

Win/Loss Analysis: What You Need to Know to Succeed

Why It's Necessary

Understanding the needs, desires, and decision-making considerations of customers in the business-to-business (B2B) world is different from in a business-to-consumer (B2C) environment. A B2C vendor can survey customers or observe specific behaviors about how consumers interact with their offerings. In addition, online reviews and social media comments give vendors strong indications of what consumers think about their products and why customers prefer one product or service over another.

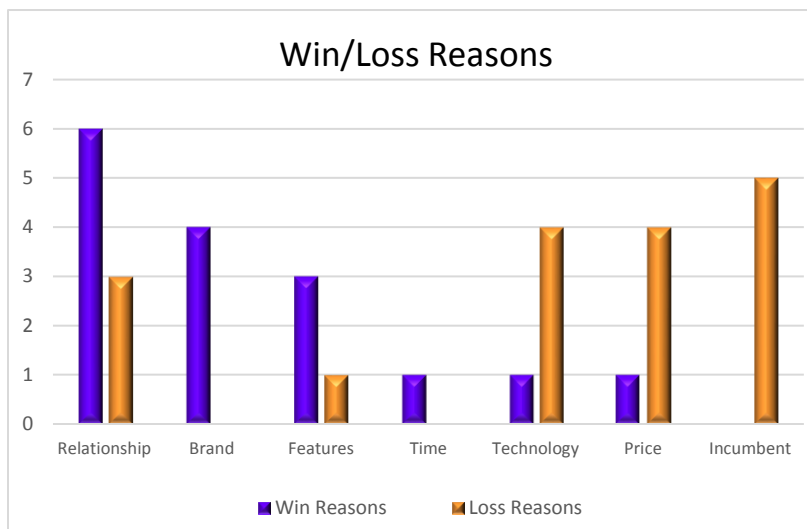
B2C vendors also know where they stand in comparison to competitors regarding pricing.

In a B2B setting, everything is a lot murkier. Customers aren't likely to comment about which B2B products and services they use—let alone which ones they like and why—because publicizing that information could impact their own company's competitive edge. Decision-making criteria and processes vary from company to company so it's hard for B2B vendors to know if a business is buying their solution because of the relationship they have cultivated over time or if it's due to price, features or functionality, or some other factor. In fact, it's often hard for B2B vendors to know if they're even speaking to an actual decision-maker. Finally, since B2B prices and sales tactics aren't well known, it's hard for B2B vendors to know how they compare to competitors.

So if you're a B2B vendor, how do you learn what the marketplace thinks about your products and services? How do you anticipate what customers and prospects will need in the future? Do you know what they value most now? What do customers think of your offerings, employees and partners? How do you

compare to the competition? The answer is win/loss analysis.

Win/loss analysis involves in-depth interviews with your customers (wins) and lost prospects to learn exactly the kinds of information you need to know.



Win and loss reasons may differ by competitor, price range, territory, etc.

Goals and Objectives

- **Learn more about your customers and prospects.** Learn about current needs, future plans, how vendors are identified, decision-making criteria, the evaluation process and more.
- **Understand how your company is perceived.** Which area of your company needs improvement in the eyes of the marketplace: your products? The sales force? Customer service? Technical support? Marketing?
- **Identify product/service strengths and weaknesses.** Where is your offering strong and weak? What features and functions should be added or emphasized?
- **Analyze how others compare your offerings to the competition.** Which other vendors were considered? Are certain vendors considered stronger for a product feature? How do compare to your competitors in terms of price?

How It's Done

- **Preparation phase.**
 - We will discuss the specific kinds of information you want to learn. We encourage participation and buy-in from various stakeholders in your organization.
 - You will need to prepare lists with the names, emails and phone numbers of all customers and prospects who should be contacted. The more accurate this information is, the better the potential response rate.
 - While you are preparing the contact lists, we can prepare, for your approval, emails (to be sent to the prospective interviewees) and a discussion guide (interview questions to be asked during the actual interviews).
 - Emails will be sent (either by yourself or us) to the prospective interviewees explaining why they will be contacted and asking for their participation.
- **Interview phase.** We will contact the persons on your list to schedule and conduct the interviews. This phase usually takes a few weeks as it is based on the interviewees' availability. We will keep you abreast of progress on a regular basis.
- **Analysis phase.** When the interviews are completed the analysis begins. Trends are analyzed, charts and tables are prepared and summaries are drafted. Initial findings can be informally relayed to you at this time. This phase also takes a few weeks to complete.
- **Delivery phase.** An electronic copy of the report will be made available to you. Based on your preference, the results can be reviewed in person or by phone. You will have the opportunity to ask questions about the process.

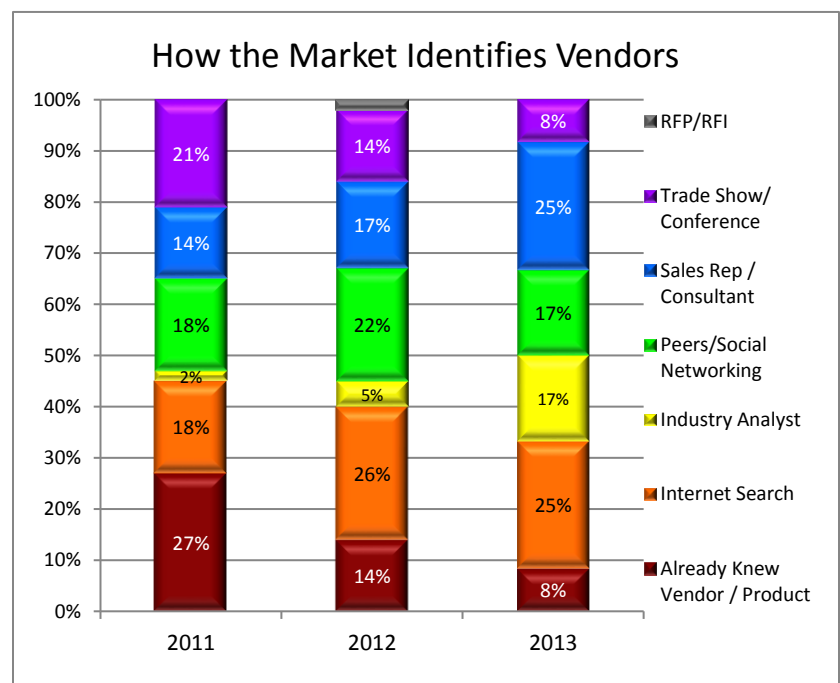
Results

Insight ... and lots of it: both strategic and tactical. You'll receive a report from companies that actually

bought or considered your products and services—not just comments from people who hypothetically considered it (as in a focus group). You simply wouldn't be able to get this information in any other way.

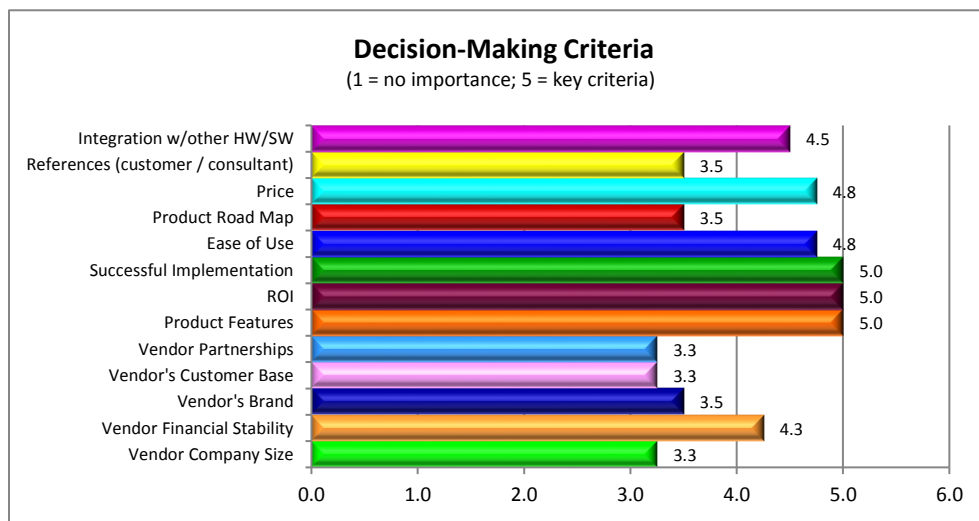
You'll receive:

- **Marketplace insights.** You'll better understand how your customers and prospects make decisions and how they expect their future needs to be changing.
- **Product direction.** You'll have input on what to add or how to change your current offerings and how to plan future offerings that will meet marketplace needs.
- **Marketing strategy.** You won't get better guidance from anyone else about where and how to promote your offerings and how your messages are perceived.
- **Sales strategy.** You will be able to determine how sales are won and lost and what tactics seem to be most (or least) effective.



If win/loss is conducted regularly, you can identify trends easily.

The **actual report** will contain: an executive summary, description of methodology, analysis (including tables and charts), and some (optionally all) verbatim comments from interviewees.



If you know what matters most to customers, you'll know what to emphasize

Conducting the win/loss analysis reflects well on the sponsoring company by showing that you are interested in listening and learning to better meet marketplace needs and desires.

Frequently Asked Questions

▪ **Q: Why would my contacts agree to talk to the interviewer?**

A: Many business people want their voices to be heard and are happy to have the opportunity to tell someone what they think—positive or negative. Additionally, some (but not all) companies sponsoring the analysis offer an incentive (e.g., a gift card or donation to a charity) to encourage prospective interviewees to talk.

▪ **Q: What kind of response rate do you get?**

A: It depends on a few factors: the accuracy of the contact list, interviewees' availability (especially if during seasonably difficult periods), perhaps if an incentive is offered, etc. Some sponsoring companies specify a certain number of contacts who must be reached and others want as many persons to be interviewed as are willing to talk.

▪ **Q: Will interviewees know that my company is sponsoring the analysis?**

A: This isn't mandatory but it is recommended.

▪ **Q: Will I learn who you spoke to and how/why decisions were made in specific companies?**

A: It's possible but not recommended.

Interviewees are most candid when they are promised anonymity and know there won't be any kind of repercussions from their speaking honestly. This means sponsoring companies will not be able to identify who said what: you will not know which individuals agreed to talk nor which companies participated.

▪ **Q: I already talk to my sales people (who debrief the customers) when important deals close. Isn't that sufficient?**

A: In all likelihood, no. Some customers and prospects may give real reasons why they made their purchase decisions, but not all will—especially if the reason was because of the salesperson. Even if sales were to get an honest answer that was critical of themselves, they wouldn't have a lot of incentive to pass that on. Additionally, sales people generally don't have the time to conduct in-depth interviews and document all responses, nor do they necessarily have the expertise to identify themes and trends for the betterment of the whole organization.