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How VARs can secure sales

Despite the undoubted importance of IT security today, sales are not as easy to land as some might think, writes **David Freedman**

At first glance, it ought to be easier than ever to sell IT security, data compliance and business continuity systems.

After all, as a reseller you hold the key to protecting against such very real headaches as web-based attacks, catastrophic data loss and identity verification. So not only should end-users be queuing up to talk to you but, more importantly, conversion rates ought to be at record levels.

Yet for many VARs this impeccable theory doesn't seem to be working out quite as well in practice. In an area of such acute sensitivity as IT security, full client buy-in is even more important. Keeping your customer with you every step of the way throughout the buying process is essential. Which in simple sales terms means 'doing the basics well'.

So where do resellers go wrong? First, it is all too easy to leap into the functionality and technical detail of



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your solution on the assumption that your customer thinks the same as you.

Continuing to talk to your usual technical contacts, rather than seeking out those in the client organisation who are most likely to make the buying decision, can also have an adverse effect.

And finally, fully confident of the technical merits of your own solution, it is all too easy to fail to make a persuasive case against the competition.

The key to success, by contrast, is to make sure your customer understands the corporate and personal consequences of inaction or the wrong action, while at the same time show-

ing them the benefits of making the right choice.

Any complex security sale is likely to involve a number of decision-makers within the client organisation. Understand who they are: then have the skills and strategy in place to move them towards your proposition as the most appropriate solution.

Because you aren't the only 'white knight' out there, it is vital to move them towards a buying decision faster than your competitors can.

Never make the assumption that, simply because you understand how important IT security issues are, your customers also do. After all, for many, just staying afloat in tough, competitive markets takes up all of their working day.

Here, more than ever, taking your customer through a disciplined and structured sales process — which begins with identifying and agreeing their real concerns and needs — is critical. After all, if the customer isn't with you at the start of the process, any chances of closing a successful sale are already dead in the water. **CRN**

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