospects. When you encounter a new prospect, think of how they fit into the first two attributes like we discussed. Make your qualification based on strong evidence there is an organizational and operational fit. To qualify the deal, ensuring the first two attributes are green (scored as a 3 or a 4) before you engage other company resources. If the first two attributes are green it's time to pursue Power. When you meet Power, make sure that if value is proven, Power will buy!



After meeting Power, score the other 4 attributes, funding, ROI, technology and service.

### Total Score



If the total Zebra score, after meeting Power is still in the red (0 – 16), pursue another prospect. If the score is yellow (17 – 22), identify the red and yellow scores and turn them green by closing the holes in your deal. When you have a zebra that is green (23 – 28) you can be confident you will close that business 90% of the time!

Your entire organization is now ready to pursue ZEBRAS!

Thanks for reading.

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