FIVE SECRETS

BUILD YOUR SALES PIPELINE AND KEEP IT GROWING

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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 eBook 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. LiveOps increased their leads by 600%, and we'll show you how you can, too.

Five secrets to building your sales pipeline and keep it growing

1. Commit to Specializing Your Sales Department
2. Invest in Outbound Prospectors
3. Invest in an Inbound Lead Qualifying Team
4. Hire the Right People for the Right Roles
5. Provide Your Teams with the Right Tools and Establish Methods to Use Them

1 COMMIT TO SPECIALIZING YOUR SALES DEPARTMENT

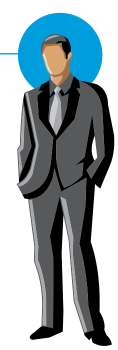
"You will not be successful unless you have prospectors prospecting, closers closing, and inbound lead qualifying done by people in a dedicated qualifying role. If you do that, usually companies triple how fast a qualified lead is generated."

– Aaron Ross, author of the bestselling book, Predictable Revenue.

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:

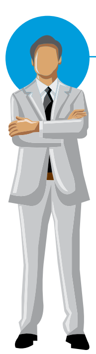
Sales Development

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.

2 INVEST IN OUTBOUND PROSPECTORS

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. Outbound prospectors, is one of them. 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.

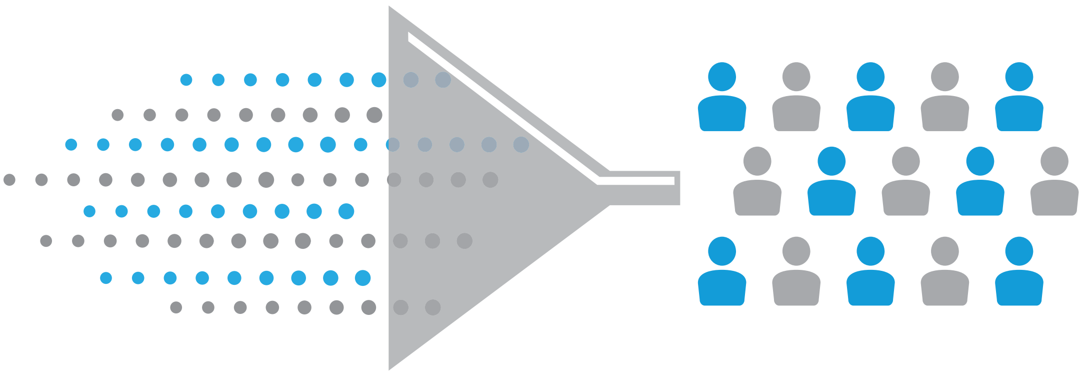
Email First

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. And if not, attempts can be made to find out who that right target is within an organization.

3 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.

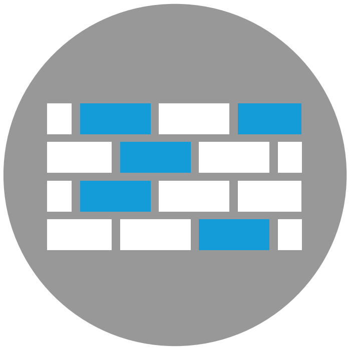


Qualify Leads Strategically

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.

4 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

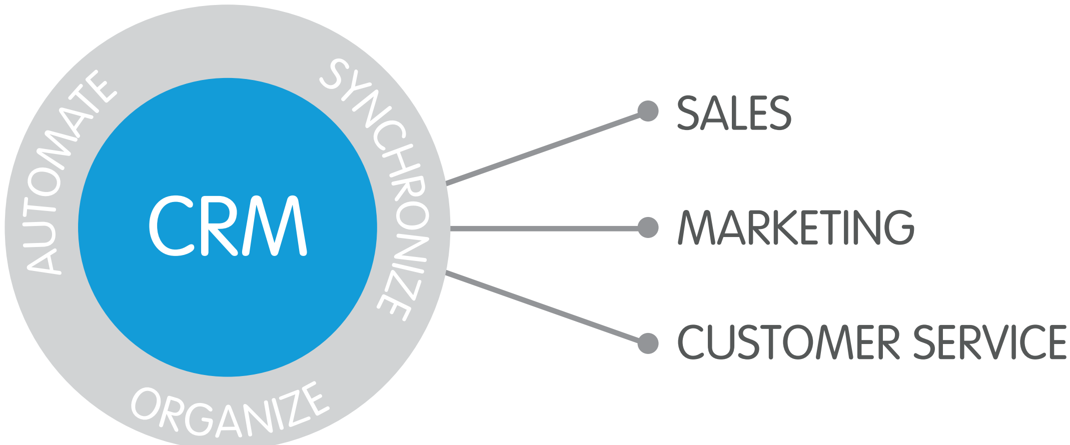
These people are entrepreneurial in spirit and quick on their feet. They're better suited for environments that are new, like a start-up. Builders are great in outbound prospector and field sales roles, especially on teams that are new and still being established.

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.

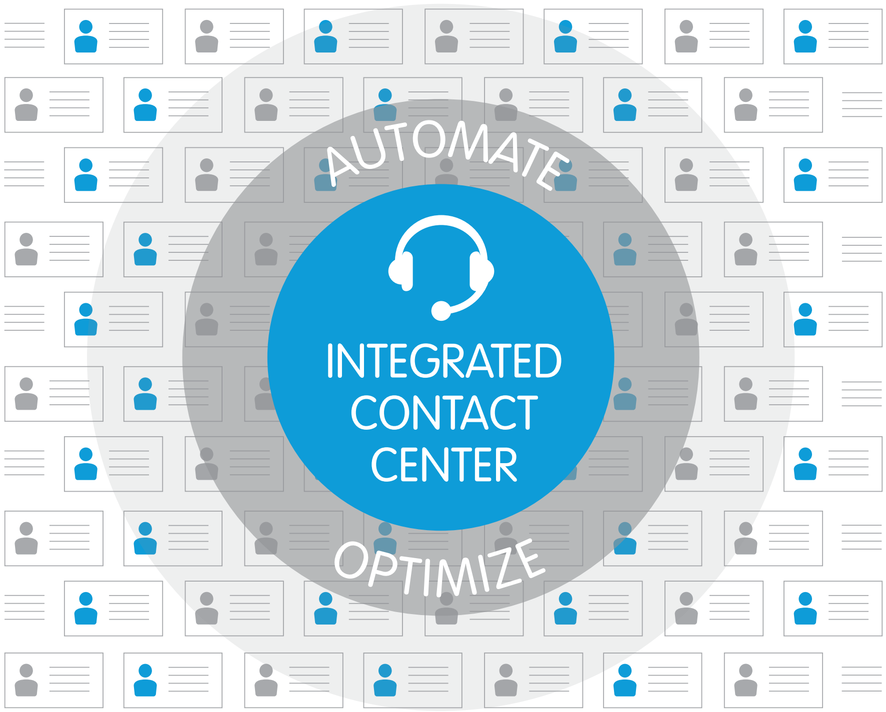
5 PROVIDE YOUR TEAMS WITH THE RIGHT TOOLS AND ESTABLISH METHODS TO USE THEM

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



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.



Lead Database

In order to effectively grow your pipeline and, in turn, grow your company, you can't keep selling to existing customers. You need new prospects. Outbound reps can use a lead database to find them. But be sure to use a database that features up-to-date, complete lead data that can also be precisely filtered to find the perfect prospects. A database solution should also be natively integrated into your CRM and able to clean the data already within the CRM. This feature is incredibly valuable for the inbound reps tasked with qualifying leads. People are constantly switching jobs and positions, so if your team is being notified of these changes in real-time, it can put your field sales reps ahead of their competition.

Engagement Tools

One of the most important tools that can help lead your outbound sales team to higher productivity and more pipeline is an integrated contact center. This allows your reps to automate and optimize inbound and outbound phone calls, as well as enable them to dial from any telephone field inside of your CRM. You can also view the CRM record of the customer you're calling so you have more information about the prospect at your fingertips, which makes for a smoother conversation. On top of this, to increase sales rep utilization, you can set up the system so leads are automatically called when the sales reps became available, filtering out non-human contacts such as answering machine. Sales reps can hold calls, transfer calls, conference in another person as well as pull up past customer calls or screen recordings to improve sales interactions on the fly.

LIVEOPS SUCCESS STORY

liveops

To show an example of the 5 steps being used to great success, we've included the story of LiveOps.

After enjoying some years of success in the Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) space with its network of 20,000 independent home-based agents, the company wanted to grow its cloud contact center as-a-service (CCaaS). In essence, it was a well-established company with new business, start-up challenges, in that it didn't have the market demand and name recognition in the cloud contact center as-a-service space.

To kick-start lead generation, LiveOps, applied principles from Aaron Ross's Predictable Revenue, restructuring their marketing and sales departments to include the specialized prospecting and lead qualifying teams described earlier in the ebook, freeing up field sales reps to focus on closing deals.

They Described These Lead Gen and Lead-qualifying Specialists as Follows:

Spears

Outbound sales and targeted sales that are focused on big revenue.

Nets

Inbound leads generated from targeted marketing programs such as webinars and events

Seeds

Inbound leads resulting from general word of mouth and public relations efforts

To help these teams, LiveOps implemented an integrated solution that combines salesforce.com's Sales Cloud CRM and Data.com lead database solution as well as their own LiveOps Contact Center. All three of these cloud-based products working together formed an end-to-end solution that provided business lead prospecting, qualifying, data cleaning, customer data organization and a way to quickly reach out to prospects.

Additionally, LiveOps became much more cognizant of Ross's philosophy that emphasizes the importance of hiring people with specialized skill sets. He asserts that you cannot maximize productivity among your sales force unless you keep the prospectors (builders) prospecting and the closers (growers) closing. Sales reps who nurture relationships with existing clients have a different skill set, and should therefore never have to prospect or close deals, but rather grow and strengthen the relationships with existing customers.

By buying into and implementing the philosophies in Predictable Revenue, which are given in brief in this ebook, as well as investing in the right IT solutions, LiveOps enjoyed a staggering 600% increase in their sales pipeline in less than one year.

TO LEARN MORE

By combining the right tools, methodologies, and best practices in this book you can make a major shift in your sales approach to help you and your company achieve the level of success you strive for. Take the next step and follow the links below to learn more about the solutions and tools from the companies that sponsored this eBook.

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