salesforce sales cloud

5 WAYS TO IMPROVE OUTBOUND SALES PERFORMANCE

BEST PRACTICES TO INCREASE YOUR PIPELINE

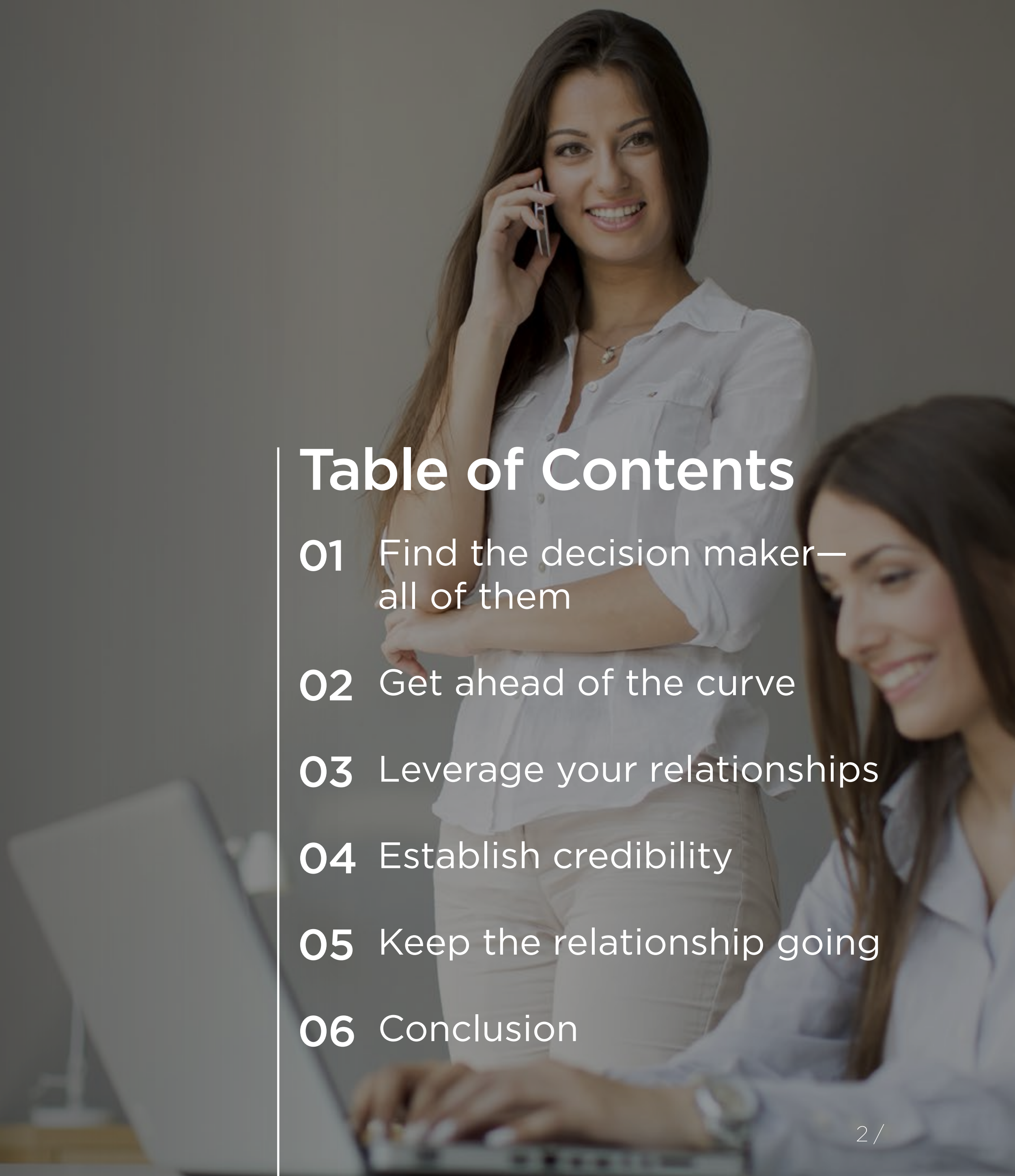
Introduction

A New Way of Playing the Numbers Game

How would you define your sales prospecting approach? Many sales professionals swear by the traditional, grind it out, numbers-based approach. This is where you pitch, pitch, pitch, and then pitch some more. After all, if you talk to enough people, some of them are going to want what you're selling. And once you have that interested prospect identified, it's time to work on aggressively closing that deal.

But there's a different approach that is gaining traction among sales professionals – one that doesn't deny the need to play the numbers game, but its success relies on quality of interactions over quantity.

Using this quality-based approach, the seller's focus is on assessing who are the right prospects to go after, really getting to know leads during the sales cycle and becoming a trusted advisor, in order to make each level of the sales funnel as efficient as possible. So, before you pick up the phone and start "dialing for dollars", read the following ways to improve the performance of your outbound selling. Think of it as getting the numbers on your side.



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Chapter 1

Find the Decision Maker — All Of Them

Here's a fact you're probably dealing with as you're reading this: according to CSO Insights, on average, four people are involved in B2B purchasing decisions.

In other words, the days of "done and done" are done. Things are much more complicated. Even if you're dealing with one key decision maker, chances are very high that that person is getting consensus with others before pulling the trigger. Unfortunately, many deals fail because these committees can't agree.

So it's more important than ever that you understand the dynamic within organizations that goes into an approval. Find out who is involved in the approval, and work to have a relationship with all the key players. And if you can't, at least know about them and their roles in the decision.

When you are involved with more than one person in an organization, you have the opportunity to become involved in the interactions that take place in the decisionmaking process, even mediating disagreements that different individuals and groups may have with each other.

Getting to know multiple people in an account will allow you to really understand the pains, issues and objectives that they are focused on, so you're not just crossing your fingers that your single champion is giving you all the information you need.

It also gives you the opportunity to expand your footprint within an account. Make yourself as deeply embedded and indispensable as possible.

> "On average, four people are involved in B2B purchasing decisions."
>
> **CSO Insights**

Chapter 2

Get Ahead of the Curve

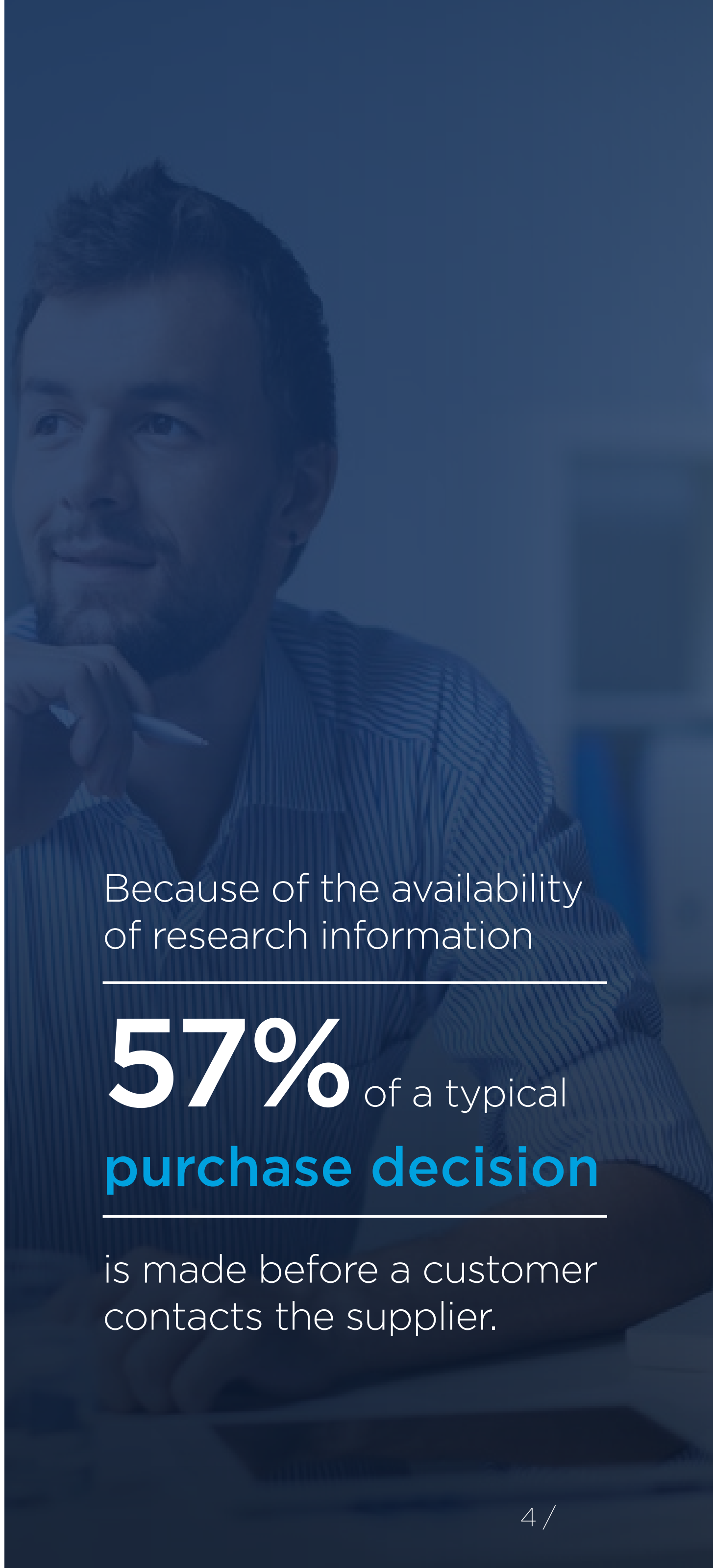
In some ways, it can be a real time saver to have an informed customer. But more times than not, it sets up challenges. Prospects don't need to reach out to, or take a call from a rep during the research phase, even if they're in the market for what the rep is selling. That's going to make it very difficult to steer the information in your favor. Instead, buyers today are reading blogs and reviews, and reaching out to peers on social media, asking what their experience has been with your company. And honestly, there's really not much that can be done about this.

But just as prospects are empowered by the web and social channels, so are reps. There are things you can do to counter this loss of control of the sales cycle, and really learn what's important to a prospect or customer.

First off, you can keep an eye out for trigger events surrounding a prospect you've spotted and even help you find new ones. We know in sales that timing is a huge factor. Find out who has started following a certain company or professional group, or who is connected with a subject matter experts on social channels. That's basically saying, "I'm looking around," so it could be a perfect time to reach out. You should also follow and participate in social groups in your industry, which will give you a presence and put you in a good position to spot these trigger events.

Prospects may be searching for you

Just as social channels can be a great way to find out more about prospects, it's key to remember that it also works the other way. Be cognizant of what you put out there on the public forum. Prospects are naturally going to think, "So, who is this person reaching out to me and what are they about and can I trust them?" Using social channels, they can get a decent idea of the answers to those questions. Being active and sharing smart thoughts about your industry on Twitter and blogs can reflect well on you. If a prospect doesn't find much on you, that may actually be a bit of a red flag. And we probatbly don't need to get into the red flags that can be raised if they find too much on you on Facebook, so think twice about what you post.



“Trunk Club runs on Salesforce. It just works. Smoothly.”

–Brian Spaly, CEO, Trunk Club

Customer Spotlight:

Trunk Club

Trunk Club is looking to disrupt an industry, and to do that they needed technology that would allow them to scale their business effortlessly. From the one-to-one interactions that customers have with their stylists to the real-time response of their customer service agents, Salesforce was the perfect solution to scale the service and personal touch that Trunk Club customers love.

Watch the film ›

Chapter 3

Leverage Your Relationships

Here's an important statistic for you: according to Nielsen, 90% of consumers trust their peers, and only 10% trust an unknown source.

In fact, it's somewhat surprising. Who would have thought that that 10% would be so high? Research shows that cold calls hit a brick wall up to 97% of the time. The adage that it's not what you know, it's who you know isn't a cliché, it's an absolute fact. But once again, social networking makes it easier to know people than ever.

You must, you must, continually network, network, network. But you can't just have a bunch of people in your Linkedin contacts and think it gets you a sure in. You've got to strengthen the links between you and a prospect, or more accurately, decrease the length of the chain.

Referrals are huge, and they dramatically increase the chances of someone responding to a call or email. And the stronger that name, the better those chances. And if you can make an introduction happen from a prospect's peer, those chances can increase the chance of making a sale by two to four-fold.

One quick tip is to make it easy on your contact to introduce you to your prospect. Draft the introduction email for them. That way you're not putting a time burden on them, and you can steer the conversation in a way that's favorable to you.

See how Salesforce1 helps you make connections on the go:
Watch the Mobile App Overview Demo

WATCH THE DEMO

Chapter 4

Establish Credibility

Social media has been a revolution in countless ways, including for sales and business—at least for those who have grabbed onto social channels with both hands and are actively leveraging the power of virtual networks. And if you're not, it's time to move past whatever has been keeping you from doing so. If you can't, your competition thanks you.

Let's look a little deeper at that number. Three quarters of people looking to buy something are leaving clues out there that they're in the market. Remember when we were talking about trigger events?

Well, in today's socially-connected business world, leveraging online channels can be the critical link for starting the process of connecting with and engaging prospective customers. Social data can be helpful if you're trying to reach out to someone who doesn't fall into tip 3, "Leverage your relationships." There are times when you're just not going to have a name to drop. But you can increase your small chances of getting a response by dropping a common interest. Tactfully using social data can give you an in, especially if it's relevant to their business.

Social Media Boundaries

These days, people share everything. And as stated, that presents a great opportunity. But obviously don't get personal ("I saw you have kids. Funny, mine are 8 and 10, too!"). Keep it professional. Avoid mentioning things you'd find on Facebook, and stick to stuff you find on LinkedIn, and maybe Twitter if they use it to talk about work. Mentioning where they went to school or an affinity for a sports team (if there are clues on professional social channels) isn't normally going to rub someone the wrong way. But even then, have a relevant point behind mentioning it. Of course personal topics aren't totally off limits over the course of a business relationship, and a Facebook invite or genuine friendship may even occur (who doesn't hope for that? It makes work more fun), but let it happen organically.

> "75% of B2B buyers are likely to use social media as part of the purchase decision."
>
> **IBM, 2012**

A New CRM for New Customers

CRM is nothing new, but the ways in which sales teams can utilize the platform has evolved significantly. Learn more about the new vs old CRM in this infographic and ask yourself, is your CRM social?

VIEW INFOGRAPHIC

Take an interactive guided tour.

Learn how a sales manager and sales rep use Salesforce to manage their day. This interactive tour guides you through the different capabilities of Salesforce. Experience the world's #1 CRM app today.

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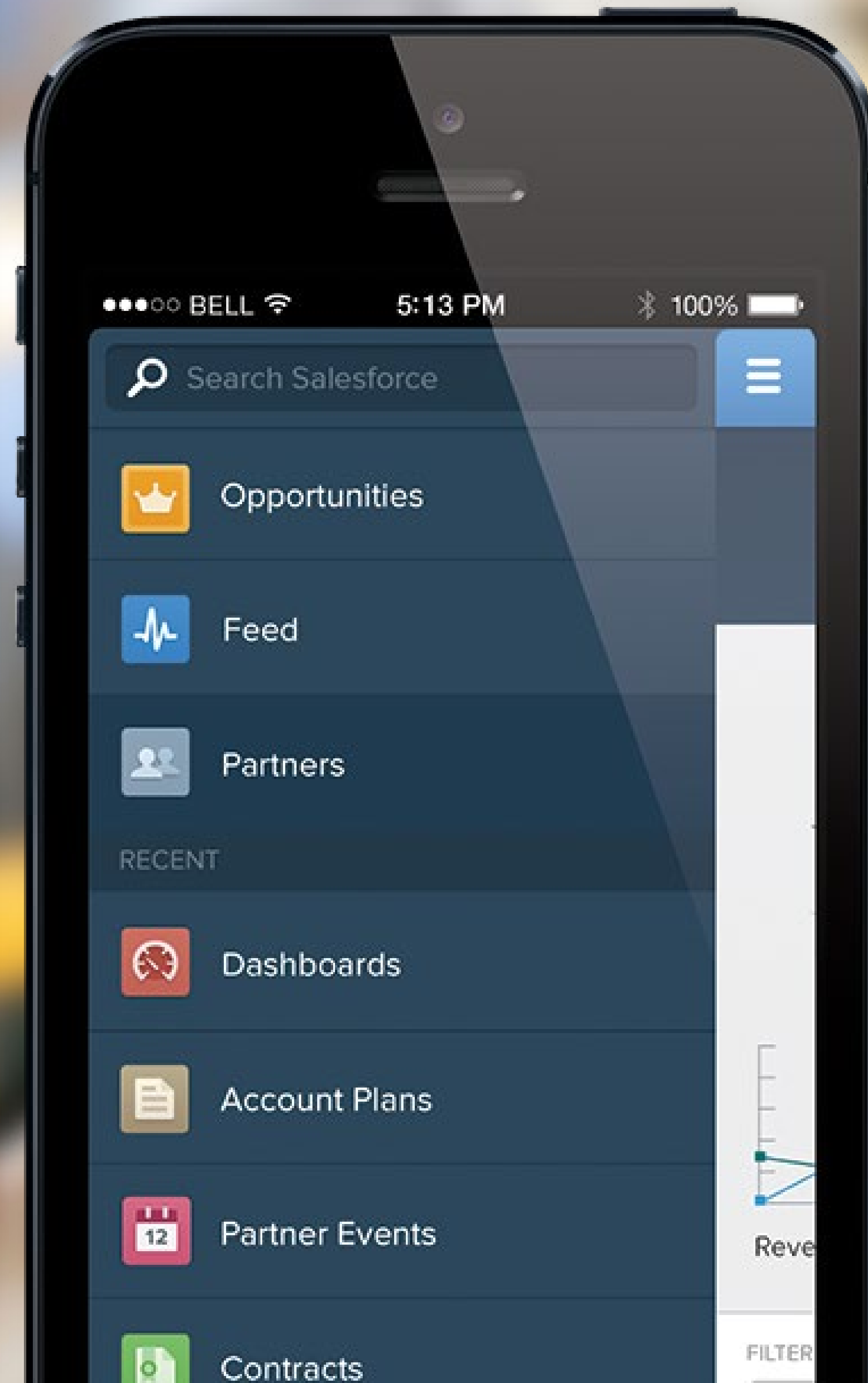

Chapter 5

Keep the Relationship Going

According to D&B, in about the time it took you to have lunch (let's say you got lucky and got a half hour for lunch today), 11 companies went bankrupt, 12 CEOs left their job, and 74 business phone numbers changed or were disconnected. And how many individuals left or started new jobs? Not even D&B is that good. But the Bureau of Labor Statistics found that the median tenure of a salaried private sector professional is less than 5 years.

Bottom line, your customer contacts are going to move around. A lot. And you absolutely must keep on top of those moves. First off, it's a great opportunity to get a new account. But don't count on your champion to pick up the phone and say, "I'm going to a new company, and we gotta have your product!"

It's up to you. It's also a good time to briefly go back to the previously mentioned necessity of having multiple relationships your customers, not just while winning an account, but also managing it. This is a great way to avoid the loss of a customer because you are not dependent on a single champion, but instead have cultivated multiple champions that believe in the relationship you have developed with them. But people don't necessarily have to move to another company to present opportunities—or potential problems. Internal organizational changes should also prompt you to reach out to an account. This can be great if a champion of yours gets promoted or reassigned into a situation you can take advantage of, but you should also be prepared if someone you're not familiar with replaces a champion (which is when having more than one relationship within the customer becomes especially important).

A final point that should be made is that all these changes are exactly why a "No" doesn't mean, "No now, and no forever." Give it some time, and follow up, even if you didn't close the deal last time. Things change, and as you know, they can change quickly. And if you've got your finger on the pulse of things like you should, you'll know when to circle back.

"The Bureau of Labor Statistics found that the median tenure of a salaried private sector professional is less than 5 years."

Conclusion

What's Been Learned?

By applying the strategies in this paper, you can transform the dynamic of outbound sales. Your approach is no longer about finding someone willing to listen to you; instead, it's about finding someone who wants to collaborate with you. The goal becomes about developing relationships that can yield ongoing results. Initially, the shift to focusing on the quality of sales interactions can seem daunting (after all, you still have a quota to achieve), but by doing this you will find that it becomes easier to find prospects. And not just a any prospects, but the right prospects – ones that are more likely to have a need for what you are selling. Even better, you can go to those prospects knowing what's important to them, providing the answers and expertise that will make more of them become customers.

SALES SOLUTIONS THAT WILL MAKE YOUR BUSINESS MORE PRODUCTIVE

If you want to grow your sales and establish a transparent sales process, you need an easy-to-use Customer Relationship Managment system. Salesforce allows you to store customer and prospect contact information, accounts, leads, and sales opportunities in one central location.

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