

Selling to Procurement: 7 Mistakes That Are Costing You the Deal

Deadly Mistake #3: Pitching Too Late



Introduction: If You're Waiting for the RFP, You're Already Losing

Welcome to Part 3 of our 7-part series, “**Selling to Procurement: The 7 Deadly Mistakes That Sales Makes.**”

If you've been following along, you already know we've covered two of the most common ways Sales teams get in their own way:

- **Mistake #1: Treating Procurement Like a Roadblock**
- **Mistake #2: Making It Hard to Do Business with You**

Today we're tackling a mistake that's less about what you say—and more about *when* you show up.

Here's the hard truth:

If you wait for the RFP to land before engaging with Procurement, you're not just late—you're locked out.

Because by that point, the scope, budget, and even the shortlist may already be set. And all you're left with is a chance to fill in someone else's blanks.

The best Sales teams don't play that game.

They shape the conversation early—when there's still room to influence the outcome.

Let's dive in.

Mistake #3: Pitching Too Late

The Reality:

If you're waiting for the RFP to show up before engaging with Procurement, you're not just late—you've locked yourself out of the most important part of the process.

Because by the time an RFP is issued, much of the decision has already been made.

- The **problem has been defined**
- The **budget has been scoped**
- The **selection criteria are weighted**
- The **risks have been mapped**
- And Procurement already has a shortlist of suppliers who helped shape all the above

If you weren't one of them, you're now playing someone else's game, on someone else's field, by someone else's rules.

And the best you can do?

Fill in the blanks, follow the structure, and hope your proposal stands out in a crowd of fully compliant responses.

That's not selling—that's submitting.

And it's how you lose even when your solution is stronger than the competition.

What Getting in Early Actually Buys You

When you engage Procurement early—during the sensing, planning, or RFI stage—you gain advantages that are impossible to recover later:

- **Educate the buyer.**

Help Procurement understand what's possible in the market. Introduce differentiators they may not have considered. Expand their view of what a good outcome could look like.

- **Counter the competition's narrative.**

If you're not in the room early, someone else is shaping the problem in their language. Early access lets you frame the conversation, not just react to it.

- **Understand their true objectives.**

Procurement might be optimizing for total cost, long-term scalability, compliance, or even internal politics. If you understand their drivers early, you can position accordingly.

- **Help shape the RFI or RFP.**

This is critical. Vendors who consult early can subtly influence what gets included—and excluded—in the formal process. This isn't manipulation. It's **solution design**.

- **Gain insight into selection criteria.**

What will Procurement score most heavily? Which risks will carry the most weight? What internal resistance are they bracing for? That's intel you can use to tailor your message.

The Fix:

Stop waiting for the RFP to dictate the terms. Start operating like a strategic advisor.

- Treat RFIs as serious buying signals—not fishing expeditions
- Cultivate relationships with Procurement before the deal exists
- Be a source of market intelligence, benchmarks, and innovation
- Equip Procurement with the internal language they need to justify your solution

This isn't about “getting in early to close fast.”

It's about **earning influence** while the deal is still being shaped.

The companies that win consistently are the ones who show up early, add value early, and position strategically—before the paper hits the street.

Conclusion: The Real Sale Happens Before the Sale

By the time an RFP hits your inbox, you're either positioned—or you're boxed out.

The sales teams that consistently win in Procurement-led environments are the ones who don't wait for permission to add value. They show up early. They educate. They influence. They shape.

If you're serious about winning more deals, it's time to stop reacting to RFPs and start operating like a strategic advisor before they're even drafted.

In the next article, we'll break down **Deadly Mistake #4: Flying Blind on the Scorecard**.

Because even if you get in early and make it to the proposal stage, you can still lose—badly—if you don't know how you're being scored. We'll show you how to uncover the criteria, reverse-engineer your response, and compete with precision.

Want to take the next step?

Visit www.convergspt.com to learn how *Cracking the Procurement Code* can equip your team to engage smarter, sell more effectively, and become the supplier Procurement champions—not just selects.