

# Do You Know What Corporations Expect from Vendors in the IT Space?

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If you are an inside sales representative selling in the IT space, Corporate Executives and IT Directors have five expectations before selecting a vendor according to a joint research project done by HP Target Marketing and Kenan and Flagler. Because inside sales reps are often the first point of contact, it is important that they examine how well they score on each of these issues to avoid missing an opportunity,

1. **Understanding of my business goals and objectives.**

The mistake that many inside sales reps make is to initiate calls before doing their homework. While it takes time to research a company and decipher corporate objectives, the effort is worth the trouble. A lot of information is available from sources such as Factiva or Hoovers, not to mention the client's own web site and their 10K if they are a publicly held company. Additionally, the rep's own company may offer other internet resources. If the company is privately held, there are industry reports available that can suggest hot button issues for maintaining a competitive edge.

While an inside sales rep can never be 100% sure of a company's problems when cold calling without asking questions and verifying what you have uncovered, clients will appreciate and notice your knowledge level in your opening statement or value proposition. If they like what you have said initially, they will continue to listen and make an appointment to talk to an account manager.

2. **Knowledge of company's products.**

Clients also need to feel inside reps have a comfort level with their organization's products, at least on a macro scale. The client's web site often allows individual's to download their catalogue of products. Again, be-

fore placing a call, the rep needs to do research so that they can tie their potential solution to the company's problem.

3. **Ability to marshal resources.**

Buyers want to feel you have the horsepower behind you to deliver on your promises. They want ease of implementation and quick fixes. While Buyers expect there will be issues, they judge you on your ability to deal with those issues. If you are with an organization that can deploy many teams, it is certainly a selling point and should be emphasized up-front. Conversely, if your company is stretched thin, it will be noticed, and you will be at risk for not delivering in a timely fashion. Reps should always expect questions about availability of resources and have examples of deployments in the same vertical that have gone smoothly.

4. **Responsiveness to requests.**

Whether a client calls with a problem or tries to access help on-line, they want their issues resolved quickly since down time on their server can cost millions of dollars in revenue. They will also notice when the help desk people are NOT knowledgeable and confident and when trouble shooting via your web site is NOT easy. Actions speak louder than words. It behooves the rep to cite specific examples of responsiveness to a client's needs. Additionally, when there is trouble, clients want a single point of contact. If the inside sales rep can be their point person, they will appreciate it.

5. **Willingness to be held accountable.**

When things go wrong, the expectation is that rep and the organization will take ownership, apologize and then make sure the issue does not continue to happen. The client will notice if a rep or an engineer tries to dance around an issue. At a bare minimum, the client clearly needs to know when something has happened and how and when the issues will

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be resolved. The inside sales rep, as a point person, always needs to be in the loop

Inside sales reps are a valuable part of any sales organization. They are often the first point of contact. If they can demonstrate from the get-go that they understand the potential client's business goals and objectives, know the company's product line, can give examples of how they can marshal resources and be responsive and also show they are willing to be held accountable, they will greatly increase the chance of closing business in the IT space.

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