

# 5 Tips to Take Your Business Development Team from Good to Great

Thursday, February 28, 2019 - Written by: [Jeff Kalter](#)



## **1: Add the Right Reps**

You have a core team of business development reps. Because of growth and turnover, however, it's likely there's a frequent need to hire anew. The qualities you seek in reps depends on your marketing strategy. Do you need inbound business development reps (BDRs) who qualify leads that come their way or outbound BDRs who track them down?

Inbound reps, who need to respond quickly to incoming leads, must have a high

sense of urgency. Outbound reps need to be good researchers and comfortable making cold or lukewarm calls. There is also some skill overlap. Inbound and outbound BDRs both must have excellent listening and communication skills. They must have a customer-first attitude and a high curiosity quotient. After all, you cannot train someone to be curious, and you want reps who are likely to ask questions, dig into prospects' situations, help solve problems and build relationships.

In interviews, it's relatively easy to observe and judge communication skills. Are you having a conversation or is the candidate on a lengthy diatribe about themselves? Are they asking you insightful questions that show they are listening and have a healthy level of curiosity?

Also, look for diversity, going beyond gender and race. Assess how people think as well as their unique skills and experience. A diverse team is more likely to collaborate productively and come up with new ideas. The final aspect of diversity is to ensure representatives are from the countries you're targeting. They'll not only speak fluently in their native languages but also understand the culture of prospects and clients.

## **2: Treat BDRs Right**

You want to keep all your good BDRs in the fold. So create a supportive, inclusive culture that makes work a place where they want to come every day. Their jobs are challenging, and it's easy to burn out, so you need to be compassionate, optimistic and encourage team spirit.

Recognize that each team member is wired differently. Get to know them as individuals and discover the best way to motivate them and leverage their talents. While it's easy to focus on monetary rewards, recognition and career progression is often equally or more important. It keeps spirits up.

So, look for opportunities to tell someone you noticed when they did their job right. Also, as reps prove themselves, allow them to progress from working on simple solutions to more complex ones. And give them a chance to add more prominent accounts to their roster. When you provide such recognition and allow them to step up the ladder, it inspires them to do more.

## **3: Learn from the Best**

Track your reps' performance. What percentage of marketing qualified leads (MQLs)

does each rep convert into sales qualified leads (SQLs)? How long does it take them to convert those leads? Even though they are handed over to the sales team at that point, you probably should find out the close rate on each BDR's SQLs and the size of the deals.

When you track this data, you can compare individual reps to the team average. Usually, there will be one or two reps who stand out. Find out what they're doing right and let them share their techniques with other BDRs. Doing so not only provides recognition but also spreads their wisdom to the team.

#### **4: Coach and Train**

For onboarding a new rep, you should have a formalized training program. While some may be experienced, you don't know their skill and knowledge gaps or how your sales methodologies differ from former employers.

Even after they've been through your training, don't assume they know the essentials. Retention can be low. Also, there's a difference between knowing what to do and being able to do it. So, follow up with ongoing coaching. Listen to calls and provide feedback. Do some role plays. Reinforce good habits and when there are opportunities for improvement, offer constructive criticism.

Last but not least, with today's ever evolving technology from virtualization to digital transformation to blockchain and more, there's a constant need to stay up to date. It's worth holding technology workshops to get everyone up to speed. You might want to have some of your senior agents host them. Teaching others helps reinforce their knowledge and is yet another way to provide recognition.

#### **5: Power Up with Technology**

On average, reps spend only 14 hours in a 40-hour week selling. Imagine the impact on your results if you increased sales time by 25 percent to almost 18 hours a week. If you have a team of eight reps today, it would be like adding two new hires! Thus, to reduce the time reps spend on administrative tasks and research, invest in technology.

What tools can assist you? A customer relationship management (CRM) system is essential to manage your customer data and interactions. Predictive analytics can help find the companies that need your help. Sales intelligence platforms shortcut the company research process. Marketing automation enables you to back up the

business development reps' efforts by nurturing leads. Automated cadence tools, such as ToutApp and SalesLoft, allow you to define and implement multi-touch campaigns via multiple communication mediums — phone, email and social media.

There are tangible steps you can take to transform a business development team from good to great. When you add to the group, look beyond experience to traits such as strong communication skills, curiosity and diversity. Provide your team with a supportive environment which makes them want to come to work every day. While you should coach and train your reps so they can achieve the best possible outcomes, recognize that it's a two-way street. You can also learn what the best reps are doing differently and have them share their successes with the team. Finally, enable your BDRs to be as productive as possible. Do so by investing in technology that minimizes their time spent away from customer-facing activities.

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