

The Challenge of Onboarding and Scaling Sales Teams

Thursday, September 3, 2020 - Written by: [Wolfram van Wezel](#)



When business is doing well, it's only natural to want to scale your sales force. It's a seemingly simple formula. More sales reps equal more growth.

But before you start hiring more reps, there are a few things to consider. When Ciara, a leader in the field of digital conversation assistants, asked reps to share their most significant sales challenges, the number two issue that they named was "difficulties onboarding and scaling sales teams."

The survey went on to dig deeper and identify the source of the problem. In particular, respondents pointed to problems with inadequate training and the long onboarding process for new reps, which, on average, required three or more

months.

Scaling up your sales teams is challenging in the best of times. Today, with coronavirus concerns completely changing how companies sell and do business, determining the best way to scale up can be even tougher. Here are some issues to think through when onboarding and scaling up sales teams.

Create a Clear Vision of Your Objectives

Your goal is to hire new sales reps and bring them on board quickly, without disrupting the current sales momentum. But before you can think about hiring additional reps, you need a clear understanding of where you've been and where you're going.

Have a frank discussion with your team leaders and top producers. Ask the team:

- How did we get to this point? Has it been steady growth? Is it a seasonal spike or due to the COVID crisis?
- What is our sales process? Has it transitioned effectively to accommodate a virtual sales environment?
- What are our goals for the next six months? For the next year?

If you have a proven sales process, then your objective is likely to scale up to take advantage of increasing demand.

But perhaps your sales process has been changing. You may be gradually increasing your inside sales force while decreasing the number of field reps. Flux within your current environment may signal that it's an ideal time to innovate the composition of your sales team and how you go to market.

Increase Sales Efficiencies

Regardless of your objective, before scaling up, make your sales force as efficient and effective as possible. If you have a strong team of field reps who are not used to working the phones, selling virtually and using various digital platforms, you may want to train them on how to use some of the tools of the inside sales team. With fewer face-to-face meetings, they need to master a broader spectrum of skills.

If your field reps can embrace digital selling, then you may want to scale up your force multipliers. For instance, instead of more field sales reps, you may need more

lead generation and more telesales or inside salespeople who can boost lead qualification, follow up with prospects and nurture leads until they are sales-ready.

Successful Onboarding Strategies

How you approach the onboarding process will make the difference between merely expanding your sales force and building top-performing teams.

Design your onboarding process before you start hiring:

- Have a formal training program.
- Institute metrics that will help you track the progress of new hires.
- Prepare a reference handbook for new reps.
- Have a team-building strategy that works in-house and in a remote-working environment.

Start small. Hire one or two new people. Put them through your process, measure their success, and refine your onboarding as needed. Doing so should make future scaling and onboarding more productive.

Initial Training and Ongoing Mentoring

The path to becoming a top-producing sales team is a journey, not a destination. It's a process of learning, discovery and sharing that never stops.

Your first goal is to get new reps up to speed. Here are a few tips:

- Never assume that new sales reps know the basics of good selling. There are likely some gaps in their sales education. Since you may not be able to identify the sales skills they lack, make Selling 101 part of your training process.
- Incorporate some of the best practices of your top producers into your training.
- Teach new reps how to sell your solutions, and ensure they have a thorough understanding of the competition.
- Train them on basic virtual selling techniques - working the phones, online conferencing and using email - and introduce them to webinars, podcasts and video recording.
- Prepare them to work remotely and to use your customer relationship management system, Zoom and other platforms in your technology stack.

Set up what you consider to be the baseline skills and knowledge necessary for the

job. But also provide your whole team with advanced training and ongoing mentoring.

Finally, whether you build teams or let them develop organically, encourage reps to collaborate and help one another.

Onboarding Metrics

To build an effective onboarding process, you need to know what works, what requires refining and who needs more help. You should set up standard review periods to measure progress using a standard set of metrics.

In addition to the analytics and key performance indicators (KPIs) that are a standard part of sales, you need onboarding metrics. You'll want to track the time and cost required for new reps to get up to speed:

- How long to master the sales process?
- What's the cost to onboard and train a new rep?
- What's the time from hire to the first sale?
- What's their performance and return on investment (ROI) after three months? Six months? A year?

The more you know, the better you can refine your training process, reduce the time spent onboarding, and boost the productivity of your new hires.

The Outsourcing Option

Creating a reliable onboarding process can take time. If you want to take advantage of sales opportunities more quickly, if you're not sure of your best strategy going forward, or if you're uncertain about your staffing needs long term, or if you are not sure who is going to manage this team, you have another option - outsourcing.

There are several advantages to working with a professional provider of sales and marketing services. You can:

- Expand your workforce quickly
- Test different sales and force multiplier strategies by increasing lead generation, response management, telesales and inside sales.
- Identify what works for you, while having an experienced team leverage best practices.

When you outsource to a professional team, you can scale up quickly without the difficulties of developing an in-house onboarding program.

Scaling up your sales teams can help your business grow. For the best ROI, move forward with a thorough understanding of your goals and what it will take to make them a reality.

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

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