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Peter Bourke of The Complex Sale Discusses the Three Biggest Pitfalls of Sales and Business Development in **Consultants News**

ATLANTA (August 26, 2005) – Peter Bourke, principal of the sales methodology and consulting firm, The Complex Sale, was featured in *Consultants News* describing the biggest pitfalls of sales and business development that he has experienced over the past 20 years working with global professional services firms such as IBM and Andersen Consulting (now Accenture.)

Pitfall #1: Client Segmentation.

All clients and prospects are not created equally. Often, there is no strategy in place to distinguish between clients (or between clients and prospects, for that matter). Additionally, some firms suffer from “opportunistic” distractions which are echoed by sentiments like, “We never met a prospect we didn’t like.” This often means that the firm rarely meets an opportunity it doesn’t pursue, regardless of whether or not the prospect is qualified. Those firms that do successfully segment their accounts often lack the discipline to sustain a long-term commitment to their most strategic clients with a resolve to be successful. Short-term quarterly earnings pressure often trumps the long-term commitment and tempts them to redeploy resources optimistically at the expense of strategy.

The Solution: A proactive, well-developed and clearly communicated client segmentation strategy.

- Identify 3-5 key segments (strategic, emerging, target and legacy, for ex.) and define key criteria for each.
- Develop the structure for how you will serve these clients including the resources you will deploy and plans and priorities for each.
- Ensure that the organization’s behavior, resource allocation and opportunity pursuits are consistent with your segmentation strategy.

Pitfall #2: Account Management.

According to Bourke, one of the biggest problems companies face is weak account management and planning, which ultimately leads to client churn, poor penetration of accounts, and lack of sales predictability. Firms tend to focus on the short-term, spending too many resources on opportunistic pursuits and not enough on more strategic accounts. Compensation plans are often structured so that the biggest rewards go to those with the

greatest amount of business developed and delivered in the shortest timeframe, which is not always in synch with long-term relationship investments. Turnover of key account managers undermines client relationships, and the vast majority of business development time is spent reacting to demand rather than creating it.

The Solution: An efficient, well defined account management and planning process.

- Commit leadership to invest and focus on selected relationships.
- Develop C-level relationships early. The hardest and least genuine time to create these relationships is in the middle of the sales process.
- Document and communicate the value your firm is delivering. If you don't, the client won't either.

Pitfall #3: Opportunity Assessment.

All opportunities are not created equal. Many organizations pursue any and all opportunities. Qualifying opportunities is seen as a one-time event – at the beginning of the sales cycle. This is like a poker player playing seven card stud and only deciding once – when he sees the first three cards dealt – whether or not to proceed with the betting from then on. Additionally, many firms underestimate the true business development cost of a new opportunity.

“The last four major consulting/professional services firms I have worked with in the recent past have universally had little, or in some cases, no widely accepted and implemented opportunity qualification criteria established,” says Burke. “You might be surprised at the number of deal coaching engagements we get involved with where we find out at the end of the pursuit that the client had no logical reason to spend hundreds of man hours and tens of thousands of dollars pursuing the business. They had no reasonable opportunity to win.”

The Solution: Establish well-tested, well- documented and well-understood criteria for qualification that gives the organization permission to say, “no.”

- Plan and measure business development resources based on opportunity cost, not payroll and hard costs.
- Don't treat all opportunities equally. Don't waste resources on long shots.
- Qualify opportunities continuously. If you can't win, spend your resources somewhere else.

About The Complex Sale, Inc.

The Complex Sale, Inc. is a sales methodology and consulting company that helps you win the sales you can't afford to lose – from speeches and tools to training and coaching to total sales force transformation. TCS helps you create pipeline, win opportunities, and dominate accounts in the complex selling environment. Founded in 1992 by Rick Page, author of the sales bestseller *Hope Is Not A Strategy – The 6 Keys to Winning The Complex Sale*, TCS programs are taught by executives who know the environment firsthand. We provide the skills and processes to Make Winning A Habit in your organization. For more information, call (770) 360-9299 or visit us online at www.complexsale.com.