4 WAYS TO PUT MORE HORSEPOWER INTO YOUR SALES PROCESS

AN EBOOK BY ANDY PAUL

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If you work in sales, you feel the pressure. Your team’s plate is already chock-full hunting for quality leads, writing emails, making calls, and negotiating and closing deals. When you add in “not-always-related-to-sales” meetings and internal administrative tasks, your sales team loses even more precious selling time.

What can you do as a sales leader to help your reps increase their productivity?

First, you need to understand what productivity means in sales. It’s not about the quantity of activities reps perform. Or even the quantity of sales they close.

In sales, productivity simply equals the amount of revenue generated per hour of selling. As in any other measure of economic productivity, to increase sales productivity, you have to increase the revenue that you generate per hour of selling time.

The following four steps have been proven to help sales organizations drive more revenue per hour invested in their selling process.
A sales rep is like a consultant. By collaborating with customers on their problems and needs, sales reps can help guide them toward the right purchasing decision. The critical question is, “How much time does this take?”

How much time does your team spend helping the customer during the purchasing process?

If sales productivity is equal to the amount of revenue generated per hour of selling, then sales leaders must measure the time that their team, including themselves, invests in their sales process with customers.

**WINNING STRATEGIES**

**Document each customer-facing step of your sales process.**
Look at every step and measure the time required to complete each one.
- How many sales interactions are there in each stage of your sales process?
- How long (in sales hours) does each interaction require? Be sure to include both preparation and execution time!
- Run correlations of time required to customer type, deal size and win rates.

**Do a periodic audit.**
Have all team members capture information on three active deals.
- Review the averages. What can you do to coach reps to reduce the amount of time they require to move a prospect from initial interest to a decision?
- Measure the cumulative time differential of one person versus another. What is the pattern? What does it tell you about what your most productive sales reps are doing that the others aren’t but could be?
Like all of us, customers are busy! Research finds that B2B buyers want to make decisions faster – up to 40% faster in IT!

Additionally, today’s buyers want subject matter experts. That means your sales reps need business acumen and relevant domain experience and expertise. While they don’t have to be the ultimate expert in every subject area, they need to effectively and efficiently handle qualification and discovery calls.

Reps need to ask the right questions during the early stages of a deal to get to the optimal solution faster. They need the business acumen to ask perceptive follow-up questions based on customer responses.

The first seller to create the buyer’s vision has a 65% chance of winning the business. Creating that vision comes from knowledge – derived from education, observation and experience.

**WINNING STRATEGIES**

**Hire specialists instead of generalists.**

- Define sales job descriptions based on what customers need from you to make a decision. What knowledge and expertise do they need from you to move more quickly through their buying process?

- Pay attention to how you describe open sales jobs. Eliminate terms such as aggressive, closer, extrovert, and hunter in favor of analytical, problem solver, curious, agile learner, and empathetic.

- Test candidates for all required skills and knowledge.

A prospect will never hold it against you if your sales rep isn’t ‘sales-y’ enough but will if your sales rep can’t deliver value on every sales interaction.
For every sales interaction, salespeople must answer the following question:

“What value am I going to deliver on this call that will move the prospect at least one step closer to making a decision?”

If that question can’t be answered, you’re wasting the customer’s time! Raise the quality of your sales interactions. Train your team to put customer value first. You’ll build a stronger, trusted relationship with your customer more quickly.

**WINNING STRATEGIES**

**Make sure sales reps are prepared for every sales interaction.**
- Make sure salespeople are trained in a well-defined sales process.
- Create a sales culture that is focused on delivering value and accountability.
- Reduce your focus on metrics, and increase your focus on coaching reps to sell with value on every call.

**Have a Value Plan for every sales interaction, large or small.**
- Before every sales touch answer these questions:
  - What value am I going to deliver that moves the prospect forward in their buying process?
  - What next steps will they commit to as a result of receiving this value?
We’ve all heard it before. Up to 50% of sales go to the first responder. In sales, timing is everything. And sellers have a lot more control over this than they think. Your reps have complete control over how long they take to respond to a lead, an inquiry, or a question from a prospect or customer. Sales organizations must accelerate customer responsiveness by delivering insights and information with speed. Buyers want responsive sellers. Don’t be a slow seller and lose out on the opportunity.

WINNING STRATEGIES

Keep a constant eye on your team’s responsiveness.

- Continually measure your team’s responsiveness. Review in weekly or monthly sales meetings.
- Adjust sales processes to eliminate wasted time and accelerate responsiveness.
- Use sales tools that alert reps to prospect engagement to reach out to them at their moment of interest.
A COLLABORATIVE APPROACH SPEEDS THE PROCESS

Selling is not something you do to a prospect. It’s a process you go through with them. The best performing sales teams collaborate with their customers to co-create value and discover the right solution together.

To achieve a collaborative approach, sales leaders must start with a clear understanding about the amount of *time* that their reps require with customers to guide them in their sales journey.

Sales reps must be knowledgeable and have the expertise to create the ‘buyer vision’ that prospects are looking for in order to guide them to the right solution.

Sales teams need the ability to *anticipate* and be prepared to answer a prospect’s questions before they even ask them.

With more to do and less time to do it in, sales is not just about having the right content at the right time. Sales organizations need processes and people able to support *intelligent* interactions that respond to a customer’s particular needs, and consistently deliver value in a timely manner.
ABOUT ANDY PAUL

As an author, blogger, podcaster, speaker and consultant, Andy Paul has helped thousands of companies and their salespeople to accelerate their sales.

Andy Paul is the author of *Amp Up Your Sales: Powerful Strategies That Move Customers To Make Fast, Favorable Decisions* (AMACOM Books, 2014). *Amp Up Your Sales* is on Amazon's list of the 20 Top-Rated Sales Books of All Time. Andy is also the author of *Zero-Time Selling: 10 Essential Steps to Accelerate Every Company’s Sales*, which won Top Sales World's award as one of the Top 3 Sales & Marketing Books of 2011. He is recognized by Forbes as #7 on their list of the top 30 social selling influencers globally. Seismic, Inc. recognized Andy as one of the Top 25 Sales Enablement resources in 2015.

His podcast, *Accelerate! with Andy Paul*, is a go-to resource offering the latest insights from the leading authorities in sales, sales enablement, leadership, coaching, and personal development to help sellers accelerate the growth of their sales and their businesses.

His newsletter, *The Weekly Sales Fix*, includes summaries of his best articles and advice, and is read by thousands of sales professionals every week.

Since founding *Zero-Time Selling, Inc.* in 2000, Andy has worked as an advisor to CEOs and entrepreneurs to transform sales team productivity and individual sales performance.

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ABOUT LIVEHIVE

LiveHive, Inc. delivers a complete sales acceleration platform that empowers sales leaders with deep buyer-based engagement analytic insights into the effectiveness of their teams’ sales efforts. With LiveHive’s comprehensive analytics, sales organizations can personalize and automate their follow-up to get more time in the day to focus on building sales relationships and accelerating sales.

LiveHive helps sales leaders get insight into reps’ email, calling and follow-up activity, ramp up new reps to full productivity faster, and ensure consistent messaging across the organization, empowering them to build a successful repeatable sales process. LiveHive’s SmartPath automated email and call scheduling, and award-winning engagement analytics let sales reps focus on core selling activity and sales leaders quickly understand the effectiveness of their sales teams’ efforts.

For more information, visit www.livehive.com.