

Accelerate Your Inside Sales Performance

A Four-Step Guide

By Gordon Viggiano

For many leading B2B companies today, Inside Sales and Telemarketing have become a critical component of their sales success. Why? Because they work. A well-managed Inside Sales organization is more efficient, less costly, more scalable and more repeatable than field sales teams.

Yet companies that deploy Inside Sales often run into challenges that can hold them back from achieving their revenue goals. This guide provides a proven set of steps that you can take to boost your Inside Sales team's success, and accelerate your company's sales growth.

1. Examine The Metrics

Start by looking at your company's Inside Sales goals to make sure they are achievable.

For instance, if the average deal for your team is \$4,000 and the monthly sales goal is \$80,000, then the rep has to close 20 new deals per month. If the current close rate on *qualified* leads is 25%, and only 10% of the leads are scored as "*qualified*," then each rep needs to make 800 NEW CONTACTS per month. Most likely, this isn't a one call close, so he/she has to talk to the contact multiple times over several weeks or months. To make 1000+ contacts in a month (the average contact rate is 20%) requires about 5000 dials of the phone. Even if the person works 8 solid hours per day without breaks, without admin work, without emails, return calls, or without proposal writing, he would need to make about 29 dials per hour or about 230 calls per day!

Needless to say, you're setting each other up for failure with this expectation. How can you improve it?

- Modify the sales activity metrics so the call counts, qualification and close ratios are consistent with your sales goals for each rep
- Increase QUALIFIED leads so your sales reps don't have to generate their own (this can be done with either with marketing automation or an entry-level Lead Qualification specialist).
- Pre-qualify your target list by doing a best customer analysis and targeting only those that fit your company's proven sweet spot
- Increase transaction potential so more product/higher revenue can be sold to the same prospect

2. Listen To What Your Reps Are Saying

When it comes to Inside Sales, it is critical that you don't leave it up to your sales reps to decide on their call approach. What are your sales reps saying on the initial call? What is their call objective? If the objective is to schedule a demo or appointment, are they

selling that, or are they trying to sell the product on the first call? How do they answer the question “what does your company do?”

Develop a pre-call planning sheet that maps your unique selling proposition (USP) to the target company’s needs. In high transaction sales, it’s not feasible to go to every target company’s website before calling, so you can make some generalities based on work you’ve done with companies in the same industry. For higher ticket items, nothing beats learning about the company and mapping your unique selling proposition to pains they are feeling or corporate objectives they have.

Once the next appointment is set, ask for needed information so your presentation on the next call can be customized to the prospect’s needs and be pertinent to their situation. This can be accomplished by saying “So I can make my demo more tailored to how you work, I have a few questions. Do you have a some time now?”

3. Observe Demos and Sales Presentations

Once you’re convinced that your reps have mastered the initial calling process, the next step is to dig into the details of their sales presentations. If you are like many companies today, you’re doing web-based demos or presentations as the next step in your sales process.

9 out of 10 times, the sales presentations or demos we hear are sales reps giving their prospects data dumps. If they are done over the phone, the prospect could leave for lunch or put the phone on mute and take another call...and the presenter wouldn’t notice. This “push” approach doesn’t work very well any more. Make sure that your reps are well-trained in consultative sales techniques, such as SPIN.

When evaluating rep demos and presentations, ask yourself the following:

- Are we weaving our knowledge of the prospect into our discussion?
- Are we asking clear questions that qualify the prospect and get them to articulate how our solution fits their needs?
- Do we ask how this compares to the way the prospect is doing it now?
- How does he/she see this working at his company?
- What improvements would they see? What would the benefit be?

Create an evaluation/coaching form to measure:

- Are the presentations engaging?
- Are the right people in the room?
- Is the rep following the logical flow?

- Is she covering key points?
- Is she asking questions?
- How is her voice volume, inflection, clarity?
- How is the energy level?
- What happens at the end? Is she closing for the next step?
- What was the objective and was it met?

4. Manage The Sales Pipeline

Many companies struggle to meet their monthly sales targets, but lack the understanding of why this is happening. The answers are usually right in front of management in the sales forecast. Unfortunately, too many companies take the sales forecast at face value, and don't take the time to scrutinize what the real status of each prospect is, and what is being done to advance the sales.

One of the most successful CEO's we know asks the following questions to insure the pipeline is real and deals are advancing, NOT just stalling (the prospect keeps saying "call me next month").

Make sure to schedule regular time with each of your reps to review the details of each opportunity in their pipeline. Ask probing questions about each prospect, such as:

- Why are they evaluating?
- What are the benefits to the client?
- Does our solution help them solve those issues? Can our competitors'?
- Why is it important now?
- How did you determine the proposed close date?
- Why would they order it by then?
- Are we winning or losing? Why?
- What is the decision making process and who is involved?
- Who in the client's organization cares about that benefit?
- Who wants our competitor's solution?
- What is the competition doing to win?
- What could go wrong?
- What scares you the most?

Concentrate on these three questions:

1. Why would they buy anything?
2. Why would they buy now?
3. Why would they buy from us?

Summary

Most Inside Sales efforts can be improved with a concentrated effort, and most of the time, small tweaks yield significant results. The tough part is taking time away from working *in* the sales process, to work *on* the sales process. Often managers are busy putting out fires and sales reps are too busy trying to make quota, to take time for the “luxury” of planning, evaluating progress, and making continued improvements.

The above proven steps build upon one another and can be implemented over time. The results you will see are:

- Improved lead quality
- Better target account penetration
- A stronger sales pipeline
- Shorter sales cycles
- Increased sales

About Gordon Viggiano

Gordon Viggiano founded Sales Velocity Group in Portland, Oregon, and is a long-time partner of The Olsen Group. He has over 20 years of experience in deploying successful lead development, lead nurturing and inside sales programs for industry leading companies in technology, manufacturing, healthcare and business services. You can reach Gordon at 503-305-8722 or gordon@olsengroup.net.