

Quocirca's Changing Channels – It's The Finance Director who is the Real Deal Killer

By Bob Tarzey, Service Director, Quocirca Ltd

The fact that most businesses value IT, as shown in a recent Quocirca survey, will not come as a surprise to many. For many it is considered an integral part of their operations. So, neither is it surprising that businesses take major IT investment decisions pretty seriously as well.

This has always been the challenge for those charged with the task of selling IT, be they the representatives of vendors or the sales staff of resellers. All too often the sales effort gets bogged down in the IT department, where time can be wasted on unwinnable deals that will not go ahead because of decisions being made elsewhere.

The most likely place that those deal killing decisions will be made is in the finance department, and finance directors (FD) are more likely to have the decisive say in prioritising IT spend than their counterparts in IT or even managing directors.

At the back of their minds most salespeople probably know this, but getting access to FDs, to qualify and hopefully help close deals is not easy and, when and if you do, you may not have long to make a good impression. It would surely help if the FDs had a favourable view of your company and its products and services before you speak with them.

Well, there is some good news here. Financial managers in general consider that it is important for them to keep up to speed with technology developments. The source of information they rely on most is communicating with their colleagues and peers in other organisations. But if they are asking their friends down at the pub what they think of a particular vendor or reseller, the friend must have got their information from somewhere.

Financial managers, it turns out, are surprisingly interested in IT, making good use of information sources such as IT trade shows. Many consider the IT press as a better source of information than the daily papers;

although most financial managers do read a daily paper three or four times a week, considering them to have some use as a source of information about IT issues. The Sunday papers are not so highly regarded.

Managers across all industries rely more on the online media to read their favourite publications than they do on the print media. That is all except public sector managers who still seem to find plenty of time to put their feet up and read traditional print media.

Online access to information is critical to all management for keeping up to speed with IT, not least financial managers. Internet news sites and search engines are considered useful by most of them and, when it comes to search engines, one predominates as a starting point for their searches – Google.

If an FD has a good impression of your organisation and has the budget to spend they can say the magic "yes" and give a go-ahead to your sale. That "yes" is critical and work has to be done to get to it. But there are many other parties to be influenced en route. These may not be able to give that final approval but they can, to varying degrees, scupper your chances by saying "no" at some point during the sales process.

To avoid this, sales teams often put in a huge amount of effort doing the ground work for their proposals; demonstrating the technical capability of the product to the IT staff, ensuring that line of business requirements can be met, and that the user interface is actually acceptable to end users. But all this can be to no avail if the money is not there or the finance department was never going to approve your company as a suitable supplier in the first place.

About Quocirca

Quocirca is one of Europe's leading independent industry analyst firms. One of its biggest assets is the core team of highly experienced analysts drawn from both the corporate and the vendor communities. This team prides itself on maintaining a bigger picture view of what's going on in the IT and communications marketplaces. This allows all of Quocirca's activities to be carried out in the context of the real world and avoids distractions with fads, fashions and the nuts and bolts of specific technologies. Quocirca's focus has always been the point of intersection at which IT meets "the business".

Quocirca Services

The insight and experience that comes from working as an industry analyst as well as a practitioner allows the Quocirca team to contribute significantly to IT Vendors, Service Providers and Corporate clients. To this end, it provides a range of consulting and advisory services. Details of these, along with some of Quocirca's latest analysis, may be obtained by visiting <http://www.quocirca.com>

Quocirca also provides bespoke primary research services through its daughter company QNB Intelligence. This involves interviewing thousands of senior decision makers on a quarterly basis.