

Who owns your sales process?

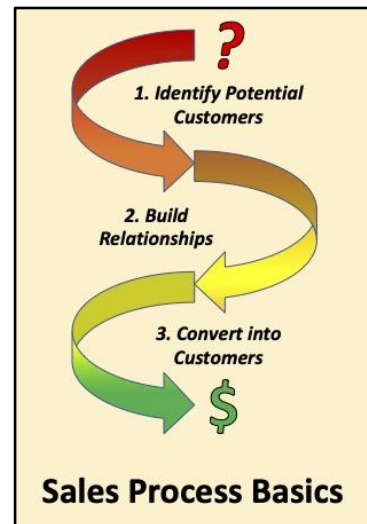
It is not your sales process, it's your customers' and there is a good chance it doesn't resemble yours.

The importance of regularly revisiting your sales process, or more appropriately, your customer's path to purchase, cannot be underestimated.

Whether it is a good or service you provide, the internal and external environments that affect the sales process are constantly changing regardless of your industry. Your sales team's ability to adapt, catch up or better yet, get ahead of these changes, is often the difference between winning and losing. And in today's business environment maybe even your company's survival.

In its simplest form, the sales process is the way in which businesses:

1. Identify potential customers
2. Build relationships with them
3. Convert them into paying customers



Navigating the intricacies of each stage can pose challenges for businesses striving for effective execution. In upcoming articles, we will delve into the pivotal role of the sales process in your business, examine both fundamental and advanced stages, and ultimately, offer valuable best practices for integrating them seamlessly into your sales strategy.

Why Is It So Important? Recognizing and comprehending the paramount significance of your sales process within your business is crucial. This understanding commences with an examination of how your sales process directly impacts your sales funnel and pipeline. If your process fails to accurately mirror your customers' purchasing behavior, it can disrupt the alignment of your sales pipeline with the future of your business. Consequently, if your pipeline is wrong then your forecast is wrong. If your forecast is wrong, then your financial planning is wrong. If your financial planning is wrong, your inventory planning is wrong, your hiring plan is wrong, your business plan is wrong, your earnings call is wrong, and so on and so on.



How Did You Get Here?

So, how did you, along with other sharp business leaders, find yourselves grappling with this predicament? Let's begin by considering that most executives and sales leaders operate within the confines of a linear sales process. It's likely that your sales leadership team reached a consensus years ago, establishing a sales process that kicked off with leads and culminated with the issuance of a purchase order or product delivery. In the interim, they introduced 3 to 8 additional activities or milestones, aligning them in a logical and chronological sequence that closely mirrored the historical path of many successful sales transactions.

While this approach isn't inherently flawed, the quandary arises when you start delving into the specifics of these activities and milestones associated with each stage. The more granular you become, the more linear the process appears to be. And therein lies the challenge. Because the sales journey for each unique customer rarely conforms to an identical pathway and almost never adheres to your projected timeline.

Why Don't Salespeople Follow the Process? Imagine the sales process as a game of Wheel of Fortune for your sales representative, with your business competitors as the other two participants. In this analogy, each letter represents an activity or milestone in your sales process, and the winning contestant is akin to the successful salesperson. In the game, the winning contestant rarely needs every letter to accurately guess the answer. This closely mirrors the typical sales processes where not all activities are required to win the sale.

In the business world, where competition is fierce and quarterly targets must be met, the need for speed in solving the puzzle (or making the sale) often means not meticulously checking off every box in your CRM's list of individual activities and milestones. It might even involve skipping a stage altogether. However, just as we collectively cringe when someone guesses the wrong answer on Wheel of Fortune, you've likely done more than cringe when a needed and forecasted sale went awry, and the front-line manager discovers "missed steps" in the sales process.

Why Is the Process Always Changing?

You probably spent a good bit of time in making sure your sales process accurately reflects the purchasing patterns of both your current and your potential customers. And if you have been using the same process for the past few years, there is a good chance it



is not as accurate as you think. So why does the sales process change? The answer is as complex as it is simple; you are selling in a fast moving and constantly changing market that is influenced by countless factors in economics, technology, and culture. Your best salespeople are adapting on the fly and following their own sales process. But many others are floundering and probably looking for a new job.

How Do I Fix It? Once you have accepted that your sales process may be outdated or worse yet, flawed, fixing it quickly is essential to assure your business's long-term success. To get started, find an objective person who will manage a project outline like below.

- Start by revisiting and analyzing your current sales process. Engage with your sales team and gather insights into their real-world experiences. Listen to customer feedback and closely monitor buying patterns.
- Identify bottlenecks, unnecessary steps, or outdated stages in your existing process. Embrace flexibility in your approach and be willing to adapt to changing customer behaviors and market dynamics. Consider incorporating agile methodologies into your sales strategy to enable quick adjustments as needed.
- Invest in ongoing sales training and development for your team to equip them with the skills and knowledge required to navigate the evolving sales landscape. Implement advanced data analytics and CRM tools to gain deeper insights into customer behavior and sales performance. Revisit your sales process on an annual basis

Remember that a successful sales process is not static; it's a dynamic and iterative framework that should continuously evolve to remain effective. By staying agile, responsive, and customer-centric, your business can thrive in the ever-changing world of sales.

To embark on this journey of revitalizing your sales process, consider enlisting the expertise of a seasoned consultancy like the Avec Consulting Group. Our team specializes in identifying and remedying sales process inefficiencies, equipping your business for immediate and long-term success. Let us help you navigate the evolving sales landscape and achieve sustainable growth.



For more information or to discuss your specific situation contact us at the following...

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