

10 TELL TALE SIGNS

**THAT YOUR
SALES PROCESS
NEEDS ATTENTION
[AND WHAT TO DO ABOUT IT]**



10 TELL TALE SIGNS THAT YOUR SALES PROCESS NEEDS ATTENTION

Organisations with a well defined sales process achieve a 31% higher win rate in forecasted deals than their less effective competitors.

MILLER-HEIMAN

When asked, most organisations will claim that they have a sales process. But there's a huge difference between having a loosely defined process that sales people give lip service to and having a highly effective and widely adopted sales process that is really driving sales performance.

The difference between the best and the rest, according to recent research published in the Harvard Business Review, translates into an average 18% advantage in revenue growth. Other studies show even more dramatic benefits.

So how can you tell whether your current sales process needs attention?

10 TELL TALE SIGNS THAT YOUR SALES PROCESS NEEDS ATTENTION

YOU FIND YOURSELF STRUGGLING TO REACH YOUR REVENUE TARGETS

#1

Every month, every quarter, it seems as if you're engaged in a perpetual struggle to achieve your revenue targets. And when you do achieve them, it's often down to a mixture of herculean effort and good luck.

But it's pretty obvious that sustaining this level of effort is simply going to burn you and your sales people out, and that sooner or later there's going to be an inevitable reckoning...

You know that there's got to be a smarter way of reliably reaching your revenue targets with less stress. You just haven't found it yet.

It's a sure sign that you need a better sales process...

10 TELL TALE SIGNS THAT YOUR SALES PROCESS NEEDS ATTENTION

SALES PERFORMANCE VARIES FROM ONE PERIOD TO THE NEXT

#2

Whenever you manage to have a good month it is often followed by a bad month - and your sales organisation is finding it hard to pull together a consistent string of over-quota performances.

And it's not just the overall achievement that varies - there's a disturbing variation in the performance against target between different product lines or different sales regions.

This unpredictability is wreaking havoc with your ability to come up with reliable sales forecasts and set accurate expectations for your board and your investors.

It's a sure sign that you need a better sales process...

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THERE'S A BIG GAP BETWEEN YOUR BEST SALES PEOPLE AND THE REST

#3

A few top performers always seem to do far better than the majority of your sales organisation. you've become highly dependent on the outputs of a handful of leading revenue generators.

Your efforts to narrow this performance gap between your best sales people and the rest have had a marginal impact at best.

Despite all the investment you've put over the years into sales training programmes, the inconsistency still remains - and in many sales environments, the gap is actually getting wider, not narrower.

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IT'S HARD TO UNCOVER ENOUGH QUALIFIED SALES OPPORTUNITIES

#4

Despite a number of campaigns and initiatives, you're struggling to fill the top of your sales funnel with enough well-qualified sales opportunities.

As a result, your sales people are inclined to hang on to poorly qualified opportunities long past their "sell by" date in the hope that they may be able to perform miracles on them.

This, of course, does nothing for either their efficiency or your win rates, and results in a huge amount of sales and marketing resources being wasted in the pursuit of the unwinnable.

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YOU AREN'T ABLE TO CONVERT ENOUGH OPPORTUNITIES INTO SALES

#5

Even when your sales people do manage to uncover an apparently promising prospect, your efficiency in converting initial interest into a decision to purchase leaves a lot to be desired.

Too many opportunities seem to be stuck in the middle of the sales funnel, or ending (after months of effort) with the prospect deciding that they can live with their current situation for a little longer after all.

Many of the opportunities that do make it to final selection are hard-fought all the way to the wire, requiring last-minute concessions.

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YOU'RE FAILING TO ENGAGE WITH THE REAL DECISION MAKERS

#6

In too many deals, your position is at risk because your sales person has become over-dependent on one or a few prime contacts within the prospect, and has failed to expand their base of support.

Given that the average complex B2B buying process now involves the active participation of 6-8 significant decision makers, this often proves to be a highly risky strategy.

Your sales people's inability to identify, engage and persuade all the key stakeholders in every significant opportunity has the effect of dramatically reducing your win rates.

It's a sure sign that you need a better sales process...

10 TELL TALE SIGNS THAT YOUR SALES PROCESS NEEDS ATTENTION

OPPORTUNITIES KEEP GETTING “STUCK IN STAGE”



Apparently well-qualified opportunities seem to make good progress to start with, but then lose momentum and fall into a holding pattern part way through the sales process.

Given that the ability to maintain forward progress is one of the primary predictors of ultimate sales success, this loss of momentum is often fatal to your chances of ultimately winning the business.

Unless you can find creative ways of unblocking this prospect log jam, your revenue goals will remain at risk.

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CLOSE DATES HAVE A HABIT OF MOVING BACKWARDS

#8

Your sales people don't admit that an opportunity has lost momentum or been abandoned - they simply have a habit of repeatedly moving the close date back.

Part of the reason, of course, is that the close date was never realistic in the first place - it bore little or no relationship to the dynamics of the prospect's decision process and timetable.

Or it might simply be that the prospect has no sense of urgency, or lacks a compelling event. So the decision drifts because other priorities have taken over on the prospect's "must do" list.

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DEAL VALUES KEEP GETTING REVISED DOWNWARDS



Too many apparently promising opportunities end up being booked at far lower final deal values.

Of course, some of these situations are the result of hard-fought, go-all-the-way-to-the-wire competitive pressures.

But more often than not, the explanation is either that the initial deal value was never close to being realistic, or that your sales person failed to articulate the full value of your solution.

Either way, the net result is that the revenue number is less than you had been expecting.

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IT'S TAKING FAR TOO LONG TO RAMP NEW SALES HIRES

#10

You might think that this is more of a recruitment or training issue, but the problem is often directly linked to the lack of a well-defined sales process.

If you cannot induct new recruits into a well-defined sales process that reflects the proven winning habits and best practices of your current top performers, your newcomers will inevitably struggle to come up to speed.

More worryingly, a significant proportion will fail to ever fulfil their potential, and will leave your organisation without ever successfully leaving their mark.

It's a sure sign that you need a better sales process...

**SO: DID YOU
RECOGNISE
ANY OF THOSE
SYMPTOMS
IN YOUR OWN
SALES
ORGANISATION?**

HERE ARE
5 SIMPLE
STEPS TO
IMPLEMENTING
A BETTER
SALES
PROCESS

5 SIMPLE STEPS TO IMPLEMENTING A BETTER SALES PROCESS



The essence of effective sales process design is to start by defining what good looks like.

What are the common characteristics of your “ideal customers” - and how can you consistently identify and qualify them early in your sales process?

What is it that your top sales people know and do that makes them such effective performers? And what can you learn from the latest sales methodologies and industry best practice?

Being clear about what good customers and good sales behaviours look like is a key step towards implementing a more effective sales process...

5 SIMPLE STEPS TO IMPLEMENTING A BETTER SALES PROCESS



CLEARLY DEFINED STAGES AND MILESTONES

It's essential that everyone using your sales process shares a crystal-clear understanding of what each stage involves and how to accurately place opportunities at the appropriate stage.

It's equally important that you establish clearly defined milestones between each stage that are based on observable evidence of buyer behaviour.

In fact, the most effective “sales processes” are actually based around the key steps in your prospect's buying decision process.

Establishing clearly defined stages and milestones is another key step towards implementing a more effective sales process...

5 SIMPLE STEPS TO IMPLEMENTING A BETTER SALES PROCESS

IDENTIFY BEST PRACTICES

Of course, simply defining the key stages and milestones in your process isn't enough.

You also need to observe your top performers in action, analyse winning behaviours, and establish what best practice dictates that every sales person needs to know and do at each stage in the process.

These best practices should be implemented in the form of simple visual checklists that encourage sales people to do the right thing and eliminate avoidable error.

Being clear about what you expect your sales people to know and do at each stage is another key step towards implementing a more effective sales process...

5 SIMPLE STEPS TO IMPLEMENTING A BETTER SALES PROCESS

**EMBED
INTO YOUR
CRM**

All too often, CRM systems are seen by sales people as burdensome administration that does nothing to support their sales success - more of a stick than a carrot!

If your sales process is to ever achieve its potential, it must be embedded into your CRM in a way that not only encourages compliance but also - most important of all - persuades your sales people that adopting the process and using the CRM solution on a daily basis will help them become measurably more effective.

Embedding your sales process into your CRM application and getting sales people to use it is another key step towards implementing a more effective sales process...

5 SIMPLE STEPS TO IMPLEMENTING A BETTER SALES PROCESS



Finally, make sure that you support your sales process - and make your CRM more effective - through the intelligent use of technology.

Investing in sales analytics ensures that you can see what's really going on in your pipeline at all times - and allows you to identify patterns of success and failure and drive continuous improvement.

Likewise, using one of the latest generation of visual sales process applications can help to drive CRM adoption by enabling guided selling.

Making intelligent use of technology is another key step towards implementing a more effective sales process...

FINAL THOUGHTS:
PUTTING
THESE PRINCIPLES
INTO PRACTICE

FINAL THOUGHTS: PUTTING THESE PRINCIPLES INTO PRACTICE

To return to the point we made at the start of this short guide: most organisations will claim to have a sales process - but we hope that we've persuaded you that there's a huge difference between having a loosely defined process that sales people give lip service to and having a highly effective and widely adopted sales process that is really driving sales performance.

If you recognise any of the issues we've highlighted - and more importantly, if you're determined to do something about them, [we're here to help.](#)



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Bob Apollo'.

**BOB APOLLO | MANAGING PARTNER | INFLEXION-POINT
B2B SALES PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENT EXPERTS**
www.inflexion-point.com | bob@inflexion-point.com
+44 7802 313300

