

How to Establish a Critical Event

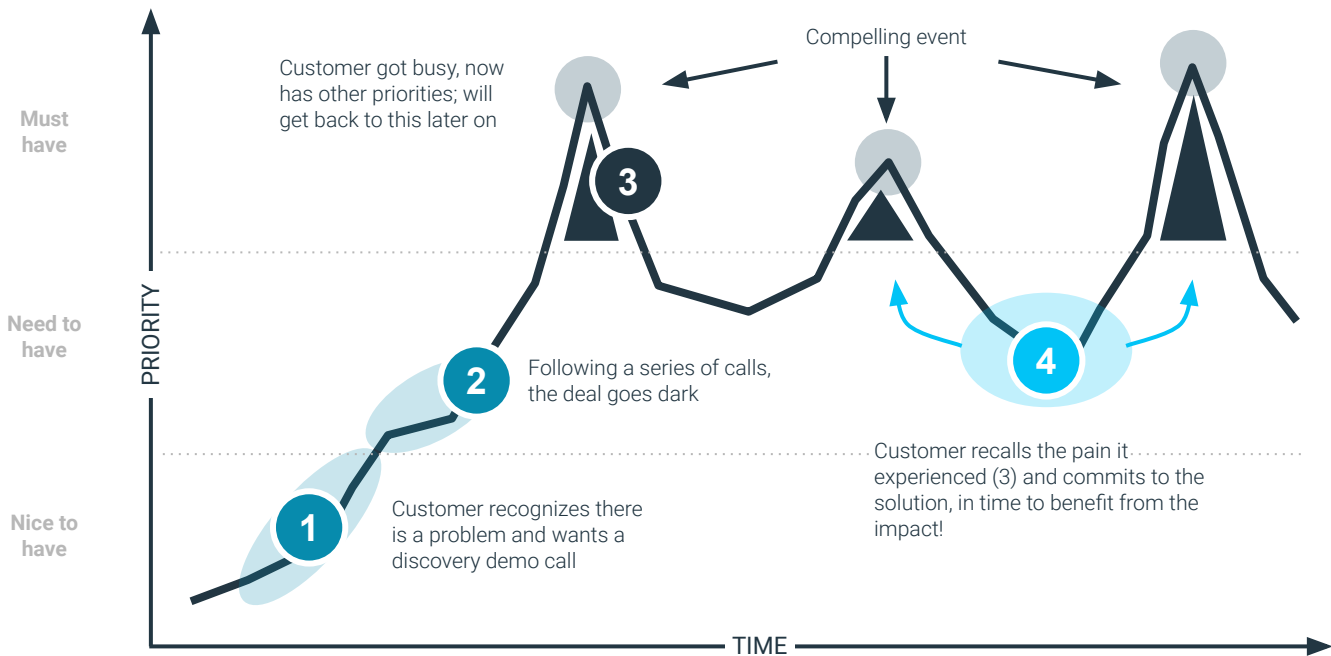


Figure 1: Priority of a critical event varies over time

A “critical event” is an event that is so important that it drives a prospect to make a decision. Otherwise, they will experience negative consequences.

In Figure 1 above, you’ll notice that over time, the priority of a solution increases from a nice-to-have to a need-to-have, and at one point, it even becomes a must-have. As you sell, you need to determine where your prospect is in this picture. As priority decreases, a prospect may go dark, leading you to believe that “the budget is spent.” What you don’t realize is that conditions may have changed in your favor, and priority will increase again.

Critical events can fluctuate over time and change as the experience of the buyer changes. In Figure 1, you can see four different kinds of critical events. As a seller, you need to know which kind of critical event you’re dealing with.

In Situation 1 shown in Figure 1, the buyer may anticipate they need a solution in late Q2. As an inexperienced buyer, they underestimate the severity of their problem, and toward the end of Q2, they miss the window for purchasing a solution and solving that problem. The deal goes dark; this is where many sellers would think the deal is lost. However, the buyer simply found other projects to be of higher priority. In Q4, they suddenly come back. Now they're an experienced buyer; they have experienced the pain point again and want to get it resolved once and for all. This leads you to Situation 4, the most critical event of all, when the buyer is firmly ready for a solution.

Critical Moment	What You Can Do
Buyer has not experienced the problem before. Would like to solve it. Often a "hurry up and wait" process.	Educate the buyer using third-party references and content.
Buyer realizes the severity of the problem and wants a solution in place. Needs everything "by tomorrow."	Assist the buyer through the trade-off process.
Buyer realizes they underestimated the project. Misses the deadline. Goes "dark."	Distance yourself. Maybe even a NO BID.
Buyer had the problem again. Wants a solution. They are a responsive and educated buyer.	HOT Lead. Assist the buyer.

► Critical Event Date

The key is to establish early on what the critical event is.

- The first question to ask is, *"When do you need this solution in place?"*
- Follow it up with *"...and what happens if you miss that date?"*
This simple question will let you know if the event is "compelling" or "critical."
- After the prospect shares the critical event and the consequences of missing it, you can ask, *"If you need to have this live by {date} to get {impact} or otherwise face {consequence}... how can we help you avoid that?"*

You can now work your way back from that date and start peeling the onion.

► Critical Event Timeline¹

A critical event is like the end result of a recipe when you cook a delicious meal. In order to achieve your desired outcome, the recipe will tell you what to do and in what order. Similarly, following the identification of a critical event, you must uncover the recipe required to get you there – in other words, you must confirm all of the steps (and hurdles) in the decision process.

Seller-Centric Timeline



vs.

Customer-Centric Timeline



Figure 2. In a customer-centric timeline, the critical event is that of the buyer, NOT the seller

Instead of determining when you need the PO from the prospect, start with the prospect's needs in mind. When does the prospect need the desired value? Find that date, then work your way back.

For example, if the prospect has a sales kick-off on July 7th, they need your new sales acceleration solution for their team in place by the end of June. Otherwise, they will miss their critical event and experience negative consequences.

¹To learn more about this, we recommend you read Trust Triangle Selling by Daniel Adams.

Important

Once a critical event timeline has been created together with the prospect, you **MUST** immediately confirm this in an email; do this in a new email thread. This allows you to help your coach later on.

Critical Event Timeline Confirmation Email

A critical event timeline is a brief, stand-alone email that talks solely about the critical event. This cannot be part of a long email with multiple action items. Below is an example.

Subject: SKO July 15 / PO May 29 / Decision May 8

Dear Mary,

Thank you for taking the time today to talk. To have us hit your July 15th Sales Kick-Off, we need to get the proposal memorialized by May 29th. Based on your purchasing process, I put the following timeline together to hit that date:

- July 15 – Your Sales Kick-off
- July 2 – Integration and Staff Training
- June 1 – Request for Web Developer
- May 29 – Process Purchase Order to Hit Monthly Cycle
- May 15 – Legal Review of SLA Agreement
- May 8 – The project team concludes <our company> offers the right solution

Did I capture this correctly?

With kind regards,
Mark

► Relationship Between Critical Event and Value

As depicted below, there's a direct relationship between the critical event and value. As a buyer, the proposed value of a solution makes you want it in place before your critical event. And the fact that you have an upcoming critical event where you could apply that solution to avoid potential pain makes it all the more valuable to you. They go together like salt and pepper.

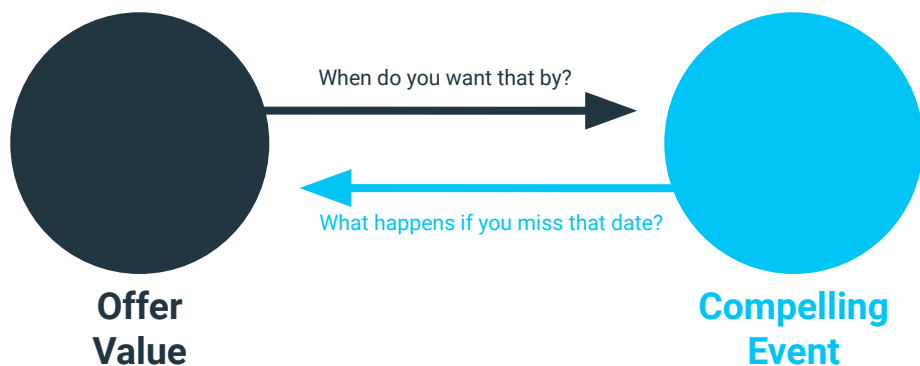


Figure 3. Correlation between the critical event and the value of your solution

TIP: If you can impact a prospect's business by providing value, they will make it a priority and create a budget for it – unless there is a specific reason they cannot take on this project right now. Perhaps they are currently retooling a part of their IT infrastructure, or a key stakeholder is out on leave. If so, it may be helpful to ask the prospect if there is any reason why they could NOT implement a solution in the next ninety days.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES FROM



Videos available on
[the WbD YouTube Channel](#)



Additional open source
templates can be accessed at
www.thescienceofrevenue.com