How to Create a B2B Sales Process that Works Like Clockwork

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If you want to strengthen your bottom line, you need to create a B2B sales process. If you already have a sales process, it's always good to review it and look for any gaps or areas for improvement.

Start Creating Your B2B Sales Process

Before we outline the steps in a typical sales process, it might be helpful to provide a few pointers on how to get started.

Think of your sales process as a series of steps that will serve as your playbook for interacting with prospective customers. For example, when a prospect tells you she doesn't have the budget to purchase, what do you do? Perhaps you have a whitepaper that lays out all the ways that your product or service is proven to save a company money or boost ROI. Whatever your best practice dictates, formalize it as a step in your sales process.

Here are some techniques to help you move forward:

- Think of your sales process as a flowchart. You could start with an inbound lead and map out how it progresses to a sale, noting all the possibilities from initial contact to WON/LOST.

- Involve your entire sales team in the exercise. Everyone has his or her areas of expertise, and working together you can build your process around the team's best practices.

- Don't rely simply on perception. Dig deep to find the proven winning strategies. Measure your outcomes and success rates when using various strategies and tactics. You may be surprised to find that a technique you think works is not the best option.

- Don't hesitate to hack your current process. Your sales process is not set in stone. As you measure outcomes, be open to adaptation.

- Integrate your process into your CRM system. If you want to put an end to the spreadsheet sales process, encourage reps to manage contacts, update the pipeline and analyze sales probabilities in your CRM application.

Stages of a Typical Sales Process

There is no simple rule or blueprint for the ideal sales process. Some teams divide the process into five or six stages; others expand it out to seven or even eight. The number is not important. What counts is that you capture the essence of what works for your business.

Once you agree on the primary stages of the process, you'll want to break each one down into the many logical steps, options, and contingencies that reflect the different ways that a sale can develop and the best responses for your reps. They need the time-tested steps to convert a lead into a customer and also how to know when to conserve resources and let go so they can focus on more promising prospects. The goal is to create a playbook that even the greenest sales rep can follow.

For convenience, we've broken our sales process into seven stages:

1. Prospect

Outline the steps for getting started. How do you research prospects and opportunities? Do you start with an ideal customer profile and then identify prospective customers that meet your criteria? Does your sales process rely on inbound leads, outreach to targeted accounts or both? If both, you'll need two sales processes.

2. Qualify

Once you have a lead, you need to determine if the company is a good fit for your product/service, they have the budget to purchase and the intent to buy. This stage may include telemarketing and email outreach to learn more.

If a lead falls short in any area, you should have a series of contingency steps to nurture and build a relationship without taking a rep's time away from more promising prospects. And because not all leads are equal, you'll want to score them to help reps prioritize their time and energy.

3. Initial Meeting

Once qualified, the first objective is often to have a meeting. Often today, that initial meeting will be via online conferencing or phone. You may need a process for scheduling, reminding participants of the day and time and following up.

You need to develop critical points for discussion and further qualification. For example, find out if you are engaging the primary decision-maker and learn who else you need to include in the conversation. You'll also want to delve deeper into the prospect's critical needs and pain points.

Some businesses also include making the sales offer as part of this stage. Others may schedule follow-up conversations.

4. Objections

With the offer presented, reps need to be prepared for objections and questions.

Outline the most common issues prospects raise and talking points for handling them.

5. **Nurture**

Even if you score the initial meeting with prospects, you're likely to find many of them are not yet ready to buy. For those, you will need to add a nurturing phase. The purpose is to offer the education that prospects need to help them buy. You can send them informative emails and content such as white papers. You also might want to recruit them to attend an upcoming trade show or webinar. Your goal should be to set up a nurturing phase that you can test and measure repeatedly to determine what works best.

6. **Closure**

As the sale moves toward closure, reps can expect negotiation. Outline the steps necessary to reach final terms and conditions.

7. **Won/Lost/Follow-up**

At this stage, you will either close the sale or assign the prospect to the loss column. However, not all losses are permanent. If the door is open to revisiting the deal in six months or a year, you'll need steps to follow up and stay in touch.

If you close the deal, you'll need steps for delivering product/service, following up to ensure everything is running smoothly, looking for cross-selling, up-selling and referral opportunities. Always keep in mind how you can build value for the customer so that you can build loyalty.

A carefully designed and closely followed sales process will keep your sales efforts running like clockwork. You can measure each stage for results and tweak the process as needed to optimize sales continually.

For help meeting your sales goals, call us at +1 813-320-0500 (US) or +39 06 978446 60 (EMEA), or contact us online.

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