

## Building & Leading Successful Sales Teams

### Introduction

When building and leading any successful sales team, a leader must focus on the primary components that provide a model for sales success: 1) people; 2) process; and 3) automation. It is also necessary, whether building a team from scratch or improving the current team, to address the three components in the order of which they are presented.

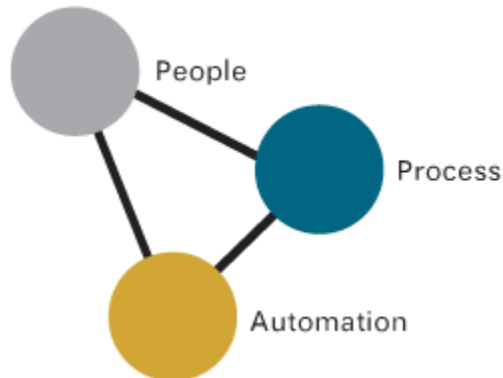


Figure 1: PPA Model for Sales Success

### Component #1: People

As it relates to sales people, there are very few eagles – the absolute superstars. These eagles are self-sufficient individuals who will succeed and be the best despite any structured guidance, management or leadership provided by the organization of which they are employed. Most sales people fall into the “A” player or “B” player categories, or below. The key to building and leading a successful sales team is to hire and retain one or two eagles (if you are lucky – there is no science unfortunately to finding and hiring these individuals), then employ a strategy to attract, select, and hire “A” players and “B” players. THEN you must provide a systematic approach to cultivating, training and motivating the “A” players to continue performing at a high level while enabling the “B” players to ultimately perform like “A” players. Easier said than done! This “systematic approach” is known as a “Prescriptive Framework for Sales Success”. Let’s look at how to implement such a process:

### Prescriptive Framework for Sales Success

#### 1. Hiring Sales People

- a) Identify what past experiences tend to predict future success, and consequently, determine a more effective and efficient **sourcing strategy** based on your findings (i.e. where are these “A” players right now?).
- b) Determine the hard skills that are most important and develop a **screening process** with the appropriate benchmarks for these hard skills.

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- c) Determine what soft skills / core competencies are most important, and build a **behavioral interview** to consistently identify them in potential candidates.
- d) Develop a **customized assessment test** for benchmarking the sales position, which will be used in the sales recruiting and hiring process. This assessment should be automated as an online assessment test if possible.
- e) An ongoing **sales recruiting strategy** should be employed by all key leaders and sales people within the organization. This strategy should be supported by a formal **sales recruiting process workflow**, of which every member of the sales leadership team should be involved in at least one step, if not more, in the process.

## **2. Preparing Sales People for Success**

- a. A formal new sales rep **orientation program** should be developed to indoctrinate all new sales people into the organization. The focus should be on the highest level of quality as it relates to information provided and the fastest rate in terms of time it takes to get all new sales reps to a proficient level of selling.
- b. Following the orientation program, a new sales rep should then shift into a formal 6-month **on-boarding program**. This program is supported by a **sales success reference guide**, measurement of a new sales rep's progress against **key performance benchmarks**, and a formal process involving **30-60-90 day reviews** with **formal coaching sessions** provided by your organization's sales leadership team.

## **3. Cultivating & Supporting Sales People**

- a. Most companies refer to this process as "managing sales people" or "sales management". However, if you hire the right sales people and provide a Prescriptive Framework for Sales Success as the sales management structure, then you will really be *cultivating*, *supporting* and *motivating* these high performers versus managing them.
- b. The cultivation process is really an extension of hiring and preparing sales people for success. It is important that once guidelines and a structured indoctrination process are incorporated, that the sales leadership team hold both the sales team and themselves accountable to what has been mutually agreed to up front in the process in terms of expected results.
- c. At least one weekly team meeting should occur, specifically where the emphasis is on learning and improving. The topics should revolve around products/services/solutions in addition to fundamental and advanced selling skills and strategies.
- d. At least one meeting should occur as a one-on-one meeting between the sales manager and each sales rep. During this meeting such topics as a review of actual performance versus benchmarks should occur, in addition to addressing any challenge areas to be improved. "What's working well" should

also be reviewed during this meeting.

- e. Finally, goal-setting and career-pathing should occur between the sales rep and the sales manager. It is important that the sales rep is always striving to accomplish personal and professional goals – the manager should be tied into these goals and hold the sales rep accountable for achieving such goals.

## Component #2: Process

In order to get the most out of a successful sales team, it is necessary to have sound processes supporting the sales team's efforts. This is where a lot of organizations make a mistake – they assume sales people know what to do and how to do it. They leave their ability to succeed to chance or luck. The reality is that processes are different at every organization. Although a sales person knows inherently how to "sell", including basic processes to follow in general, they need to be trained on *your* organization's specific processes to be most effective.

Without the initial overview of clearly documented processes and expectations, sales cycles will be lengthened (and even lost) as a result of mismanagement of the process. Documented processes that are easy to follow and understand should be implemented and adhered to by all members of the sales team in order to improve the growth rate of the business. Processes can also be in the form of programs that support the sales team's efforts. Processes and programs should be developed for the following key aspects of the business as it relates to the sales force:

1. Lead & Opportunity Generation (all facets including Networking, Social Media, etc.)
2. Buyer-Seller Dialogues
3. Client Meeting Management
4. Ongoing Customer Message Management (including tools to enable this)
5. Sales Opportunities – Assessment, Qualification & Management
6. Proposals – Development, Management & Presentation
7. Negotiation & Contractual Paperwork
8. New Customer Initiation
9. Customer Service & Support (i.e. revenue protection)
10. Cross-selling & Up-selling (i.e. profitable revenue growth)

## Component #3: Automation

Where applicable, companies should evaluate the automation of certain processes and components of the sales organization. Companies should not implement sales-related technology for the sake of technology; rather they should **automate processes** to drive efficiency into the way they sell to and service customers. The goal is shortening cycles, improving quality of communication both internally and externally, improving "speed-to-information", and improving "speed-to-results".

Examples of specific processes that should be automated include:

1. Lead tracking via marketing campaign management
2. Account & contact management
3. Customer Message Management (CMM)
4. Sales opportunity management
5. Sales forecasting
6. Formal sales methodology adherence (i.e. Solution Selling, etc.)

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7. Proposal development
8. Sales Knowledge Management (SKM)
9. Formal Sales Coaching
10. Reporting for all of the above processes

## Summary

At the end of the day, all sales people want to know what is expected of them in terms of what they sell, how they sell, and specific measurable results they must deliver.

Furthermore, they want to know they have the support of the management team and the necessary tools and information to get the job done right. The more structured the support, guidance and processes – the better. Keep in mind that most sales people are not eagles, so they require this structured approach. As a result, it is crucial to the sales organization's success that the leadership team provides a systematic approach with an emphasis on: Sales Talent, Sales Performance and Sales Management.



**Figure 2:** Sales Operational Components

Sales Talent is addressed within component #1 of the PPA Model – People. Sales Performance is addressed within component #2 of the PPA Model – Process. Keep in mind that component #3, Sales Management, is really the cultivation, support and motivation of sales talent and the way that sales talent performs. This, of course, is dependent upon whether the Prescriptive Framework for Sales Success (described above and throughout this white paper) is successfully implemented as the system for Sales Management. All of these components make up the complete sales organization and will surely lend itself to building and leading a successful sales team.

## About Sales Integrity, Inc.

Sales Integrity, a sales coaching, training and consulting firm, helps salespeople and sales organizations become money-making profit generators. Sales Integrity has custom-developed **The Sales Operation Framework™**, a sales and marketing content library of documented best practices, messaging, processes, templates and tools. The Sales Operation Framework™ consists of four sub-frameworks: **The Sales Discipline Framework™**, **The Sales Success Framework™**, **The Sales Enablement Framework™**, and **The Sales Management Framework™**. Sales Integrity draws upon the vast experience and resources within these frameworks to provide individual coaching services to salespeople and deliver professional services to its corporate clients that produce top-line growth and bottom-line results. To learn more about Sales Integrity please visit us on the web at [www.salesintegrity.com](http://www.salesintegrity.com).