How to Improve Sales and Achieve Quota

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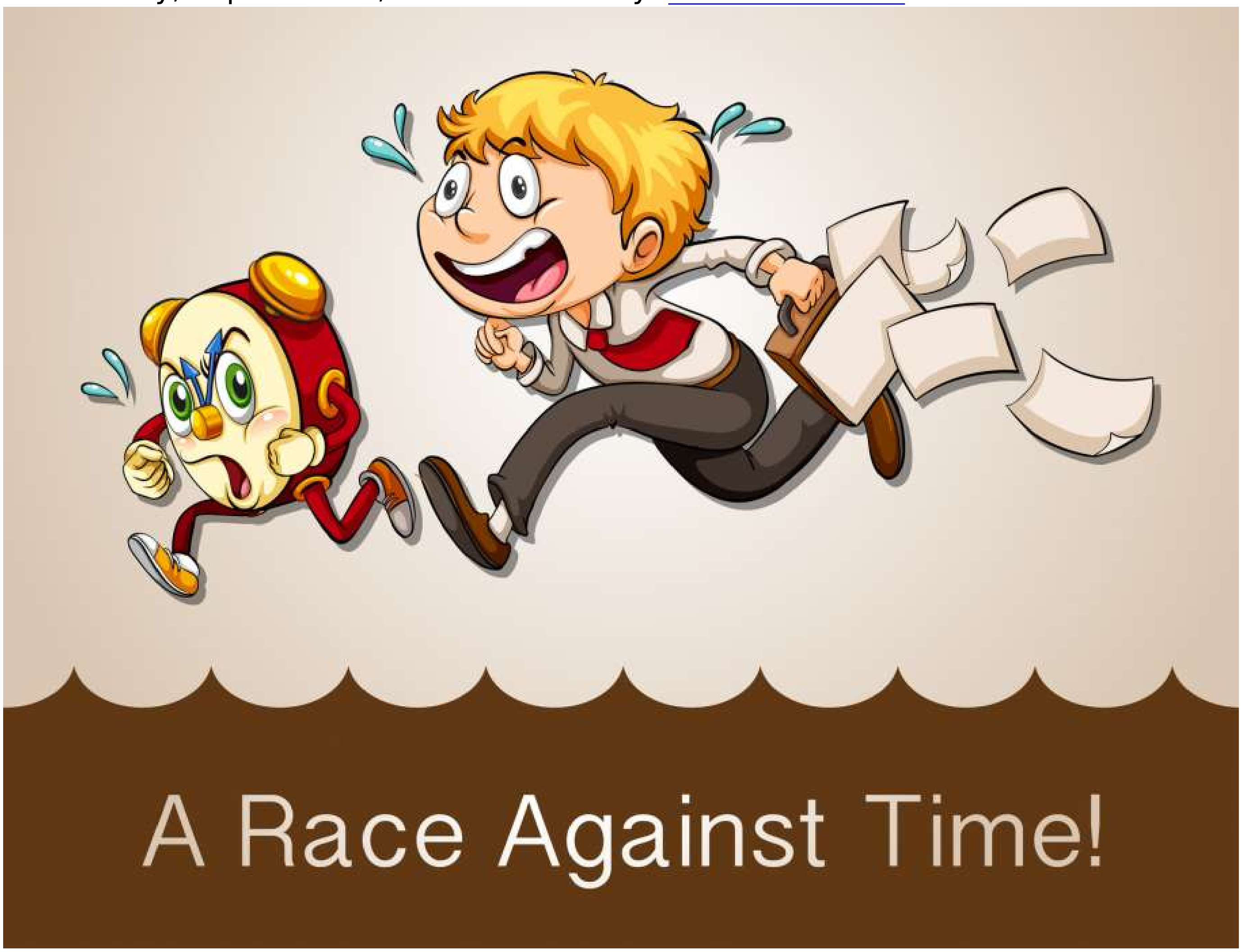

How to Improve Sales

If you’re suffering the same predicament as John, you need to take action. Now. What should you do? Well, it depends on where you are today. So, first identify your exact problem, and then the solution.

- **Problem 1: You Have Leads, They’re Not Qualified**

  At least you have something in your pipeline. Now you need to transform unqualified leads into sales. Depending on the length of your sales cycle, it may be possible.

First, whip your leads into shape. If you’re missing phone numbers or demographic information, such as industry type and company size, append the list. The demographic data will help you to segment the leads and prioritize who to call first. That’s essential because there’s no time to lose.

Now, add the human touch. Get a team of professional telemarketers or inside sales people on the phone to qualify the leads as soon as possible.

The team will gather the names and titles of everyone who’s involved in the buying decision and determine whether the lead is hot to buy or just researching. Also, they’ll dig into the potential client’s problem, gathering the information your sales people need to prepare a persuasive sale presentation.

And, of course, they’ll make sure the lead can afford your product, service or solution. Your sales people can’t afford to call on people who can’t afford to buy.

Your team has a lot of questions, but it’s not a one-way street. If it’s available, they also need to provide information to help the potential client move through the buying process.

If the lead passes all your qualifying criteria, your business development representative can set up the appointment while they have the lead on the phone. This enables them to pass qualified appointments to your sales people, empowering them to make the best use of their time and close more sales.

If you don’t have an internal team to take care of lead qualification, you can outsource the project to a team of professional B2B business development specialists.

- **Problem 2: The Sales Pipeline Has Dried Up**

If there are no leads in the pipeline, your problem is more serious. You need to generate leads quickly. It’s too late for inbound marketing driven with content, which is a good strategy when you have time and can be patient.

But does cold calling still work in 2015? Absolutely, with one caveat: you have to do it right. That takes a little more time upfront for planning, but it pays off.

First, get a list based on your profile of your ideal customer's demographics. Then, research each lead. Check out the company's website and social media profiles. Find out the background of the person you're calling, the business' product offering, recent organizational changes and more.

This information is food for your business development specialist's conversation with the lead. It personalizes the conversation. Also, depending on what you find, it may help you eliminate some names for a more laser-targeted list.

Now set the call objective. In your current situation, you likely want to go for the appointment. But make sure you qualify the leads before you set one up. Also, since you won't be successful in setting an appointment with everyone you contact, have a secondary objective. That might simply be lead qualification and gathering more data.

There's just one more thing you need your reps to do before they pick up the phone. Make sure they can relate your value proposition and have a memory bank filled with success stories. To persuade people to take action as soon as possible, these must roll off their tongues.

Preventing Future Q4 Sales Troubles

Once you've surmounted today's troubles and have sales back on track for this year, you'll need to put a plan in place to avoid future Q4 sales sprints.

Create a strategic lead management process that you can monitor throughout the year. Define how you're going to work with your leads from acquisition to qualification to close. Set up qualification criteria, and how you plan to filter and score leads, ensuring sales people focus their time on the golden nuggets.

Of course, it's not all about the leads you send to sales. Many of your leads won't be ready to buy day one, but most of those will want to buy down the road. If you don't want them running off to the competition, you need to set up a plan for nurturing these leads until they're ready to buy.

Also, determine how to track, measure and report on your lead pipeline. If you have clear visibility on where your leads stand in the pipeline and typical conversion rates, you can forecast future sales. If your sales forecast falls below your quota, you'll know exactly where you need to turn up the volume, improve sales and achieve your goals.

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