



## **The role of sales managers in opportunity qualification**

Held on Thursday 18 April 2024, 9am.

### **Panel:**

Bob Apollo (chair),	Inflexion-Point
Chris Capon,	Westfield Health
Ian Moyse,	Aztech IT
Mark Erskine,	Seller Performance
Magnus Christoffersen,	Yara
Virginia Ainscough,	Lanvin Services
Guy Lloyd (host)	ISP

### **Key Observations:**

- 56% of qualified opportunities end in “no decision” (The Jolt Effect, 2022) – how much of this is down to poor qualification?
- Qualification is as much about what gets qualified out as what gets qualified in.
- Using a percentage of sales cycle completed to forecast probability of closing, can be very misleading.
- Qualification is the result of good questioning to establish if value can be delivered.
- A clear Ideal Customer Profile is important for effective qualification.
- Qualification skills and effectiveness is a differentiator between good sales organisations and less effective ones.
- The complexity of the sale increases the difficulty of good qualification work.
- Good sellers understand the value of their time and direct it carefully – the quality of their pipelines is usually significantly higher than the average; although the “total size” might be less than average – they close more.
- Evidence is critical to qualifying opportunities.
- Managers need to establish consistency in how opportunities are qualified to improve forecasts and close rates.
- Qualification is a continuous activity, rather than a sales stage to get through.
- Pipeline coverage multipliers are a blunt tool and can drive unhelpful behaviour.
- Opportunities that drift are probably poorly qualified - it takes longer to lose an opportunity than to win it. (When do we declare it dead?)

### **Conclusions:**

Sales managers need to encourage critical thinking when qualifying opportunities. Better qualification activities are likely to result in a smaller pipeline (coverage ratios), but better win rates and increased overall business results.

Sales managers who challenge why opportunities are in the pipeline - challenge the qualification - will help their salespeople to sell more.

### **Questions explored:**

- How can sales managers establish a regime that ensures every salesperson qualifies every opportunity to a high standard?
- How to ensure salespeople take accountability for the forecasts and pipeline quality?