7 Steps to Modernizing Your Manufacturing Sales Process

Table of Contents

Introduction

Meet Astro and Friends!

As you may have noticed, the style of this e-book is inspired by the great outdoors and U.S. national parks. Why? Because they express a feeling of fun, adventure, and exploration – and Salesforce is all about empowering people to blaze their own trails and be part of something greater. Pretty cool, huh?

If you want to know more, check out Trailhead, the fun way to learn about Salesforce. Get started today at salesforce.com/trailhead.

TRAILHEAD

***Imagine a manufacturer** using the same machine tools and production process today that it employed in the 1980s. Needless to say, it would be at a huge disadvantage versus its competitors. Now substitute "sales process" for "assembly line" and you've uncovered one of the biggest hurdles manufacturers face in growing their businesses.*

Over the past three decades, manufacturers have completely modernized their physical production through automation and modern management processes. These innovations enable them to design and produce products faster and cheaper than ever before. Unfortunately, updating sales processes has lagged far behind.

Manufacturers who have reached their full growth potential realized that much like physical production, sales is a process, and like any process it can be transformed with modern technology and innovative management. In order to maximize growth and profitability, it's essential to implement a smart, organized sales process that helps reps operate at full capacity and maximum efficiency.

This e-book will show you how and where to begin.

CHAPTER ONE

7 Steps to Modernizing Your Sales Process

Once upon a time, *manufacturers relied on the superstar salesperson who could win the day and bring in new customers thanks to relentless effort and undeniable charisma. But just like the physical process of manufacturing, companies have realized that there's a science to finding, winning, and keeping customers. And that science relies on process more than personality.*

Here are the seven steps to creating a winning sales process:

1

UNIFY PROSPECT AND CUSTOMER DATA

If a prospect asks your rep how many units are available for delivery and installation within the next 14 days, you want that rep to be able to immediately come up with the right answer. If a prospect asks a deep technical question, you want your rep to know exactly who to contact to get the answer.

So how do you get there? Chances are your production, inventory, sales, orders, assets, warranty, entitlements, support requests, and other crucial data is presently living in multiple places – including your ERP system, proprietary data bases, spreadsheets, filing cabinets, and inside people's heads.

Fortunately, there's a great tool called CRM (Customer Relationship Management), which helps your sales team take full advantage of the data your company already has, and do things like check inventory levels and production capacity in real time. And because it offers a single source of truth, CRM makes it easier for every employee to align, collaborate and rally around your customers.

Just as modern machine tools combined into an assembly line according to your production methodology help you maximize manufacturing efficiency, CRM components combined into a sales management platform according to your sales process help you maximize profitability and growth.

> *CRM makes it easier for every employee to align, collaborate and rally around your customers.*

2

GENERATE AND FOLLOW UP WITH NEW LEADS

Your sales teams always play a big role in generating new leads. From cold calls to referrals, to email marketing, they identify promising prospects and get them interested. A systematic approach to managing lead generation and tracking new leads is the key to generating business opportunities in a scalable, predictable way.

It's important to have a follow-up process in place for every new lead. The longer you wait to follow-up, the more stale and less valuable each lead becomes. CRM can help you create a lead assignment and follow-up process, so when a new lead emerges, there's a clear logic in place about who's responsible for following up, what needs to happen, and when. Details matter – especially in sales.

FUNCTIONAL DEFINITIONS

Sales is a process that consists of three components - (1) finding customers, (2) winning their business, and (3) keeping them happy. In order to understand how you can start implementing each of these components it is important to first understand the definitions of the three key terms of the sales process - leads, opportunities, and CRM.

Lead - a lead is a prospect that has expressed some interest in your products or services and has provided his/her contact info.

Opportunity - an opportunity is any in-progress deal with either a prospect or a current customer.

CRM - a software tool that allows you to define, enforce, and continuously optimize your sales process.

Customer Spotlight

FREIGHT FARMS

FOUNDED 2010

Freight Farms is an innovative agricultural equipment company that helps its customers grow up to two acres of produce inside a standard shipping container.

Issues

Sales and marketing processes weren't formalized until around 2014 and the company had data strung across 11 disconnected technology platforms. They needed a centralized place to store all customer data - from sales and orders to inventory to data gathered by sensors installed in each of the containers that were in the field.

Solution

The company's software developers were the first to adopt Salesforce. They used Xively, an API connector, to create a real-time uplink of data from all the farms into Salesforce. Of course, farm data wasn't very useful without customer data, so the second step was to migrate customer data into Salesforce from a variety of sources such as spreadsheets, docs, emails, and even handwritten notes.

In a short period of time, Freight Farms streamlined its overall operations and created a well-defined process for lead assignment, qualification, and conversion.

> *In a short period of time, Freight Farms streamlined its overall operations.*

Leads from all sources get imported into Salesforce and automatically assigned to relevant business development representatives (BDRs), who operate off a playbook for qualifying leads.

Now qualified leads get converted into opportunities and auto-assigned to the right sales rep, while unqualified leads get reengaged by marketing. Sales reps have a playbook for working opportunities, and executives can track forecasts and drill into specific deals when they feel sales execution could be improved.

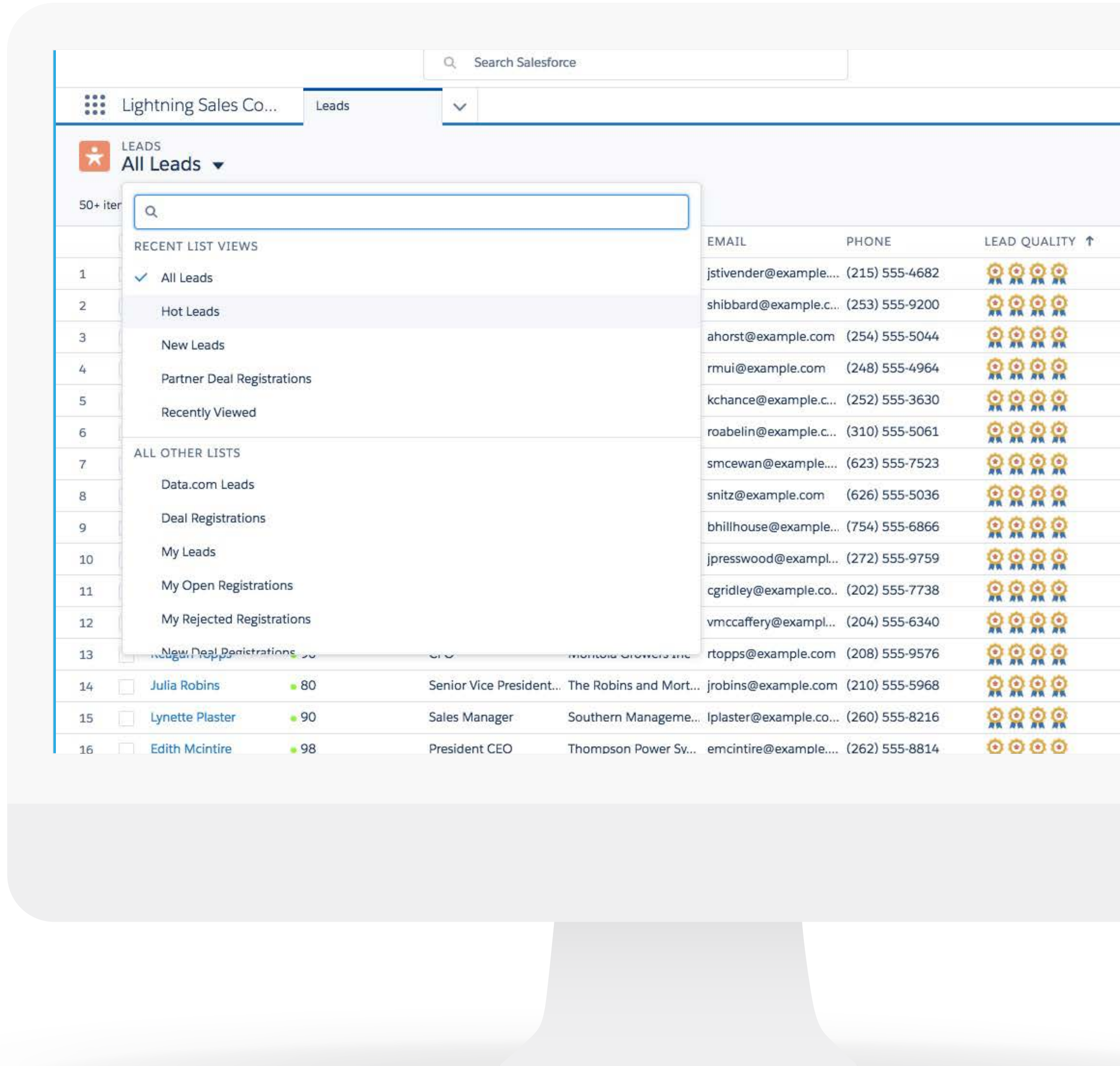
3

QUALIFY AND CONVERT LEADS

A common mistake is launching into the sales process with every prospect that agrees to a call. Some prospects have already done their research and understand which products fit their needs, while others might just be thinking of maybe someday buying a product or service you provide.

Needless to say, you want your sales team focused on the former. Lead Qualification is the process of deciding whether a prospect is worth your sales team's effort. You should develop your own parameters for what it means for your leads to be qualified.

Qualified leads should get converted to opportunities and assigned to relevant sales reps, while unqualified or unresponsive leads should get archived and possibly re-engaged at a later date.



Customer Spotlight

SlabbKiosks
THE PUBLIC TOUCH COMPANY

SLABBKIOSKS

FOUNDED 2001

SlabbKiosks is a leading international manufacturer and distributor of cost-effective, interactive kiosks – installing and customizing tens of thousands of units for hundreds of clients in more than 20 countries. It's a virtual company, which means everyone works remotely. Adding to the overall complexity, each kiosk is customized in terms of visual design, software, and hardware.

Issues

Because it didn't have a unified view of its customers, SlabbKiosks struggled to keep up with growth and provide high-level customer service. And sales reps were forced to maintain their own records of orders and invoices.

Rather than marketing to a broad audience, SlabbKiosks wanted to target a defined list of companies and government agencies likely to buy their product. So they needed a centralized place for all contacts in order to target advertising and to track engagement.

Solution

Now the company is running everything through Salesforce – from sales and service to operations and ERP. It has resulted in seamless handoffs from sales to fulfillment to shipping to installation. And each project is fully tracked within Salesforce, from deal closed to kiosk running.

> *It's all added up to being able to take on a lot more business without significantly increasing team size.*

Once employees realized they had all their data in one place, they fell in love with Salesforce. It's now much easier to find documents, answer customer questions, and collaborate remotely. It's all added up to being able to take on a lot more business without significantly increasing size of its team size. Thanks to Salesforce, SlabbKiosks is doing a lot more with a lot less effort.

4

ASSIGN AND CLASSIFY LEADS

A winning sales process should allow you to easily track the progress of lead generation, follow-up, and qualification. You can get there by assigning a status to each of your leads. For example you might want to classify each lead as either:

- **OPEN**: A prospect provided their contact info to you, but hasn't yet talked to anyone in your company
- **CONTACTED**: Someone in your company connected with the prospect and started the qualification process
- **QUALIFIED**: The prospect is sales ready
- **UNQUALIFIED**: The prospect isn't sales ready at this time
- **UNRESPONSIVE**: The prospect ignored all follow-up attempts

Once your leads have been classified, it will be easier to determine which can be considered true sales opportunities, and which need more work. This is a significant step towards improving the overall efficiency of your sales efforts.

5

IDENTIFY AND WORK OPPORTUNITIES

A new opportunity could be a prospect or an existing customer. Once again, a common mistake for many sales reps is engaging in high-value sales activities (such as drafting custom proposals, holding in-person meetings, and creating demos) without first ensuring there's actually a real opportunity for new business.

If prospects need your product, but don't have the authority to purchase it – those opportunities aren't real. If they need your product, have the authority to purchase it, but have no budget, they aren't real opportunities.

Establish a well-defined process for determining which opportunities are worth your sales reps' effort, and which should be put on hold and reengaged later. It's important to define specific criteria for qualifying opportunities, so your reps don't spend time spinning their wheels on pointless meetings and sticking pins in a doll that looks like you.

> *Once your leads have been classified, it will be easier to determine which can be considered true sales opportunities, and which need more work.*

Customer Spotlight

THOMPSON PUMP
Experience Innovation

THOMPSON PUMP & MANUFACTURING

FOUNDED 1970

Based in Port Orange, Florida, Thompson Pump & Manufacturing builds portable diesel-powered pumps for markets including construction, municipal, agriculture, military and industrial customers. On average, it rents 200 pieces of equipment and fields 30 new orders per day.

Issues

Due to its size and being family-owned, tasks like order tracking were done manually, and most communication was through email. There was no centralized location to track leads and their conversion ratio. New production orders required multiple group meetings and check-ins to keep everyone aligned. And sales reps in the field were flying blind and couldn't track updates in real time.

Together, all of this made it difficult to know how many orders the company could take on. And it meant that customer complaints could possibly take weeks to address.

> *Using Salesforce has resulted in a massive saving of about 20% of the company's overall order processing time.*

Solution

With Salesforce, Thompson Pump & Manufacturing has automated their processes and streamlined repetitive, manual tasks like entering, dispatching, and shipping orders. Service is more responsive and aligned around the customer. And reps are able to get real-time updates, no matter where they're working.

It has all resulted in a massive saving of about 20% of the company's overall order processing time. A big part of that was simply reducing the time it takes to process each order from 30 minutes to 5 minutes. Add that up over 30 to 40 orders every day, and it's easy to see why Thompson Pump & Manufacturing loves Salesforce.

6

CLOSE AND DELIVER

When an opportunity is sales-ready, you need a process in place that lets you leverage the collective intelligence of your entire organization for every deal. If reps get asked tricky questions, they need to be able to find the right expert in your organization within minutes.

During negotiations your reps should be able to be ultra responsive, so it's essential that they have a quick way to create quotes and proposals, get approvals for custom pricing and terms, and be able to check and request inventory on the spot.

Once the sale concludes you want to make sure your company delivers on your sales reps' promises. You need to be able to get all the requirements and specs to your installation and service teams right away, while ensuring the customer has total clarity on their point of contact going forward.

7

TRACK AND FORECAST

You need visibility into all in-progress deals, so you can accurately forecast sales and demand, and check the status of deals without meeting with sales reps. Meanwhile, reps need that same visibility to prioritize their time and effort and meet their sales goals.

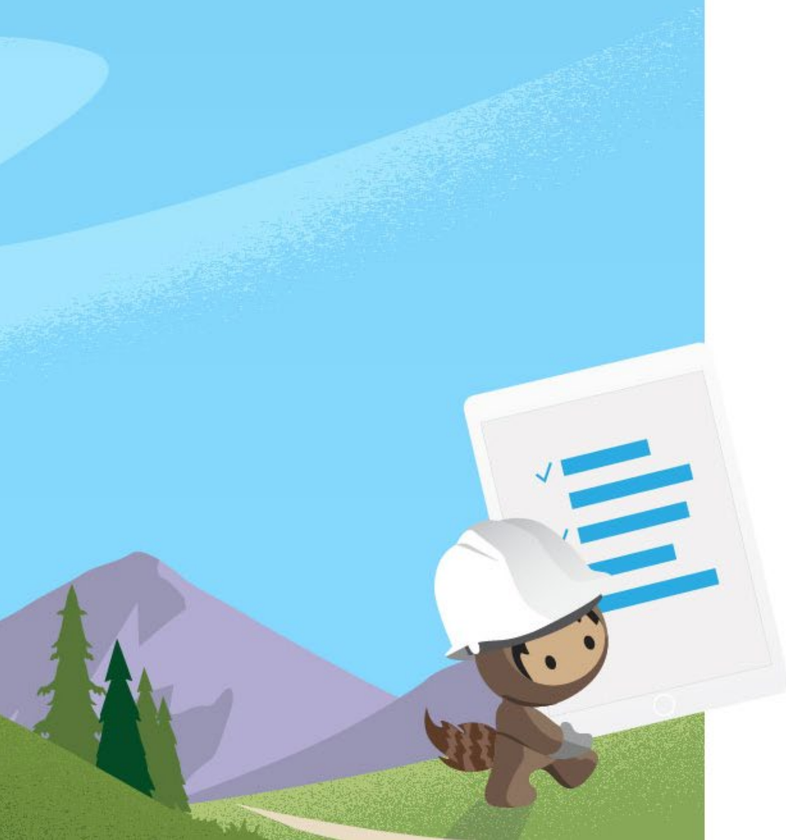
So it's critical that every activity (such as a call, email, or meeting) is correctly logged for each opportunity, and that every opportunity is classified according to the stage it's in. For example you might want to classify your opportunity stages as either (1) qualifying, (2) establishing value proposition, (3) identifying decision makers, (4) creating proposal and price quote, (5) negotiating, (6) closed won, or (7) closed lost.

Tracking opportunities by stage will help you get closer to the mark with your sales forecasts. And as more deals pass through your CRM system you'll be able to calculate actual probabilities of deal closings for each stage.

More importantly, capturing the activities that go into closing deals makes it easier to improve the overall effectiveness of your sales team. What does your best rep do? When does he or she follow up? How do they engage at different steps of the deal cycle with different types of customers? Those questions are easier to answer when all your data is stored in one place, and your whole team can connect to it. That's how a modern sales process leads to more wins and happier customers.

CHAPTER TWO

6 Questions to ask when Evaluating a CRM



1. Does it make it easy to unify all relevant prospect and customer data?
Look for solutions that support custom data structures and can readily connect to legacy systems.

2. Does it allow your teams to collaborate from anywhere?
Your sales reps spend a lot of their time on the road, so it's crucial that your CRM system is fully mobile and enables social collaboration.

3. Does it make it easy for reps to log activities, and enter/update information?
If your reps need to spend hours each day entering information into your CRM system, they won't use it. So features like automatic email capture, voice dictation, and business card scanning aren't just cool, they're necessary.

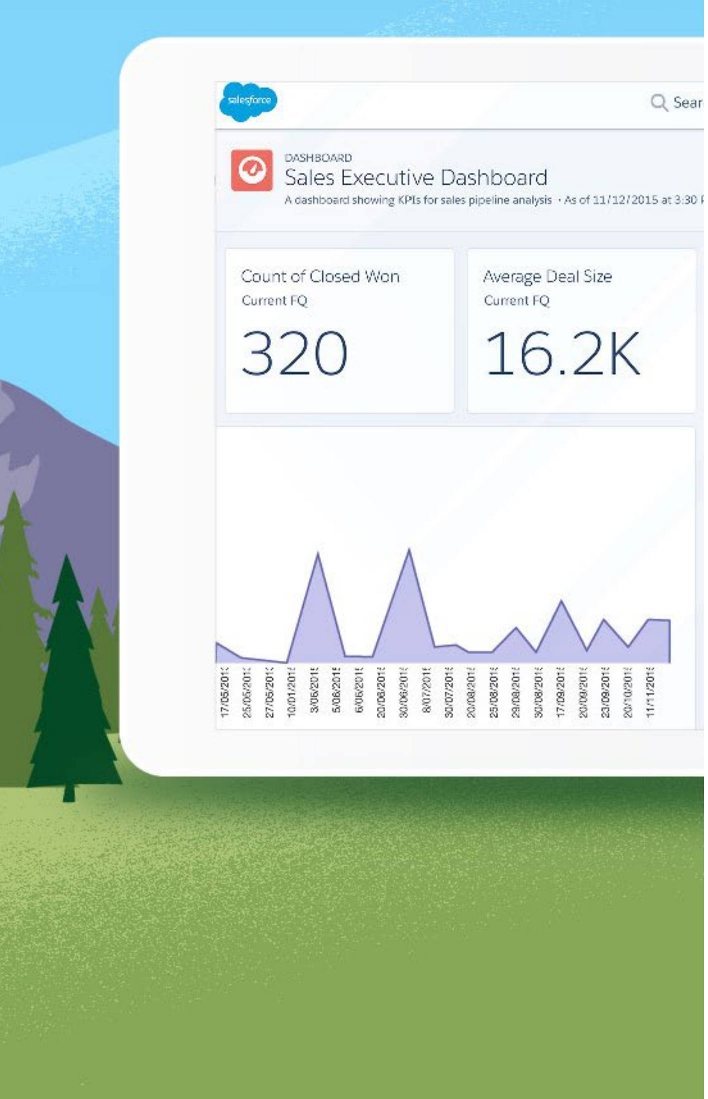
4. Does it help your reps sell?
A good CRM doesn't just help managers to keep track of progress – it also helps reps make their numbers. Look for solutions that make it easy for reps to create and secure approvals for quotes, proposals, and contracts.

5. Does it help your executives run their business?
A good CRM shouldn't just tell you what's happening, but why it's happening. If you're ahead, it's important to understand how you can maintain momentum. If you're behind, it's even more vital to figure out which factors are holding you back.

6. Is it secure and scalable?
Seek out solutions that have been certified by independent parties and offer advanced security features such as two-factor authentication. Additionally, as your business grows your sales process will evolve, so you want a CRM that's flexible and can grow with you.

CHAPTER THREE

Conclusion



No manufacturer that wants to stay in business would rely on disjointed, ever-changing processes to manage physical production. So it's surprising that companies still count on sales processes that are chaotic and ill-defined.

CRM is the crucial part of a winning sales process. The right CRM platform shouldn't just let you track progress, it should help your sales team become better at selling. It should be easy to adopt and use. And it should be as totally mobile and easy-to-use as the most popular consumer applications.

Salesforce has helped thousands of small and medium-sized manufacturing companies bring their sales processes into the 21st century. Find out how we can help you meet your toughest challenges, and why your business can't afford to wait any longer to upgrade its sales process.

Learn how Salesforce can help you find, win, and keep customers – and connect everything you need to take your growing business to new heights.

Visit salesforce.com/SMB or call 800-NOSOFTWARE.

LEARN MORE

CONNECT TO YOUR CUSTOMERS
IN A WHOLE NEW WAY