



## Top 5 Priorities for Sales Leaders

Pressure on sales leaders to be close to each and every deal is stronger than ever. The challenge is determining where sales leaders should focus their attention to provide the greatest value. In short, sales managers must prioritize. I've put together a list of the top five things sales managers should be watching for as they review the opportunities being worked by their teams. Providing focused coaching to keep the sales team managing toward a closed sale will help sales managers make the biggest possible impact on results.

1. **Get in Front of Your Customers.** There is no better place to invest time in current market conditions than with your current customers. But the most common mistake made when trying to secure this time with customers is that salespeople lack a valid business reason.

Your customers are facing new challenges. The reasons they started doing business with you may have changed in recent months. It is important to learn what's changed, but salespeople must be prepared to bring value to the conversation. Trying to schedule time to "catch up" is not likely to produce results.

2. **Have a Valid Business Reason for Every Call.** Prospects, like your current customers, have new challenges they are trying to solve. Salespeople who can articulate how they can help solve these issues are much more likely to get their calls and voicemails returned.

Learn what your salespeople are saying when trying to secure time with prospects. Which salespeople are getting the best return rate on calls? As a leader, you should be leveraging these best practices for the benefit of the rest of the team. This is a scalable activity.

3. **Reach the Senior Decision Maker.** More C-Level executives than ever are getting involved in spending and budget decisions. It's changing the buying process and leaving many sales organizations ill-prepared to adjust their sales strategies. Securing time in the C-Suite will improve win rates as opportunities get more complex.

Questions you should be asking your team:

- Have you identified the final decision maker?
- Have you spoken directly to this decision maker?
- Do you understand the challenges this company is trying to resolve from this decision maker's perspective?



4. **Get Something in Return for Discounts.** In this economy, it's understandable that salespeople will resort to heavy discounting to win new business. But when they do, do they get comparable value in return for a discount.

Are your salespeople able to negotiate effectively to win business while maintaining margins and establishing customer relationships based on trust and respect?

5. **Lose Fast.** When resources are scarce, it is important to invest in viable deals. When sales are down, salespeople tend to hold on to opportunities longer than usual. Does your sales leader have an established process to know when to stop investing in a large deal.

One coaching tip is to find out if the key contact in each opportunity is willing to provide access to others in their organization. Not getting this access is a highly accurate warning sign that something needs to change in the pursuit plan, including a decision to stop pursuit.

For sales managers who came up from the ranks as top performing salespeople, it is hard to resist jumping in on a sale. The reality is sales managers can't effectively handle every sale. It isn't efficient use of their time. Just like a great coach who can't run onto the field when a play is going wrong, your best results will come from helping the members of your team leverage their strengths and quickly getting them back on track when missteps occur.

Suncoast Partners works with organizations across all verticals to build and sustain customer-focused, high-performance organizations that can drive profitable sales.