



## THE COMPLETE SALES SYSTEM APPROACH

The current state of sales is in disruption. There are ballooning buyer expectations, more people involved in the buying process and fundamental shifts in workforces and technology. Selling as a profession is evolving, and we need to bring more science to the art of selling. Sales 2.0 explores how to use repeatable, scalable, and a proven sales methodology with modern selling tools. Follow these steps, and you'll soon be spending more time adding value to your sales relationships.

### THE COMPLETE SALES SYSTEM APPROACH

Our Sales System is a customer-centric approach that we use as our lens to look at the B2B world. It begins, of course, with the customer at the core. By focusing on the customer, knowing who they are, how they buy and why they buy from us ensures that we understand the customer's concept. What they are trying to accomplish, fix or avoid.



The first layer out is our customer management strategies. It's what we do to find business, to win business, and to grow relationships. It entails:

*Lead Generation:* Targeting and gaining access to prospects, scoping their needs and qualifying opportunities.

*Pursue Deals:* Allocating resources to qualified opportunities and managing the sales process through closing.

*Grow Relationships:* Protecting and growing strategic accounts.



The next layer out is our business management strategies. It's our people and organization, our operations and enablement, and management and execution.

*People and Sales Structure:* Organizing, staffing, developing, and managing a high-performance sales force.

*Operations and Enablement:* Providing infrastructure and programs to increase sales productivity and drive sales force transformation.

*Sales Management Execution:* Aligning the organization and driving the behaviors essential for success.

Everything we do is through the lens of our Sales System. It is our Rosetta Stone for analyzing and comparing sales behaviors.

## LEAD GENERATION

It's time to think about lead generation in a more human way. Understanding who your prospects are and what they need. When you do this, you're working with your prospects and you position yourself as a resource, not just a vendor who wants their money.

No one enjoys making a cold call! And the truth is, most of the time there is a better way to start the conversation. Nearly 10 years of extensive research across geographies and industries has shown that sellers who adhere to a specific sales process are more likely to be successful.

Our LeadGen 2.0 system is a multi-channel outbound lead generation and sales development solution for small and midsize B2B companies using LinkedIn messaging, email, social media posts and phone calling.





The multi-channel system we will execute on behalf of your company looks like this:

1. *Nail a Niche.* Everyone is bombarded with noise and messages, and with copycat companies popping up overnight, every market is busy and competitive. Your ability to specialize, stand out, be targeted, and have messaging that is simple enough to understand is the key to growth.

When you try to speak to everyone, you speak to no one. Be specific so that you can call out certain pain points and outcomes relevant to the exact audience you want to target. With your niche nailed you'll be able to make more money per customer, have faster sales, higher win rates, and less effort per deal. When you know your niche, you know who to target, what pains to address, and the business result you deliver. You know why your customers NEED you, not just why they WANT you.

2. *Develop an in-depth prospect profile.* Again, this is imperative. Really know who your prospect is. Do deep research and develop a persona that you can market to that helps drive your copy & creative mixes. If you don't identify and understand who you are trying to target when you are building your LeadGen 2.0 system, then you are probably not going to have much success.

Creating a prospect profile helps you in gathering as much information as possible on your ideal prospect so you can truly understand their wants and needs and what makes them tick.

The key areas you need to focus on when creating your Prospect Profile:

- Professional Demographics and Professional Attributes

Writing all this info down helps you home in on the best people to connect with and provides valuable insights on how you are going to approach and overall, it will help you deliver more focused and effective messaging campaigns.

3. *Dial in your targeting and messaging.* To drive booked appointments, your targeting and messaging should be your primary focus.
4. *Highlight one main pain point.* Use your prospect profile to craft content that speaks directly to specific pain points your potential prospects may have. What frustrates them in achieving their work goals? What causes them stress? Or wastes their time? Or costs their company money?
5. *Post on social media.* The goal with social media content is to have variety between content that is:



**Relevancy:** What your prospects care about. This shows you understand their industry, their role, or their situation.

Example: If you provide COACHING services to Small Business owners, relevant content to the small business owner audience could cover anything from hiring practices to leadership to sales content and more.

**Authority:** This is content that highlights you as a subject matter expert. The go-to option in your market for specific questions about your niche that your prospects may have.

Example: If you're an SEO provider, this would be search marketing and search engine optimization content. Perhaps your own content. Or content on updates or changes coming to common search platforms.

**Consistency:** This is the key. Having a consistent presence on social media is how you begin to create top-of-mind awareness. We recommend aiming for one post per weekday at a minimum.

6. *Send emails, make phone calls, book meetings.*

Our LeadGen 2.0 system allows you to continually optimize your lead generation and sales development over time. This is what I call the machine - where you can turn it on and see new leads coming in the door, with a pretty good idea of what results you can expect.

## **PURSUE DEALS**

### **STRATEGY AND TACTICS**

I would like to share our definitions of Strategy and Tactics.

Strategy is the process you use to lay out your moves in advance of the sales call. Tactics refer to the techniques you use when you're actually face to face with a customer or prospect in a sales call. The key words in Strategy are *process* and *advance*. The key words in Tactics are *techniques* and *face-to-face*. The critical difference between strategy and tactics is: Strategy is meant to get you in the right place with the right people at the right time so that you can make the right tactical presentation. So, strategy is planning while tactics deals with executing the strategy.



## **MORE PEOPLE INVOLVED IN THE BUYING PROCESS**

CSO Insights revealed there are now 6.4 decision makers involved in an average B2B sales cycle. Yet many of us are still relying on one or two people inside a company to close the deal. This is an increasingly risky strategy as the sizes of your deals grow. Ideally, you want to establish connections with all the key Buying Influences in the buying team. We have found that the more right people you're connected with in the decision process, the higher your chances of success. This is true for both new customer acquisitions as well as renewals. If you only have one lead and this person leaves the organization, you may have to start the entire sale process from the beginning.

No matter how many people are involved in a buying decision and no matter what official functions they play in their organization, the same four buying roles are present in every complex sale. It's more useful to focus on roles rather than comfort level, past contacts, or job titles because any given player in an account can shift roles quickly and unpredictably, even though their title and official function on the buying team remain the same. If you can identify who's playing which role in your deal, you'll be able to tailor your proposal early on and increase the odds of winning the deal.

## **THE FOUR BUYING INFLUENCES**

Each buying influence you encounter will have a different focus. This is the reason that we separate the players into four distinct categories of buying influences. You will come to find out that each buying influence has a different point of view regarding his or her concept, your proposal, and a different reason for considering it. It isn't enough to just identify key players in a sale. We need to understand what each buying influence's concept and what their 'Personal Win' is. The risk of not identifying all the players of a role is potentially losing the sale. With each buying influence we need to have a strategy and an action plan that takes into account his or her current perception of the business situation and his or her perceived discrepancy between reality and results. This is what I refer to as "covering the bases" with your buying influences. Below I have identified the four types of buying influences, their role and focus.

The role of the *Economic Buying Influence* is to give final approval. This is the person who can say YES when everyone else has said NO, as well as veto the deal that everybody else has approved. The focus of the EBI is the bottom line and the impact this sale will have to his organization.



The *User Buying Influence's* role is to judge the impact this sale will have on his job performance. In any given sales there could be several or many UBIs. Their focus is always on the job to be done.

The role of the *Technical Buying Influence* is to screen out or be the gatekeeper in his or her area of expertise. They could come from functions like Purchasing, Finance, Legal and Technology. The TBI's focus is making judgements about technicalities in their specific areas of expertise.

The fourth and final role of Buying Influences is your *Coach*. It is imperative that you develop at least one coach. He or she will act as your guide for this sales opportunity. The Coach's focus is your success with this proposal.

## HOW TO FIND YOUR BUYING INFLUENCES

The easiest way to find out who influences the buying decision is to ask your connections directly. The trouble is they don't always know who else is part of the process, and if they do, they can be reluctant to offer introductions. Sometimes your relationship hasn't progressed to a stage where either of you will feel comfortable having that conversation. And you don't want to risk giving the impression that the person isn't worth your time by asking about others at the company. You could use more traditional approaches like company directories, trade publications or word of mouth to find other influencers. But these options have diminishing returns. Perhaps you are already using your normal LinkedIn membership to try to find out who else works at the company. But what if you want to find out if you're already connected to someone at the organization? Or more importantly, what if you're missing out on a referral through someone on your own team?

## IDENTIFYING THE CUSTOMER'S BUYING MODE

Predicting the best time to call or meet a Buying Influence is one of the greatest unknowns in the world of selling.

The Four Response Modes of Buying Influences can help you gauge the best time and manner to approach.

A company in a **Growth** mode is always ready to say yes to somebody's proposal – though not necessarily yours. Some early indicators might be a buyer who recently joined the company, or there are lots of job openings in sales roles, or company is in the news for spectacular growth. When companies are in a Growth mode you will often hear their people say, I need to do more. I need to do it faster. I need to do it better. With these indicators the probability of the company taking action is high.



A company in **Trouble** mode is begging for immediate change as a way of preventing a defeat. The company wants to fix whatever is wrong and get back to normal. Some indicators might be negative press, or high turnover of staff. The kind of things people say when they are in the trouble mode, I need to do more right now. I needed it yesterday. If I don't fix it soon, I am sunk. The probability of the company taking action is high.

A company in **Even Keel** mode has a "why rock the boat now" mindset, and your chance of making a sale is low. In this mode some indicators might be where the Buyer has been in their role more than a year, or the business is: currently focused on other areas of growth. They might be telling you; Go away. Don't rock the boat. Why do I need to make a change? The probability of the buyer taking action is very low.

A company in **Over Confident** mode is the most difficult of the four Response Modes to sell to. Some of the indicators might be where the buyer has been in his role for a couple of years, or company is successful, and there are a small number of job openings. You might hear their people saying, Who needs your proposal. I never had it so good. Things are too good to be true. Here the probability is practically Nil.

#### **HAVING A VALID BUSINESS REASON TO MEET**

Before you walk into a sales call or meeting, you must ask yourself: "What is the reason this person is meeting with me?" It may sound obvious, yet most sellers don't ask this simple question. Instead of giving their customers sound business reasons for spending time with them, sellers focus on their own comfort areas, the product pitch or nonproductive social calls and lunch dates. Thus, the sales process falters or stalls.

A Valid Business Reason (VBR) is something that gives your potential buyer a reason to spend their valuable time with you. It is important to think about your meeting from the customer's perspective. A VBR accomplishes two major goals: 1) It gives the potential customer information he needs in order to understand exactly who you are and why you want to meet. 2) It establishes a common foundation, so that when you do meet you can concentrate on understanding what the customer is trying to accomplish, fix or avoid.

#### **ACTION COMMITMENTS**

Now that we considered the purpose of the meeting from the Buying influence's perspective, let's think about what we would like to happen as a result of this meeting. Many times, at the end of a customer meeting, the salesperson leaves with a number of actions to accomplish. We would like to make sure that our buying influence is also taking action, moving his/her decision and our sales forward. We call this concept: Action Commitments.



After every meeting, both parties should leave with a set of action items that move the opportunity forward. If only the salesperson takes actions, s/he risks getting to the bottom of the funnel alone, with no sales.

The Best Action Commitment is the most the salesperson can expect the Buying Influence to commit to as a result of the meeting. It may be to get the signed contract, or it may simply be an introduction to other Buying Influences in the customer organization. The Best Action Commitment is dependent on where the Buying Influence is in the decision-making process. You don't want to ask for an activity that makes no sense given where s/he is in the sales process.

The Minimum Acceptable Action is the least commitment to an activity that the salesperson can accept to continue to invest time and effort in the Buying Influence. Once you know where the Buying Influences are in their respective buying decision process and have an idea of the types of actions they should be taking at this stage, you'll have a good foundation for creating strong best Action Commitments and Minimum Acceptable Action Commitments.

When setting Action Commitments, it is important that the two are linked. You can't have the contract being signed as the best and a follow-up meeting as the minimum. They're too far apart and may not be appropriate at this time.

Example of linkage: Best Action Commitment is to have the Buying Influence agree to a follow up meeting and include the key Technical Buying Influence and User Buying Influences from the IT and Operations organizations. The Minimum Acceptable Action is for the Buying Influence to get feedback from those individuals to share with me at our next meeting.

Finally, Action Commitments are reality checks:

- What is the Buying Influence willing to do?
- Where are you in the sales process? Where is the buying Influence in his/her decision process?

## **COMPETITION**

The competitive situations people are facing today are much more intense and trickier than they have ever been before. What the other guy is doing is a major item on most sales professional's worry lists. Our view is that competition is often overrated as a 'make or break' factor. Focusing on the competition can be just as dangerous as ignoring it.





We believe that strategies that focus on competition are reactive, not proactive in nature. They are not responsive to the customer's needs, but rather focus on opposing what the competition may do. This will only validate that your competition is good and represents what you strive to achieve.

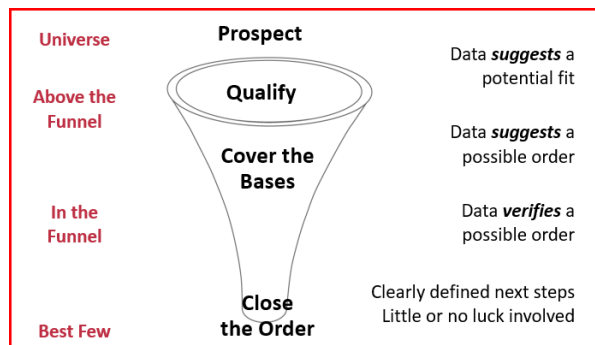
We define competition as any alternative solution. There are four types of competition:

- Buying from someone else
- Using internal resources
- Using budget for something else
- Doing nothing

What sellers are competing for today is the customer's decision to allocate resources to their solution.

### SALES FUNNEL MANAGEMENT

The Sales Funnel is a concept that should be used as a tool to help focus salespeople and managers on the selling work that needs to be accomplished. A Sales Funnel helps define where a sales opportunity is in the selling process and what the next action steps should be. It is useful to help manage selling time and prioritize selling activities. It is also a tool to help salespeople avoid the sales roller coaster effect. Unevenness of income is so common in sales that many managers and sales reps consider it kind of a natural law. It's not. No matter how natural and inescapable it may seem, the roller coaster effect is not inevitable. There are alternatives to waiting out the lows until the next high.



A successful sales rep must be able to do four kinds of selling work: prospect, qualify, cover the bases, and close the deal.



*Prospect*: any company or person that could ever probably use the seller's product, service, or solution, usually the result of a demographic analysis.

*Qualify*: Determining which accounts have indicated that there is a possible order.

*Cover the bases*: An account in which you have found a buying influence in Growth or Trouble mode, and you are developing a strategy for pursuing this opportunity.

*Close the order*: Activities to secure the sale via a signed contract, final presentation, or however a sale is considered closed for the seller's organization.

### **SELLING WORK PRIORITIES**

With multiple opportunities in a salesperson's funnel and in various stages of the sales process, what does a salesperson do first each day? Second? Third? Fourth?

To ensure a steady and predictable revenue flow, the seller has to have sales opportunities moving steadily and predictably from the top to the bottom of the funnel.

A salesperson's first priority should always be *Close the Order*. This is common sense. It is the point of heaviest investment and greatest vulnerability. Close the order before someone else does.

Second should be to *Prospect* and third to *Qualify*. This is primarily because if it were left to the seller's own instincts, s/he would leave these two steps until last because they have the highest level of uncertainty. They are uncomfortable. If these steps don't get done early on, the Funnel will dry up, creating the sales roller coaster effect.

The fourth sales task priority is *Cover the Bases*. This task is placed fourth because a good salesperson will always take time to *Cover the Bases* but might let *Prospect* and *Qualify* slide. A large chunk of a salesperson's time can be spent nurturing, caring for, and feeding active opportunities that are in the Funnel. It is more comfortable to *Cover the Bases* than to look for new business. It's a necessary task but not at the expense of all the other selling tasks.

### **CONSIDER THESE FACTORS WHEN ALLOCATING SELLING TIME**

Priority always remains the same: *Close the Deal*, *Prospect*, *Qualify* and *Cover the Bases*. But the amount of time allocated to each task constantly changes depending on several factors.

*Tasks to be performed*: The Sales Funnel is a snapshot of a salesperson's total territory in a single moment in time. As opportunities move down the Funnel, that picture changes and the salesperson has to adjust his allocation of time in response to that change.



*Difficulty and amount of work required:* No two opportunities require exactly the same amount of work. The seller has to adjust her time allocation to accommodate those opportunities that demand more (or less) than the customary amount of selling work.

*Amount of revenue involved:* No matter where an opportunity is in the Sales Funnel, the seller will probably want to give it special attention if it will mean major income down the line.

*Potential of account:* Large accounts Above the Funnel are seen as investments in the future. It's okay to allot some time to these accounts on a regular basis because the potential payoff is high.

*Accommodation of buying cycles:* because it's virtually impossible to sell outside of a customer's buying cycle, the seller cannot ignore that buying cycle.

*Product-mix quotas:* The seller may have to adjust his time allocation to meet product quota requirements of his company. If a higher commission is paid to sell certain products, the salesperson may allocate more time to those opportunities.

Suncoast Partners International combines methodology and technology in its complete Sales System Approach. We give your sellers the process and tools they need to conduct a strategic analysis for an account with multiple decision makers. By addressing customers' business needs and personal motives, sellers uncover essential information and their reasons for buying. Through this system, sellers earn the right to engage with buyers earlier and more often in the sales cycle, leading to more win-win deals.

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