



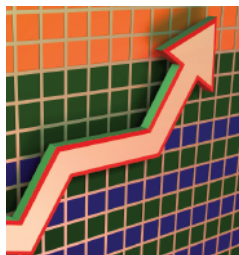
Don't get me started on...



Improving the Sales Process

For most management teams, a steady improvement in sales productivity is a necessity and a culture of “no surprises” from sales is fundamental.

Many boards assume that implementing a CRM will deliver the goods but (depending on your source) between 50% and 90 % of CRM projects fail.



We hear Sales management say that “things are just fine” but they spend far too much time changing their forecasts and juggling deals to make them fit the business plan.

What are the basics for getting this right?

Be systematic, don't tinker, think 80/20 rule

Under pressure to get results and minimise expenditure it's understandable that many organisations find it difficult to make selling work like the well-oiled machine we'd all like it to be. Making incremental improvements to sales performance rarely delivers the kind of results that you'll see from a well structured process improvement approach, Who's got it right ? In-house or external, get someone good at looking at the whole process to get you started.

What works? catch it and do it

Many personal characteristics can make a salesperson successful. That said, in most sales teams the difference in results between the top performers and the majority is rarely dictated by innate abilities. The majority can succeed too if they are able to understand and replicate what the top performers do well; this is a combination of both skills and process. Making it easier for everyone to replicate the best deals can have a massive impact on productivity, a real win-win all round.

Risk management and sales

Risk is an integral part of any business and risk management is part of any well-run business but rarely are the techniques applied to sales. What's the risk in a major deal slipping into the next quarter? Risk in sales can be managed effectively with clear qualification, definitions and process. Managers don't often lose their jobs by correctly forecasting a downturn in the market but a succession of surprises can definitely be harmful to a career.

Don't make stuff that doesn't work well, go faster

Like any other business process, making sales work faster is of little value unless it's the right thing to do. Big busy businesses make CRM essential so it's vital to have a clear understanding of the sales process that's right for your business if you're going to be competitive. Introducing new technology without challenging the status quo is short term and short sighted and can be incredibly costly over time.

Keep it simple

Having a suitable methodology helps sales work more effectively, working together and talking the same language. Having it implemented in the CRM makes it part of “the way we do things here”, there's no doubt that ‘what gets measured gets done’. But this goes horribly wrong when too many steps get specified, when managers mandate too much and it all takes more time than it's worth. Only when sales people find the system easy to use and helpful will you get the results you seek.

There's no silver bullet

This closing strategy, that CRM, this sales technique, may address part of the challenge but it's only when you link them all together that benefits will flow. Tying the sales methodology together with best practise and implementing it intelligently in a suitable CRM makes it all work.

Practising what we preach...

We've helped many sales and marketing organisations do better by taking a systematic approach to making sure that good things happen more often. We're pragmatic and believe in keeping it simple, sales have to get value out of what we do, as well as management.

Here's a checklist..

1. Be clear about your business strategy, from lead generation to closure; construct a sales pipeline that binds them together.
2. Have a sales methodology that everyone is familiar with and everyone can use. Have a common language and a clear sense of direction in selling.
3. Identify “best practice” or sales model that sums up the DNA of the way the best people do things, let the rest share the secret.
4. Measure what you do; not just the forecast but the whole sales process. “What gets measured gets done”, link this with your objectives and you'll succeed.
5. Don't try to adopt a “one size fits” all approach to skills development, all sales people are different, it's the job of management to give them what's appropriate, individually, to get them to a consistently high standard.