

3 Deal Risks That Kill Pipeline (and How to Spot & Fix Them)



Attention



Most reps think deals die at the finish line.

In reality, you lose deals when you can't sniff out risk early in a sales process.

There are 3 common deal-killing risks in sales:

- (1) Nice-to-Have Risk: Reps go through multiple rounds of negotiations only to lose the deal to no-decision at the end.
- (2) Timeline Risk: Reps think "I like the demo" means "I'm going to sign at the end of the month".
- (3) Power Risk: Reps trust mid level champions will be able to get the deal done internally, when they really have no power.

President's club reps and managers don't ignore these red flags.

They identify nice-to-have, timeline, and power risk early instead of trying to save the deal when the prospect walks away.

So today we'll review how to spot and fix risk across these three areas:

- (1) Nice-to-Have Risk
- (2) Timeline Risk
- (3) Power Risk

And along the way, we'll show you how Attention helps you spot deal risk early in the cycle—highlighting vague timelines, single-threaded deals, and lukewarm commitments from your prospects—without asking reps or managers to add another field, checkbox, or note in your CRM.

Nice-to-Have Risk

After weeks of selling, you finally get to proposal and you think you're close.

Instead, the client reviews the proposal and tells you that it's not the right time to move forward. You didn't find a real problem in discovery but they were willing to continue to take demos and learn more about pricing.

That's why you need to run a nice-to-have risk check on every deal.

- 🛑 No Pain: → Prospect doesn't acknowledge a meaningful problem (surface level at best).
- 🟡 Pain: → Prospect experiences an annoyance, but it might not be worth solving.
- 🟡 Problem: → Prospect agrees the challenge is real and costly, but it might not be the top priority against other problems.
- 🟢 Initiative: → The challenge is tied directly to a top business priority. Prospect signals intent to solve it, and your solution is positioned as the path forward.

Sitting in the red? Here's the play at the end of your first call to confirm you're not just a nice to have:

Run the 5 Minute Drill at the end of your discovery call

At the end of every discovery call, ask 3 questions to determine if a next step is even worth it and if so, what it should be:

- Do you wanna buy (confirms a real problem)
- When do you wanna buy (confirms timeline)
- How do you buy (confirms process to get power involved)

Now you don't *literally* ask those 3 questions like that.

Here's how to ask the first question that tests for if the deal is a nice-to-have:

"Before we talk next steps, we're both gonna invest a good amount of time here together. That might mean pulling in both of our technical teams for a demo or partnering on a business case to your CFO if the next call goes well.

[Pressure Test]

So my question is, knowing what you know today, is it worth continuing to invest more time together?"

They basically just confirmed that their problem is big enough to solve and they see you as a viable solution.

Attention's Super Agent flags when you're stuck as a "nice-to-have"

Most reps lose deals at the finish line because they fail to tie their prospect's problems to a real business priority. Attention's Super Agent listens across calls and flags vague, low-stakes pain before it kills the deal.

✅ **Spot vague pain language early** — Get alerted when prospects admit challenges but keep them non business impacting.

✅ **Catch low quality next step setting** — Get nudges when AEs aren't confirming the prospect's problem is big enough to continue the evaluation.

✅ **Help managers coach on business impact** — Managers get real call snippets showing where reps failed to push from pain → problem → initiative.

Timeline Risk

Nothing kills a deal faster than a shaky timeline that isn't tied to a real business driver or project.

You can lose a deal because a prospect wants to buy your solution at some point, but other things are more important right now.

So here's how to assess your timeline's risk from red to green:

- 🛑 No timeline: → Prospect is vague ("later this year," "once budget frees up").
- 🟡 Soft timeline: → Dates mentioned but no real driver (e.g. budget cycle, project deadline).
- 🟡 Clear timeline: → One strong driver locked in.
- 🟢 Double-locked timeline: → Two+ drivers identified and tracked in a MAP.

Still don't have a timeline with real drivers? Here are the plays to move from red to green:

Step 1: Ask Question 2 in The 5-Minute Drill (Question 2: When do you wanna buy?)

Use question 2 to find timeline. If they gave you a lever earlier, like a product launch date, resurface it. If not, suggest 2–3 common drivers. Here's what it sounds like:

"Typically when teams solve this, it's tied to [deadlines 1, 2, 3]. Given that, when's the latest you'd want this in place?"

Finding a problem isn't enough—they need a reason to act now.

Step 2: Ask Question 3 in The 5-Minute Drill (How do you wanna buy?)

Talk them through a high level walk-back plan that includes the following:

- Their go-live date
- Implementation time
- Vendor review time (legal / security)
- Evaluation time
- What they need to do *today*

And then validate: How does that line up with what you had in mind?

Step 3: Reinforce Timeline In Every Call

End every conversation with a recap email + next steps tied to the timeline. If you don't reinforce it, the client will forget and the timeline disappears.

Now your deal is truly in play because you and your prospect agreed on a date tied to a real driver that you're reinforcing throughout the process.

Attention's Super Agent flags vague timelines before they kill your deal

Reps often throw dates into their CRM that aren't tied to any real drivers and end up losing the deal. Attention's Super Agent listens across your calls + CRM, flags vague timeline talk, and nudges your team to tie dates to real drivers—before those deals go dark.

✅ **Spot red flags instantly** — Catch vague timeline language before it crushes your forecast.

✅ **Surface next steps to drive timeline** — Get nudges to confirm next steps and automatically draft post call Mutual Action Plans (MAPs) to prospects.

✅ **Help managers coach on urgency** — Instead of replaying hours of calls, get ready-made timeline specific coaching prompts pulled from real conversations.

Power Risk

Most reps lean on their champion to sell for them.

That's a one-way ticket to no because champions often aren't decision makers.

And by the time you realize it, real power's already killed your deal.

That's why you need to run a quick power involvement risk assessment on every deal.

Here's how to assess your power risk from red to green:

-  No power: → Single-threaded with mid-level buyer, no exec awareness.
-  Potential power: → Champion promises to bring leadership in later or make the case alone.
-  Power engaged: → Verified champion + execs are looped in.
-  Power aligned: → Execs actively involved + bought in.

Still working with just the champion? Here's how to get power involved and move from red to green:

Get to power by finishing out the 5 Minute Drill (Continuing Question 3: How do you buy?)

Teach your prospects how to meet their go-live date and ask to loop in power in the prospect's best interest (not yours):

"It sounds like you really care about getting this right. Typically when it comes to compensation decisions, I've just seen it blow up if someone like your CHRO, Jane isn't involved, just because comp is such a touchy subject. Think we could pull her into the next call and work on this one together?"

Can't get to power? Use your executives.

Struggling to reach power through your champion? Get your boss to drop their exec a short note—no ask, simply acknowledging you're working with their team.

If you can't get to power later, your exec can reply to that thread in the worst case scenario to ask for a meeting 1:1 now that the line of communication is open.

Attention's Super Agent exposes when you're missing power

Most reps don't realize they're betting on a single champion until it's too late. Attention's Super Agent tracks who shows up (or doesn't) in calls, flags when execs haven't been included, and prompts your team to bring power in sooner rather than later.

- ✅ **Spot missing power early** — See when deals are stuck with mid-level champions and no exec involvement.
- ✅ **Automate reminders for deals missing power** — Get nudges to loop in leadership and push for exec-to-exec outreach.
- ✅ **Coach your reps into power** — Managers get real call snippets showing when reps are single-threaded and not involving power.

Final Thoughts: Beat the 3 Biggest Deal Blockers Before They Beat You

Nice-to-have, timeline, and power risks are absolute deal killers.

Most reps miss the red flags until it's too late—then wonder why their forecast slipped.

With the tactics in this toolkit, you've got a clear way to spot risk and flip it green before your deal stalls.

And if you want to make managing these blockers 10x easier...

Attention pulls the truth straight from your calls and CRM:

- ✓ Surfaces nice-to-have deals and identifies coaching opportunities for reps.
- ✓ Flags vague timelines and nudges reps to set real close dates based on actual drivers.
- ✓ Highlights single-threaded deals and missing buy in from power early.

With Attention, you don't just spot risk—you fix it with deal saving insights.

Liked this toolkit? Learn more about Super Agent and get started with Attention [right here](#).

