

SERVER SALES ROADMAP

THE ART OF SELLING SERVERS

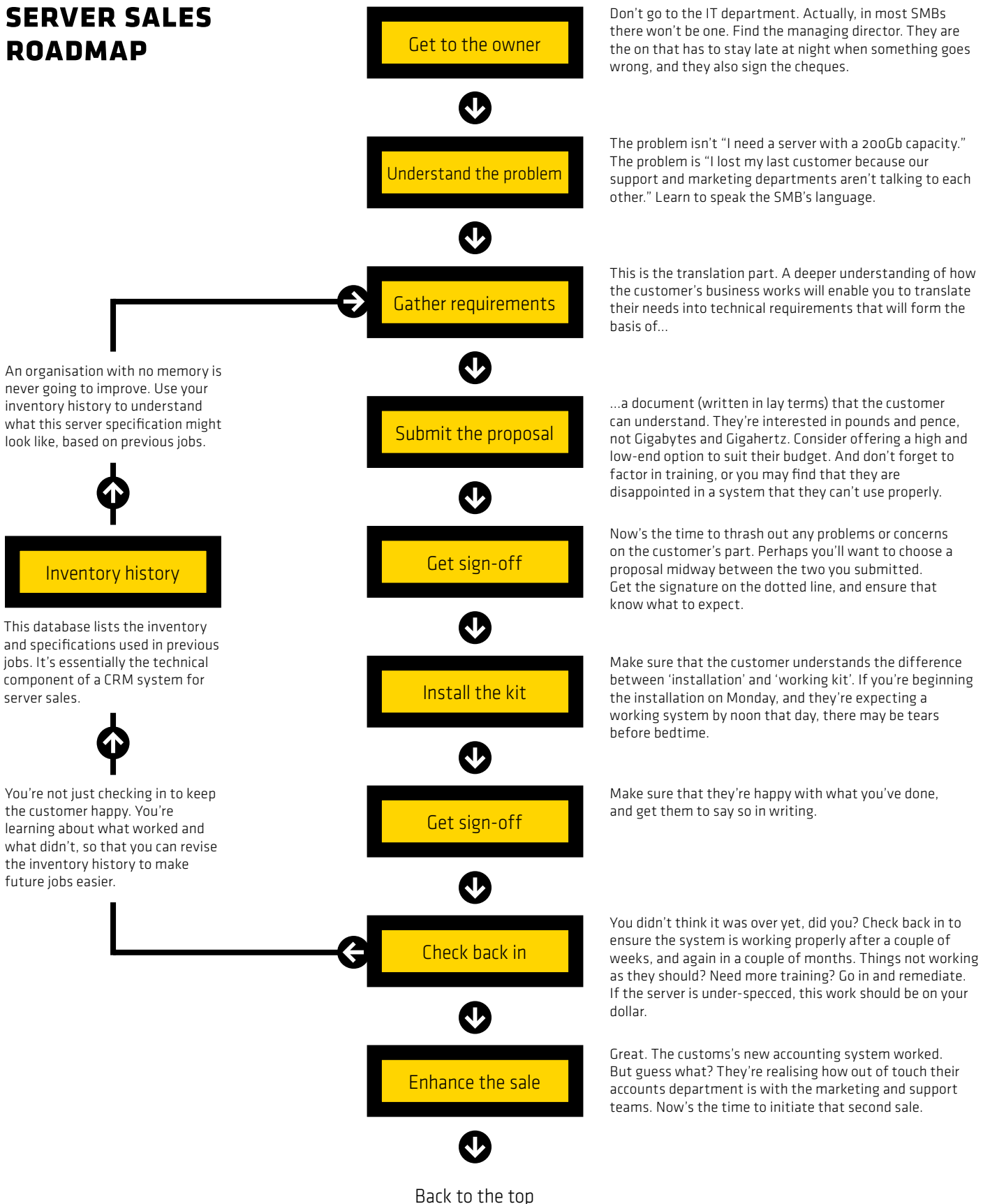
Explaining the benefits of a server in two sentences in terms that are relevant to a business owner is something any competent consultancy should be able to do.

But it's the first sit-down meeting where you'll need all of your skills to persuade them that investing in a server is the right thing for their business.

Gathering requirements involves teasing out enough information from senior executives to build a suitable specification.

The trick is to get the answer to questions such as these, using roundabout questions in lay terms. Asked how big his office is, a managing director might reveal that space is maxed out and that while he has lots of liquid assets, he has no plans to move the company. That might tip the balance towards more expensive but space-conscious rack-mounted servers, even though he has no idea what they are . ☒

SERVER SALES ROADMAP



SERVER SPECIFICATION

SERVER HARDWARE

What processors are necessary, and how many cores?

Is it to be a 32-bit or 64-bit server?

How much memory is required?

How much power is necessary to operate the server?

What storage capacity do you require, and what configuration should the drives be in (or should you have NAS instead)?

SERVER FORMAT

Rack-mounted, tower or blade?

What colour? We're not kidding!

SERVER LOCATION

How much space is there for the server?

Is the area capable of holding the weight of a fully loaded rack?

Are the security, ventilation, power sockets and cabling points sufficient to support the server at this location.

How far away will the server be from office equipment and other PCs, and how many pieces of equipment will it be connecting to?

INSTALLATION

When are they expecting the system to be working by?

When will they be ready to accommodate the installation team?

Are there access constraints to the site (office on the tenth floor, an open retail space with busy periods)?

SECURITY

Are there any ports on the routers that will need forwarding?

Does the company need a hardware firewall?

Do executives wish to monitor Internet access?

How strict will group policies be across the company's computers?

How detailed and granular will user rights be?

Will the users want single sign-on access?

SOFTWARE

CLIENT SOFTWARE

What software is required on the client machines?

COLLABORATION

Do they need an intranet?

How many will use it?

Does it need to be externally accessible?

What features should it contain?

LICENCES

How many are required?

What licensing model do they prefer? OEM, Open?

Do they have enough licences, too few or too many?

THIRD PARTY SOFTWARE

What applications above those included with the OS does the business need?

How heavily will these applications impact the server?

Will data migration be required (from the overloaded desktop application, for example)?

Will users need remote access to applications?

EMAIL

Do they need their own email hosted on their own server?

Will viruses and spam be managed at the server level, or by a hosted service such as Postini, or a Microsoft Exchange Hosted Services (EHS) provider?

Will email archiving be necessary?

Will the company be using BlackBerrys or some other push email service?

Will employees need access to email from browsers or Outlook clients outside the office?

CONNECTIVITY

INTERNAL

Where will the cabling and electricians run, and what are the safety and capacity considerations in terms of ducting?

What cabling specifications are required, and is there cabling already at the site?

How many ports required on the network switch (don't forget to leave room for expansion)?

Do they want wireless capabilities? We are now recommending wireless 802.11 or Wi-Fi N.

What internal domain name do they want?

Are they connecting to any other OS? Mac OS, Linux etc.

What other constraints are likely to be imposed on the network in future? For example, are they planning video conferencing?

EXTERNAL

Keeping external users connected and supporting them can raise issues, so try to connect them using the same ISP on business DSL accounts.

Do they require FTP access?

Do they have a domain name? How and where do they want it housed?

Have they ordered the telephone line? What broadband supplier do they want to use? (Allow at least five days for connection).

Will they want to connect to other sites? Will they need VPN or desktop optimisation?

RESILIENCE

REDUNDANCY

What is the minimum allowable downtime?

Should the server be hot swappable?

POWER

Is the site prone to power fluctuations/surges?

What capacity should the UPS be? How long does it take to shut the system down?

BACKUP

On site: Tape, optical, cheap primary source, or a combination?

Off site: Is it appropriate?

How many generations of backups are required?

What will the backup schedule be?

How quickly must the data be restored?