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sage

**Skyrocket
your profits
with these
5 proven
sales tips**

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Contents



Introduction 3

 **Tip 1** 4
Are you ready to take lead generation to the next level?

 **Tip 2** 6
Are you looking for a good list?

 **Tip 3** 8
Are you balancing selling harder with selling smarter?

 **Tip 4** 10
Preparing for customer questions and objections

 **Tip 5** 12
8 reasons why you can't rely on spread sheets for forecasting

How Sage can help 14

Introduction



Sales are the lifeblood of pretty much every company around the world. In order to grow and succeed you need to focus your efforts on closing sales and increasing profits. In this eBook we aim to provide genuinely helpful sales insights and techniques, which you can apply to your business and use to contribute to your success.

Created from the advice of experienced sales professionals you will learn about:

- Accelerating your lead generation activities
- Developing good customer lists
- Improving the quality of sales calls
- Preparing for difficult customer questions
- Why you cannot run a sales organisation using spread sheets



Don't forget to try the short exercises in this eBook to evaluate areas your company can improve on to drive sales success.

★ Tip 1

Are you ready to take lead generation to the next level?



Consider this question: could you sell more if you had more high quality sales leads?

If the answer is 'yes', you should apply the latest thinking behind effective lead generation.

In part one of our top tips for effective selling, we explain why you need to start nurturing leads as if they were 'contacts'.

The 'Contact' mind-set

What happens in your company when you receive a lead or when a salesperson hangs up the phone? Is there a system to ensure the next contact takes place on time or as agreed? If not, your company can quickly slip from a prospect's mind, leaving the scene open for a competitor.

Companies that successfully address this challenge can increase sales by between 5 per cent and 35 per cent over time. They do so by adopting a 'contact nurturing' mind-set. That is to say, they manage their 'leads' like 'contacts'.

Developing a nurturing process

Thanks to the increased power and sophistication of CRM systems, it is possible to show you an example of what the future of lead generation looks like. This example is called a nurturing process and it involves multiple sources and multiple touch-points over time.

It means, for example, integrating a telesales initiative with a campaign landing-page on your website, with an email newsletter, or with anything else you may have in your marketing armory.

If one method fails to reach or inspire a potential customer, the next method may succeed. We call this a nurturing process and it is key to effective lead generation.



This process is an example of how sales and marketing can work together to successfully nurture a prospect to the point of sales readiness

Put it to work

Do you know what your nurturing process is?

Typically, it is the ideal process of nurturing leads and enquiries to the point of a sale. Using the above diagram as a guide, why not take a blank page and sketch this process out?

The role of a sales system

If you have a good CRM tool, putting a nurturing process in place can be relatively easy, and you can automate much of the contact activity within.

With a system to support your nurturing process you will be able to track the degree of engagement and the effectiveness of the different activities involved.

However, without a CRM tool, you will continue spending money on leads, rather than investing in nurturing contacts that generate future sales.



Are you looking for a good list?



The power of good customer and prospect information

You may have asked the question, “Where can I get a good list of potential customers?”

In part 2 of our top tips for effective selling, we share the secrets of a great list. We also warn you against the types of lists that will frustrate your sales team.

Bad lists mean bad results

You cannot buy a good list. Good lists are built, not bought. The failure to grasp this reality is at the core of many of the problems in marketing and sales.

Poor lists are the number one cause of struggling sales and marketing campaigns and bought-in lists don't help. These off-the-shelf lists typically result in:

- Poor targeting and pre-qualification
- Ineffective marketing
- Poor conversion rates
- Wasted sales efforts

Build, don't buy

Searching the internet or buying pre-cooked lists from a broker will provide you with basic raw materials. However, a good list – one that truly rewards your sales efforts – has to be built. And it is developed and refined over time.

Every name in a good list or database has a monetary value and the more complete and up-to-date the information, the greater the value of the list or database.

It is worth investing in quality customer and prospect records. And if this information is to serve you well, it deserves a good home, in the form of a CRM tool.

5 principles of good list management

You should follow these five principles if you want your lists to give the results you need:

1. One list is better than 10. Pooling all names into one master list is critical, because this is the most effective way of removing duplicated data and keeping information up to date. **How many different lists or list sources are you using in your business?**
2. Size isn't everything. A list of 400 well-chosen names and up-to-date records is better than 5,000 randomly selected and incomplete pieces of information. With a CRM tool, you can partition good information from raw data without losing anything. **How many good customer or prospect records are really on your lists?**
3. You can improve the effectiveness of your lists by combining multiple sources. It is easy to track these sources in a CRM tool. And the more you prune and refine your list, the better it will become. Similarly, regularly updating information on the list increases its value. **When was the last time you cleaned and purged your list?**
4. All records within a CRM tool need to be categorised in terms of existing customer, past customer, and so on. Records should also be categorised in terms of potential future sales using A, B, C ratings or other relevant labels. **Have you categorised your list?**
5. There is little value in storing the name of a company without the names of relevant contacts. The gathering of contact names is central to an effective list. **How many companies in your list have a valid contact?**

Put it to work

Audit the health of your lists using the 5 principles listed above. Then, make a list of the different ways in which you can improve your lists to boost your sales.



Are you balancing selling harder with selling smarter?

3

Sales calls and presentations – increasing your rate of success

Every day millions of sales calls and presentations take place online and face-to-face. Most are unsuccessful.

In part 3 of our top tips for effective selling, we show you the solution to this problem by explaining the quality of sales conversations.

Why most sales calls miss the mark

Today, it can take many emails, phone calls and voicemails to talk to customers. However, getting through is only part of the challenge.

A customer or prospect may pick up the phone or turn up to an appointment, but this does not mean they will open up and engage with a salesperson.

The quality of many sales calls is at an all-time low.

Listen to a sales call

When was the last time you listened to or sat in on a sales call in your business? Why not do it now?

Take care when sharing feedback about a call with another salesperson. The golden rule is to start by highlighting what you liked about the call. Stay focused on the positive and only comment about the call and the message, rather than about the caller.

The role of CRM

Improving the quality of the sales call is a major opportunity for most sales managers. However, without an effective CRM tool, it is difficult to track simple things, such as the success rate of calls.

We don't believe in scripting sales calls because this stifles conversations with customers. Based on our experience, effective conversation guides and the use of prompts and structured work flows within a CRM tool can help you make better, high-quality sales calls.

Put it to work

Here is a six-point checklist which will help you analyse the quality of a sales call by one of your team. Listen to a call and then fill it out.

Call quality checklist

1. What **3 words** would you use to describe the call?

(a) _____ (b) _____ (c) _____

2. How **impressed** (on a scale of 1 to 5) would you be with the call from the point of view of:

(a) The customer/prospect? _____ (b) The manager? _____

Scale: 5 = 'very impressed' and 1 = 'not impressed at all'

3. How would you rate the **message** (using the same 1 – 5 scale) in terms of:

(a) Clarity? _____ (b) How compelling it was? _____

4. Was there a clear **next step**?

Yes No

5. How would you rate how the person making the call **sounded** in terms of each of the following (using the 1 to 5 scale):

- (a) Confident? _____
- (b) Knowledgeable? _____
- (c) Respectful? _____
- (d) Professional? _____
- (e) Enthusiastic? _____
- (f) Relaxed? _____

6. Do you have any advice or suggestions as to how the call could be **improved**?



Preparing for customer questions and objections

4

When was the last time you were caught off-guard by a customer who asked a difficult question or raised an awkward objection?

In part 4 of our top tips for effective selling, we show you how to prevent this happening again.

Preparing for a sales call

You can anticipate and prepare for more than 90 per cent of the questions and objections customers and prospects put forward.

Being more prepared could significantly boost your sales success. It will also increase your level of comfort, credibility and effectiveness with and during the sales process.

The most frequently asked questions and objections

To help you prepare for sales calls and presentations, here is a list of the top 15 questions customers are likely to ask. This list is based on extensive research with professional buyers.

Put it to work

Use this list of the most commonly asked questions and objections to identify those questions that need a better answer. Then, write out and practise different approaches until you find one that works best.

(a) When the customer is exploring alternatives

1. Why should we choose your company?
2. What are the advantages of your solution over others?
3. Why is your solution better than your competitors?
4. Why should we do this now, as opposed to next year? Why should we not find the solution in-house?

(b) When the customer is looking for confidence

5. Who else is using it? Has the solution been bought by others in my industry?
6. Do you have an office in our region?
7. Has the solution been tested, verified or certified by any independent organisation?
8. Can this prototype be piloted?
9. How strong is the financial backing of your company?

(c) The cost-benefit equation

10. What are the benefits - can they be substantiated?
11. What is the payback or return on investment?
12. Our business/needs is/are different. So, how can this work for me?
13. I question your figures. Can that really be achieved?
14. What is the true cost? There must be other/hidden costs that need to be taken into consideration?
15. Why is it so expensive? What is the total cost of ownership (running costs, etc.)?

The role of CRM

By compiling the best answers to the most stubborn customer question and objections, you are creating a valuable sales resource. Your CRM tool is an ideal place to store and develop this information.



8 reasons why you can't rely on spread sheets for forecasting

5

Excel is a great tool. It has a wide range of practical uses from creating budgets to building lists. However, no matter how skilled or creative you are with Excel, it has its limits.

You cannot run a sales organisation using Excel or with its sister application Outlook.

In part 5 of our top tips for effective selling, we explain why managers solely relying on Excel or Outlook are paying a penalty in terms of lost time, limited access to information and ultimately lost sales.

Here are 8 reasons why you can't rely solely on spread sheets:

1. You need better forecasts

Spread sheet-based forecasts are undermined because they don't provide information such as:

- How many leads, presentations or quotations are required to generate a sales target
- The volume of pre-sold business and progress in respect of expected orders
- The number of customers who placed orders during the last period or during the same period the previous year

2. You can't work with out-of-date information

A spread sheet only gives a snapshot of a point in time and it goes out of date, unless it is regularly updated. For example, forecasts for the next quarter don't always update when you reschedule a potential sale that is set to close. This is compounded when sales and management teams use different versions of a spread sheet.

3. You need to be grounded in reality

Sales people are by nature optimistic. A sales tool, however, tapers optimism with reality. It provides for a common sales and opportunity rating as well as close dates. This ensures a more objective standard of completed work and progress in respect of each account or opportunity.

Put it to work

Do you have the tools you need to manage sales targets and forecasts? Review the ways spread sheets could be frustrating your efforts (as listed) and see if it is time for you to move beyond Excel.

4. You want to know what to do next

Spread sheets don't trigger actions in a diary when an action is allocated to an account or an opportunity. And they don't provide a record of the associated actions, emails, meetings and so on.

5. You want to be protected

Spread sheets are of little use if a sales manager or a **sales rep leaves your company**. With growing levels of sales staff turnover, it is vital that all account, contact and opportunity data is held in a central repository so that it does not vanish when a rep leaves.

6. You need metrics to track progress

A spread sheet will struggle to give a sales manager the metrics he/she needs to build and stand over solid sales forecasts. These metrics include the ratio of leads to orders, the win rate of proposals, and quotations.

7. You won't be prepared for a setback

Sales managers dependent on spread sheets are at risk of being shocked or surprised by things like a setback against a target.

8. Your time is precious

Managers who track sales with spread sheets are losing valuable working hours. They are spending time preparing reports and presentations as well as gathering information required for their reports.

The role of CRM

A CRM tool can help prevent being surprised by a sales setback. With an effective tool, managers can see as much, or as little, customer, campaign, and opportunity information as they need ahead of any meeting.

With a CRM tool, you won't need a salesperson to tell you what is happening.



How Sage can help



Sage has been working with small to mid-sized companies for over 30 years. We have helped thousands of businesses to acquire, retain and delight their customers and achieve their business ambitions.

Using Sage CRM, our customers save time, increase productivity and gain greater visibility across the business. Additionally, thousands of Sage CRM customers have enjoyed increased sales and bigger business growth.

CRM software enables your marketing, sales and customer services teams to work together, to share information and to manage every interaction with prospects, leads and customers.

Sage CRM is an affordable and easy to use solution that over 15,000 small and mid-sized businesses around the world depend on to grow their business.

Sage CRM customer PARS has doubled its revenue in the six years since purchasing Sage CRM and according to Karen Zfaty, Director of Marketing Info Systems, Sage CRM “has played a significant part”.

Discover what Sage CRM can do for you and your team. Visit sagecrm.com for a free 30-day trial.

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For more information on the ASG Group, please visit theasgroup.com





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