



# Credit-to-cash briefing

## Checklist: Early detection of fault risks

**Insolvencies often happen when an important business partner folds. Particularly small and medium-sized enterprises with capital ratios of less than 20% can fall victim to this domino effect. They find it difficult to weather losses caused by a customer's insolvency and can fast end up in dire straits, with liquidity constraints threatening their very existence.**

However, businesses almost never go into insolvency over night. Therefore, a timely identification of vital factors is indispensable to protect oneself.

A 100% accurate prognosis is hardly possible. It is not uncommon for companies to be successful despite showing negative indicators.

On the other hand, it is not uncommon for businesses that in the past did not show unfavourable signs to file for insolvency. But practical experience shows that the chance for a future insolvency will grow with the number of negative characteristics and indicators.

This checklist typifies the most important indicators you should monitor. It thus enables you to adapt your business policy

accordingly. The credit risk goes up with the number of indicators that are fulfilled. And uncertainty grows with the questions that do not lead to concrete answers (n.i. =no input.).

## Credit-to-Cash Briefing

# Checklist: Early detection of default risks

### Payment behaviour

A customer with a bad payment record is an unmistakable early warning sign, particularly if negative changes occur. Be sure to adapt your terms of payment and security measures accordingly.

#### Keep close tabs on the following indicators:

	YES	NO	N.I.
Does your customer frequently fail to pay on due dates?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do they permanently take advantage of the full credit lines you have granted?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have constant reminder notices been necessary of late?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Does your customer at times ask you to prolong overdue bills?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Has your customer suddenly changed the bank?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Has your business partner offered bills of exchange when invoices become overdue?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have cheques recently been returned unpaid or bill of exchange dishonoured?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Were insufficient funds in the account when debited?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Did unwarranted rescission of direct debit authorisations occur?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

### Senior management

Particularly the management of small and medium-sized businesses often lacks the relevant expertise to generate a sustainable level of profit. You should closely monitor the following potential weak points in the senior level:

#### Qualification:

Particularly the management of small and medium-sized businesses often lacks the relevant expertise to generate a sustainable level of profit. You should closely monitor the following potential weak points in the senior level:

	YES	NO	N.I.
Insufficient management expertise?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Lacking experience in the relevant sector?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Lopsided technological orientation?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Rather unrealistic business planning?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

#### Human resource problems

Particularly the management of small and medium-sized businesses often lacks the relevant expertise to generate a sustainable level of profit. You should closely monitor the following potential weak points in the senior level:

	YES	NO	N.I.
Have there been problems with the issue of succession?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Was there a frequent change of partners in the past?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is there a high turnover among senior management?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
In your eyes, has the senior management made errors in assessing situations and developments in the recent past?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

## Credit-to-Cash Briefing

# Checklist: Early detection of default risks

<b>Financing</b>			
Return on sales is often at a low level. Therefore, adequate liquidity and financing capacity are crucial. Moreover, Basel II now obliges companies to commit themselves to an optimal financing scheme.			
<b>Capital structure</b>	YES	NO	N.I.
The risk of insolvency rises with unfavourable figures, in particular:			
Do you perceive your customer's equity capital to be insufficient?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is there a marked reluctance to increase their equity capital?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do you believe the debt level to be overly high?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are there high loss carry forwards on the balance sheet?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Does the interest to sales ratio exceed the sector's average?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are fixed assets predominantly short-term financed?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Internal financing</b>	YES	NO	N.I.
Is the rate of return on capital employed too low?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

<b>Accounting</b>			
More than in other areas, weak spots in the accounting department can lead to grave financial problems. Moreover, an accounting that is flawed and not based on the latest data is often the reason that a company's management fails to identify serious problems in time.			
<b>Collections</b>	YES	NO	N.I.
Do you believe that your customer has a flawed collections management?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Every delay in time costs money. If collection services fail to operate inefficiently, DSO (days of sales outstanding) ratios are high and cut profits because of increased financing costs.			
<b>Invoicing / billing</b>	YES	NO	N.I.
Are invoices regularly sent out too late or do they often hold mistakes?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Unnecessarily late invoicing implies additional need for financing as customers are kept from making timely payments.			
<b>Financial, cost and liquidity planning</b>	YES	NO	N.I.
Do you find that financial, cost and liquidity planning are unsatisfactory?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
An adequate planning process is precondition for responsible corporate management. Without it, the possibility of financial problems occurring is definitely higher.			

## Credit-to-Cash Briefing

# Checklist: Early detection of default risks

<b>Procurement</b>			
Your customers' procurement policies allow you to draw important conclusions as to their creditworthiness.			
<b>Dependence</b>	YES	NO	N.I.
<b>Does the company depend on too few suppliers?</b> Depending on only few suppliers can be potentially dangerous. If one of them should file for insolvency or experience difficulties in delivering ordered goods, the buyer, i.e. your customer, might face a predicament.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Suspension of deliveries or immediate collection by other suppliers</b>	YES	NO	N.I.
<b>Have you been informed of suspension of deliveries or immediate collection by other suppliers?</b> Caution is advised should you be informed to that effect. Payment problems or lacking lines of credit with credit insurers or factoring institutions might be the reason.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Recurring change of suppliers</b>	YES	NO	N.I.
<b>Have you found out that your business partner often changes suppliers?</b> This can imply problematic relationships with suppliers.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Complaints</b>	YES	NO	N.I.
<b>Has your customer made unwarranted complaints?</b> Repeated complaints that turn out to be unwarranted or based on mere trifles are usually used as a pretext to delay payments.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Ordered quantities</b>	YES	NO	N.I.
<b>Have there been extreme changes in ordered quantities?</b> A decline in ordered quantities can in certain cases indicate a decline in sales and a sharp increase in ordered quantities might indicate that a customer has stopped receiving goods from other suppliers. Furthermore, fraudulent ordering can be the reason for an unexpectedly large order.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Manufacturing</b>			
Critical weak points in the provision of goods and services can have serious financial implications for a company.			
<b>Stock on hand</b>	YES	NO	N.I.
<b>Are your customer's stock levels comparably high?</b> A strong hike in stock on hand can indicate falling sales.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Production capacities</b>	YES	NO	N.I.
<b>Does your customer have excess production capacities?</b> Facilities that do not operate at full capacity in most cases imply sales problems. This also has an adverse effect on the cost structure.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Manufacturing facilities</b>	YES	NO	N.I.
<b>Are the manufacturing facilities in a bad shape?</b> Poorly maintained facilities as well as lack of investments into new fixed assets or the replacement of old ones may indicate a deficit of funds. The closure of complete product lines could be because of problems with the market. On the other hand, it might also signify a market-driven and sensible decision.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Product quality and product range</b>	YES	NO	N.I.
<b>Do your customer's competitors boast superior product quality / product range?</b> If competitors are superior in both product quality and product range, this can suggest a flawed product management as well as not adequately qualified senior management levels. In the medium term, this carries a particular risk of insolvency.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

## Credit-to-Cash Briefing

# Checklist: Early detection of default risks

<b>Sales</b>			
Sales and turnover are decisive factors in securing a company's financial standing. Negative developments can lead to insolvency within only a short period of time			
<b>Customer structure and credit rating</b>	YES	NO	N.I.
Do your clients depend on a few customers?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
If yes, do these buyers have a rather low creditworthiness?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The risk that you have to file for insolvency due to bad debts is larger if your accounts receivable are dominated by only few customers. In this case, the likelihood of having to deal with potentially dangerous situations is obviously higher. Frequently the default of one major customer can already lead to the creditor's insolvency. Therefore, it is advisable to closely monitor your client's customer base and – if possible – their buyers' creditworthiness.			
<b>Market behaviour</b>	YES	NO	N.I.
Does your customer offer products or services at unusual prices?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
In a desperate effort to raise cash, a customer's "last stand" might be to resort to aggressive sales techniques, e.g. special offers with extremely high rebates.			
<b>Market development</b>	YES	NO	N.I.
Is there a greater competitive pressure on your client?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do you believe that your customer fails to adapt adequately to market changes and innovative customer demands?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Your customers' market environment plays an important role. Unfavourable risk factors, e.g. a slump in sales, recession in the relevant sector, as well as aggressive competitors need to be taken into account too when rating their creditworthiness.			

**You cannot always identify impending dangers. This makes it all the more important to prepare yourself for worst case scenarios.**

**Atradius offers a range of comprehensive credit insurance solutions geared to protect you against bad debts in the followup of customer insolvencies. Please don't hesitate to contact us. We will be glad to help you.**

#### Disclaimer

This publication is provided for information purposes only and is not intended as a recommendation or advice as to particular transactions, investments or strategies in any way to any reader. Readers must make their own independent decisions, commercial or otherwise, regarding the information provided. While we have made every attempt to ensure that the information contained in this publication has been obtained from reliable sources, Atradius is not responsible for any errors or omissions, or for the results obtained from the use of this information. All information in this publication is provided 'as is', with no guarantee of completeness, accuracy, timeliness or of the results obtained from its use, and without warranty of any kind, express or implied. In no event will Atradius, its related partnerships or corporations, or the partners, agents or employees thereof, be liable to you or anyone else for any decision made or action taken in reliance on the information in this publication, or for any consequential, special or similar damages, even if advised of the possibility of such damages.

© Copyright Atradius N.V. 2021

#### Connect with Atradius

Atradius @atradius atradiusgroup



Contact us  
atradius.com

Atradius  
David Ricardostraat 1,  
1066 JS Amsterdam  
The Netherlands  
Tel. +31 (0)20 553 9111

info@atradius.com  
www.atradius.com