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5 SECRETS TO BUILDING YOUR SALES PIPELINE

AND KEEP IT GROWING

Introduction

It's Time For a Strategy Shift

The typical strategy for meeting sales targets is to set aggressive individual rep quotas, rely on your top reps to achieve them, and then hope to get enough from the rest of your team to get over the top.

And while this approach can drive growth in the short term, it's not an effective long-term strategy for getting maximum sales performance from your team. Especially wasteful is the underutilization of that "rest of your team," who could really drive growth if they were performing at the next level.

Instead, when plateaus are hit and the pressure to meet forecasts mounts, organizations tend to go to timeworn ideas to get back on track, such as cold calling blitzes to find new prospects. Or, there's always the approach of churning through average reps (without taking the time to maximize their potential, of course), hoping to find that next "natural" sales star, who will be relied on to carry the load. Sound like a stable strategy? Go ahead and say it out loud. "Nope."

While there's the obvious need to use outbound prospecting, as well as to have a goal-oriented sales culture, there are more productive ways to get the most out of your team. If you use the following tips, you'll find that reaching your company's sales goals will become easier (and who knows, maybe sleep will become easier). But this e-book is more than giving you a few tips to achieve better numbers. It's about how to make a major shift in your sales approach for the better in order to both increase individual sales rep effectiveness and improve collaborative team selling.

Combining the right tools, methodologies and staffing best practices, you can increase your pipeline several fold, leading to more closed deals and customers.

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Commit to Specializing Your Sales Department

There's an old expression, "Jack of all trades, master of none." Yet in the sales world, generating pipeline is often seen as the job of the same people responsible for closing deals. But according to Aaron Ross's bestselling book Predictable Revenue, sales efforts should be handled by specialized, focused teams:
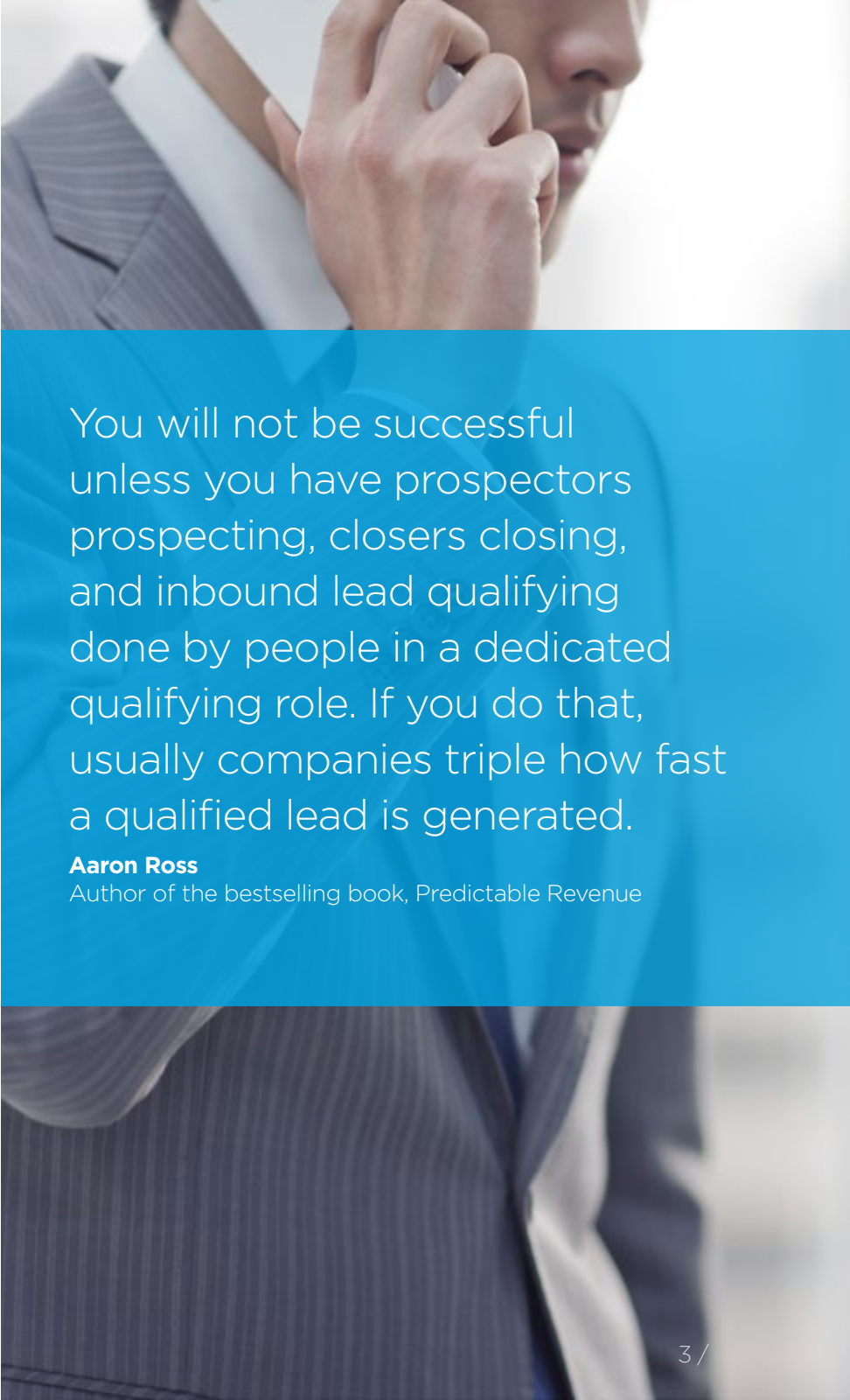
Sales Development

Consisting of outbound and inbound reps, they're solely responsible for bringing in and handing off qualified leads. This group will be a major focus of this ebook.

Field Sales Reps or Account Executives

These are your closers, and they should be focused on making sales, not prospecting and generating pipeline.

Account Managers

They specialize in nurturing and growing revenues once the AE has closed the deal.

> You will not be successful unless you have prospectors prospecting, closers closing, and inbound lead qualifying done by people in a dedicated qualifying role. If you do that, usually companies triple how fast a qualified lead is generated.
>
> **Aaron Ross**
> Author of the bestselling book, Predictable Revenue

Invest in Outbound Prospectors

Outbound prospectors are one of the the two groups that specialize in generating qualified leads. Their sole focus is prospecting. But they're hardly cold callers—at least they aren't if they follow some best practices.

Define Your Ideal Target

First off, they should be reaching out to targets with big revenue potential (think quality over quantity). Secondly, outbound prospectors need to be prepared before contact is even attempted. This can be done by defining an ideal target profile internally, and create a structured, repeatable identification methodology. There are also tools, like CRMs, lead databases, and integrated engagement solutions, that should be used to properly target and contact prospects, which we'll get into later.

Email First

Today, email is more commonly used than phone calls. It gives both prospector and prospect more control over communications. If prospects are interested, they'll respond with their information. And in turn, the prospector will have the information needed to not only have a more fluid conversation, but also know if the prospect is someone they should be talking to at all, which is crucial to productivity.

The Sales Development people mentioned above, who specialize in generating qualified leads to be handed off to the closers, are actually broken up into two parts.

Invest in an Outbound Lead Qualifying Team

This is the second part of the sales development team. The Inbound team's primary role is to qualify leads that are coming in from marketing programs, like advertising, trade shows or PR.

Because, let's face it, what comes back from those efforts is often of limited quality. But once again, it shouldn't be the job of field sales reps or account executives to sift through those unqualified leads. They need to focus on closing deals. The goal is to create an end-to end funnel with the mass of names and contact info going into the big end, and a steady stream of qualified leads dropping into the sales teams' anxious hands on the small end. Here are a few tips for inbound teams.

Qualify Leads Strategically

Like the outbound team, strategies, thresholds and structured, repeatable processes should be established to maximize lead quality and rep productivity. This team's work can be augmented with marketing automation tools on the front end of the funnel to score leads, which will help prioritize further qualification. Inbound teams should also be using a lead database that can match data and clean business leads to ensure they're up-to-date and complete. A good database will also be able to track down social data on prospects, which can be incredibly valuable for sales reps trying to establish rapport.

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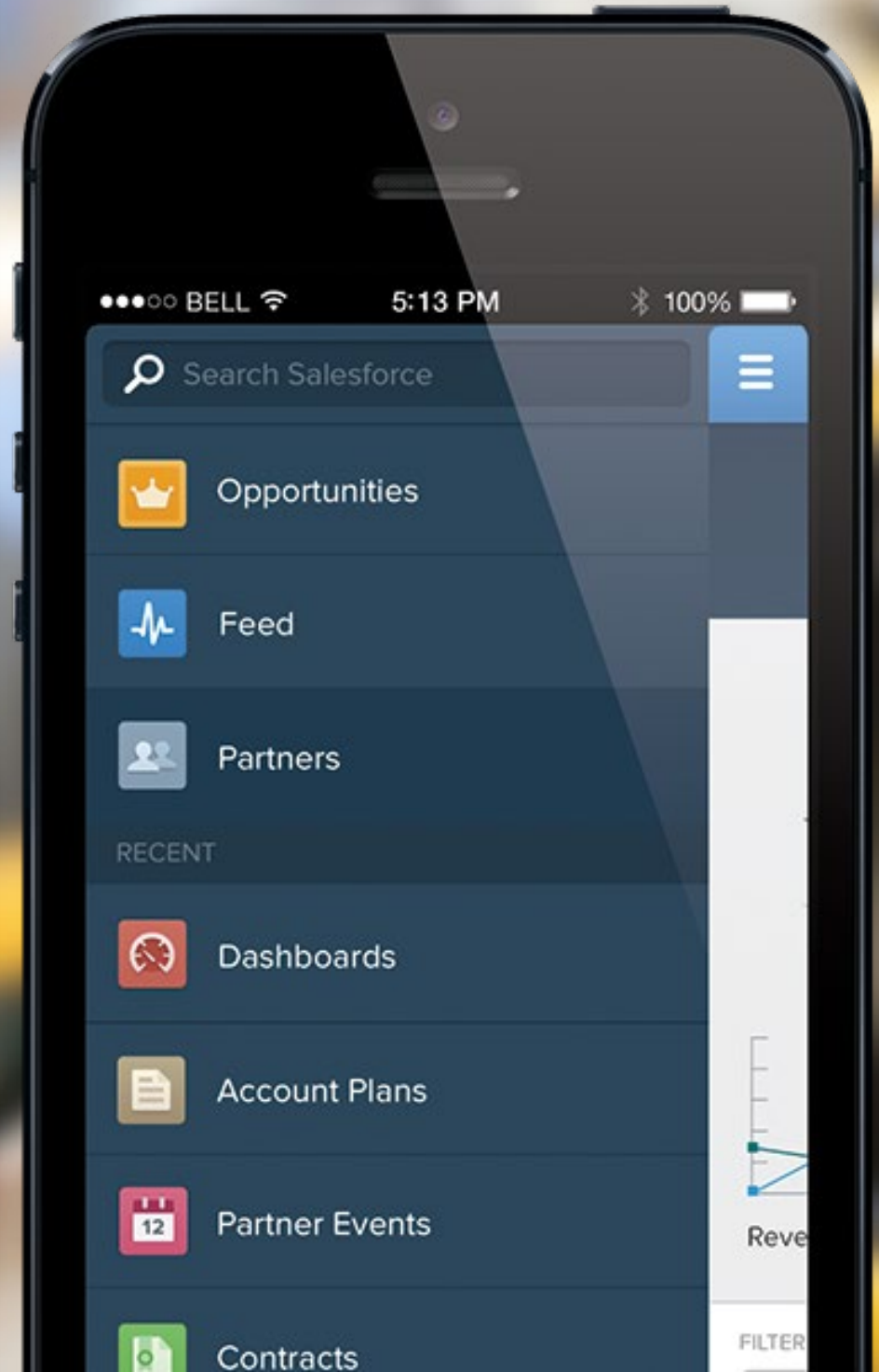
Hire the Right People for the Right Roles

Aaron Ross's philosophy in Predictable Revenue emphasizes the importance of hiring people with specialized skill sets to fill specific roles. Though it seems like a no-brainer, hiring the wrong person is common. Often this is a result of looking for the "gold-plated resume" from established environments. He describes "Builders" vs. "Growers," explained here.

Builders

These people are entrepreneurial in spirit and quick on their feet. They're better suited for environments that are new, like a start-up. Builders are great in outbound prospector and field sales roles, especially on teams that are new and still being established.

Growers

Growers are extremely valuable in those previously mentioned established environments, like a big company that has been around for a long time. They're nurturers who are highly skilled in driving and continuing the growth of a company. Growers are perfect for account manager roles.

Aaron Ross's philosophy in Predictable Revenue emphasizes the importance of hiring people with specialized skill sets to fill specific roles.

Chapter 5

Provide Your Teams With the Right Tools

The right blend of technologies is critical to leveraging the framework discussed in the previous steps of this e-book.

CRM

A Customer Relationship Management solution is the key tool in helping organize, automate, and synchronize sales, marketing, and customer service. In terms of the roles mentioned previously in this ebook, a CRM allows the disparate teams that are all working toward a common goal to collaborate—and also stay out of each other's way. The best CRM tools will also include collaboration tools, which operate much like an internal social network. This transparency is key because, obviously, if a prospect is getting contacted by multiple reps from the same company, he or she is not going to feel extra loved—they're going to feel extra annoyed.

A CRM can also give at-a-glance performance tracking to reps and managers, which is invaluable in knowing what methods (and which reps) are working well, and what's not working. This is especially crucial to newly established teams and organizations that are trying to build best practices. These results are also extremely helpful when setting up those important strategically built, repeatable processes for outbound and inbound teams.

The right blend of technologies is critical to leveraging the framework discussed in the previous steps of this eBook.

"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 ›

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.

Learn more ›

32% Improvement in win rate.

40% Increased sales productivity.

32% Increase in sales revenue.

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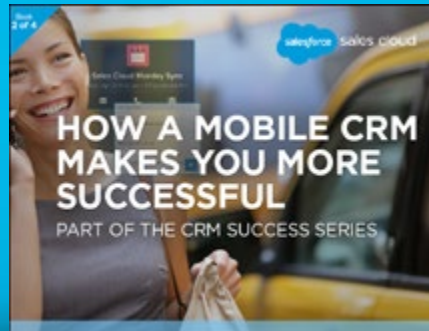
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THE CUSTOMER SUCCESS PLATFORM