



## Eliminate the Plague of Stalled Opportunities

By *Jeffrie Story*  
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You may have a plague in your office. Eliminate it!

It's called Stalled Opportunities and it drags out your sales cycles. It's silent but costly. With two simple steps, you can activate those sales opportunities and shorten your sales cycles immediately.

But first, what is a stalled opportunity? Is it a new prospective sale that is dragging out for some reason? Is it a slippery prospect who seems interested but won't return calls? At what precise point do you determine that an opportunity is stalled?

A stalled opportunity is one in which your rep doesn't have a *meaningful* next visit that is also scheduled on your *prospect's calendar*. If it's not on your prospect's calendar, the visit doesn't count. Dropping off doughnuts doesn't count as a meaningful visit, by the way.

This sounds easy, doesn't it? Actually, it's quite profound. Longer sales cycles inherently add risk to your opportunities. More competitors can enter the scene and prospects can lose momentum or get overwhelmed by their own crises and fire fighting. Your sale can hit the prospect's back burner with the speed of lightning while your reps are still in the office putting out their own fires, oblivious to the risks.

How often do your salespeople leave an appointment with only a vague future timeframe? They say, "He said to call back in two weeks" or, "I'm writing a proposal and then we'll set up an appointment." These situations automatically create stalled opportunities!

Have you ever had difficulty reaching someone? How far out is a decision-maker's schedule booked? Without a next planned appointment, your sales process is put on hold, or delayed, and your prospective sale is jeopardized. Remember, longer sales cycles add risk.

Reps in some markets may swear that their current accounts and prospects refuse to set appointments. While this may be valid in some instances, is there room for improvement?

Probably. A scheduled appointment can even be “Tuesday morning” as long as the prospect is committed to it. Every ounce of scheduling can save wasted time in the field, as well as drive faster sales.

With this understanding you can coach your reps to take two simple steps, which I promised earlier. First, have reps make a next appointment before they leave every single sales call — unless, of course, the account has no potential for your products.

Second, have reps determine — with the prospect — the agenda or purpose for the next meeting. This step is done the same time as the first. When we have a commitment, we drive ourselves to meet it. It also measures the prospect’s interest. If the prospect subsequently cancels without re-establishing the meeting, it’s a signal!

You, as managers and executives, can reinforce this concept. Whenever you discuss an account, ask the rep when the next meeting is scheduled. If there isn’t one, it’s a stalled opportunity. Another signal! It’s time for the salesperson to get on the phone and schedule an appointment, or your probability of closing this particular sale has just been lowered.

With the nasty Stalled Opportunities Plague out of your sales team, revenue flows faster toward a helpful part of your life: your bank account!

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Jeffrie Story is President of Unleash Your Sales DNA®. She helps newspapers drive new business through behavioral change. She combines scientific tools with her sales background and passion for personal transformation. For information, contact Jeffrie at 877-378-5580 or [Jeffrie@UnleashYourSalesDNA.com](mailto:Jeffrie@UnleashYourSalesDNA.com).