

A sales process that isn't mapped to the prospect's buying process is doomed to failure and poor sales will result

## Are You Selling the Way Your Prospect Buys?



An Opinion Paper by  
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Why are your sales results (monthly/quarterly) a series of peaks and valleys? Do you get frustrated and confused when talking with Sales leadership about what's going on in Sales? Do you feel like your sales success is too dependent on a few sales people? Do sales opportunities 'go dark' after a lot of investment of time and resources by your customer-facing teams? Do new sales people with a proven track record struggle to become productive in a reasonable amount of time?

If any of these questions resonate with you, you're not alone. In today's challenging business environment, many CEOs and senior executives struggle with getting good answers to these questions.

I was recently engaged by the CEO of a software company whose VP of Sales said in our introductory meeting: "Every sales opportunity is unique. There is no way we could have a consistent approach to how we sell... we'd never close any deals!" From that response I immediately knew one of the problems that needed to be addressed.

### **Sales Process is the Key**

The root cause of the issues stated above is the lack of an accurate, well-defined sales process that is aligned with the target prospect's buying process. Without a documented sales process that reflects current reality and is well understood by all customer-facing teams, a lot of problems quickly appear. Additionally, it is critical that the sales process is mapped to the customer relationship management (CRM) platform that is in place.

Your sales process is not broken because it doesn't have enough stages or oversimplifies the reality of selling your product or service. It's not broken because it isn't based off of the latest hot sales methodology. It's not broken because of shortcomings in your CRM platform. Very simply, it is broken because it does not map to your target prospect's buying process. Sales processes that are developed independent of a deep understanding of how the target prospect evaluates and buys a product or service are doomed to failure.

Several years ago I ran global sales for a start-up software company that had a green technology solution. The sale was complex, involving several business lines (IT, Marketing, Finance, Corporate Responsibility/Sustainability and Operations), was time and resource intensive and had deal sizes ranged from \$150,000 to over \$1,000,000. As we engaged our large enterprise targets in consultative selling conversations, my team and I worked hard to understand how the prospects were executing their evaluation and purchase processes. The more we understood about how the prospect was buying, the better we could define an effective sales process that drove results. Absent this ongoing dialogue and continuous learning, I'm pretty sure our sales would have been much lower.

The development of a clear, detailed sales process based on in-depth knowledge of how a target prospect buys will deliver substantial value to many parts of the business:

- Sales will have a common language to credibly and accurately talk about sales status at both macro (e.g. overall forecast) and micro (individual sales opportunities) levels.
- Sales will be able to develop and distribute key metrics that are accurate and useful because they are based on a set of defined sales stages that are adhered to throughout the Sales organization and mapped to CRM.
- Finance will be able to use clear quantitative inputs to its business projections.
- Marketing will be able to prioritize its work – from PR to lead gen to sales tools – based on analyzing the sales pipeline and having meaningful, evidence-based interactions with sales management.

By Michael Godfrey Andrews

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