



REFINE

12 Reasons Late-Stage Deals Slip

Find the risk before the close date moves again.

A close date is not a strategy.

Suncoast Spark • Free Resource for B2B Account Executives

The date moved because something underneath it was never solid.

Late-stage opportunities often look healthy. The buyer likes the solution. Pricing has been shared. Stakeholders are engaged. Legal or procurement has started. There is a date in CRM.

But none of those guarantee a decision.

The buyer likes the solution

Enthusiasm is not commitment. Preference is not a signed order.

Pricing has been shared

Receiving a number is not the same as approving one.

Stakeholders are engaged

Attendance is not alignment. Presence is not authority.

A date is in CRM

A seller-entered date is a forecast tool. It is not a buyer commitment.

A late-stage deal is only as strong as the unresolved conditions behind it. The 12 risks that follow are where deals quietly stall, slip, or die — not because the solution was wrong, but because something necessary for a decision was left unresolved, unowned, or assumed.

 **FORECAST RISK LIVES IN THE GAPS BETWEEN SELLER CONFIDENCE AND BUYER EVIDENCE.**

Buyer Alignment

These risks appear when the seller has built relationships but has not confirmed who holds authority, who drives action, and whether the buying group has reached genuine consensus.

RISK 1

Economic Buyer Never Truly Engaged

Signal: The deal has progressed through lower-level contacts, but decision authority has not directly validated the case.

Why it matters: The final decision may still be based on priorities, risks, or criteria the seller has never heard.

Ask: *"What does the person who ultimately approves this need to believe before saying yes?"*

Next move: Earn a decision-focused executive conversation tied to business outcomes.

RISK 2

Champion Strength Was Overestimated

Signal: The contact is supportive but does not create introductions, share internal information, or influence action.

Why it matters: A friendly contact cannot carry the deal internally when resistance appears.

Ask: *"What has your contact actually done inside the organization to move this forward?"*

Next move: Test champion strength with a specific internal action.

RISK 3

The Buying Group Is Not Aligned

Signal: Important stakeholders have different priorities, concerns, or levels of involvement.

Why it matters: Consensus may be assumed rather than demonstrated.

Ask: *"Who could still disagree with this decision — and why?"*

Next move: Surface stakeholder positions before final approval.

Value + Priority

These risks appear when the business case is thin, inaction remains comfortable, or competing internal priorities have quietly displaced this one.

RISK 4

Business Case Never Became Credible

Signal: The seller has value language, but the buyer has not validated the economics or internal case.

Why it matters: A deal without a defensible business case can lose to competing priorities even when the solution is liked.

Ask: *"Could the buyer explain why this deserves budget without us in the room?"*

Next move: Build or pressure-test the business case using buyer-owned inputs.

RISK 5

Status Quo Remains Acceptable

Signal: The buyer sees value in the solution but has not made inaction painful enough to change.

Why it matters: "No decision" is often the strongest competitor.

Ask: *"What actually happens if they do nothing?"*

Next move: Revisit the consequences of delay and the cost of maintaining the current approach.

RISK 6

Internal Priority Shifted

Signal: Timelines extend, meetings move, or buyer responsiveness drops after a new initiative or leadership change.

Why it matters: The original problem may still exist, but it may no longer rank high enough to act on.

Ask: *"Where does this sit now relative to the buyer's other priorities?"*

Next move: Revalidate priority directly rather than manufacturing urgency.

Process + Risk

These risks appear when the seller has mapped the people but not the process — and when late-appearing reviews, approvals, or compliance requirements add time that was never in the forecast.

RISK 7

Decision Process Was Assumed

Signal: The seller knows the people but not how approval actually happens.

Why it matters: Hidden steps, committees, or internal criteria can appear late.

Ask: *"How have similar decisions actually been made here?"*

Next move: Map the real decision process, milestones, and owners.

RISK 8

Procurement Started Too Late

Signal: Procurement appears only after commercial alignment.

Why it matters: Vendor onboarding, negotiation, approvals, and paperwork may add significant time.

Ask: *"What has to happen on the procurement side before signature is possible?"*

Next move: Build a procurement path with owners, requirements, and timing.

RISK 9

Security, Legal, or Technical Risk Remains Open

Signal: A critical review is still incomplete or lacks a clear owner.

Why it matters: Late unresolved risk can stop the deal regardless of buyer enthusiasm.

Ask: *"What specifically remains unresolved, who owns it, and what determines completion?"*

Next move: Create an explicit resolution plan with milestone dates.

Commercial + Commitment

These risks appear when scope is still in motion, buyer actions are soft, or the close date was built around the seller's quarter rather than a real buyer event.

RISK 10

Commercial Scope Is Still Changing

Signal: Pricing, users, services, regions, or contract structure continue to move.

Why it matters: A moving scope means the decision is not yet stable.

Ask: *"What still needs to be settled before the buyer can approve the commercial structure?"*

Next move: Separate required scope from optional expansion and lock the decision baseline.

RISK 11

Buyer Commitments Are Vague

Signal: The seller owns most actions while buyer commitments remain soft.

Why it matters: Interest without buyer action creates false late-stage confidence.

Ask: *"What is the buyer doing that demonstrates this is actually moving toward a decision?"*

Next move: Convert vague intent into specific buyer-owned actions.

RISK 12

The Close Date Is Seller-Created

Signal: The date exists because of forecast pressure, quarter-end, or seller expectation rather than a buyer event.

Why it matters: A date without a buyer-owned milestone has no structural reason to hold.

Ask: *"What buyer event actually determines when this decision must happen?"*

Next move: Anchor timing to a real business event, approval milestone, contract date, or internal commitment.

Close-Date Reality Check

What supports the date?

Work through this before your next forecast call, pipeline review, or stakeholder conversation. If a field is blank or uncertain, that is the risk.

Current forecast date
Buyer event that drives the date
Who owns that event
What must happen before it
Which milestone has buyer commitment
What could delay it
Most important unresolved risk
Evidence supporting the forecast

 **A FORECAST DATE WITHOUT A BUYER EVENT IS A HOPE.**

If the date cannot be anchored to a real buyer milestone, the right response is to reforecast — not to hold the date and wait.



AE ON DEMAND

Find the risk while there is still time to act.

AE on Demand helps account executives pressure-test late-stage opportunities, separate known facts from assumptions, identify unresolved risks, evaluate stakeholder and buyer commitment, and determine the next move — inside ChatGPT or Claude.

Use it to ask:

- "What is most likely to make this deal slip?"
- "What evidence supports the current close date?"
- "Which unresolved risk matters most?"
- "What buyer action would increase confidence?"
- "What should I do next?"

Explore AE on Demand at aeondemand.com