



# e<sup>o</sup>volve

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~ Henry David Thoreau

Success usually comes to those who are too busy to be looking for it.

We are not creatures of circumstance; we are creators of circumstance.

~ Benjamin Disraeli

Anyone who stops learning is old, whether at twenty or eighty.

~ Henry Ford

Admiration begins where acquaintance ceases

~ Samuel Johnson

If you're always trying to be normal, you will never know how amazing you can be.  
~ Maya Angelou



# MANAGING SALES

# ACTIVITIES

# 3 Do's and Don'ts

We think that a focus on sales activities is the smart way to grow a business; as a salesperson, you want your prospects to buy, but it can only be achieved by you taking action that leads them to buy. Similarly, as a sales manager, you want your salespeople to sell, but it's only achieved by you doing something that leads them to sell and improve.

However, while activities are important, they can be mismanaged. Sales managers can be distracted by too many metrics, assign vague goals to reps or mishandle a rep who may not need the same oversight as the rest of the sales team. Sales reps can let their inboxes dictate their schedules, get impatient and yearn for what they can't control.

We asked some experts if there was a right way and a wrong way to manage activities in sales. While not all the experts are fans of setting activity goals, all of them agree that there are do's and don'ts when it comes to activities.

## Do the math

There's no getting around it: Sales is a numbers game. "Let's say I want to sell in-house training. I don't need to be an Einstein to realize that not everyone buys that, but I need to write a certain amount of proposals first," Purde said.

To get one customer sold on this training, he said, you may need to contact 10 leads, have eight follow-up calls, four meetings and submit two proposals.

This is what Jason Jordan, author of *Cracking the Sales Management Code*, refers to as "reverse-engineering success," or starting with the outcome that you want, and then deciding exactly what you and your sales team need to do to achieve that goal.

The first step to doing that is understanding your team's close ratio. If this sounds like a daunting task, no worries.

## DON'T OVERLOAD YOUR REPS

Conversion metrics are important, but that's not a license to pile more and more activities on your sales team. For example, a company might put 100 leads in the pipeline, and 20 might come out the other end as closed deals. To double their sales, that company might just tell its reps to put 200 leads in the Pipeline instead of 100. And while that may work, it will also burn out a sales team.

"That's not the most effective way to do it," sales coach Mike Brooks said. "Working harder is not working smarter. Getting out, making my team make 200 phone calls to put 200 prospects in there, to get 40 back, that doesn't improve my closing percentage, does it? No, I'm still getting two out of 10 deals."

So while paying attention to your metrics is important, it's also important to make sure your reps have a manageable workload, and that you're constantly developing them so that they can improve their closing percentage.

# DO SET TIME LIMITS

It's easy to fall down a rabbit hole when you're concentrating on a specific activity. You may find yourself concentrating on a spreadsheet, examining sales metrics or a proposal for hours.

Mark Hunter of The Sales Hunter recommends assigning a time slot to each activity, and sticking to it. If you plan to spend 10 minutes trying to generate leads on social media, for example, once that 10 minutes is up, close your browser.

"If you look at really high-performance people, not just in sales, but in everything, they manage by their calendar, and they also create extreme amounts of open time to capture the moment — whatever it might be — in that activity, that's rewarding everything," he said. "We unfortunately have a tendency to allow our work to expand because we don't realize that the valuable asset we have is time."

These time limits help salespeople who overly focus on nonsales activities — like spreadsheets or social media — make more time to prospect.

"We, in life, get focused on the activity, when we should be focused on what's going to deliver the maximum outcome," Hunter said. "We have got to protect our selling time, and what happens is, the majority of salespeople start their day by looking at their activities. No. Start the day by looking at the outcomes. What are the outcomes that you want to achieve? What are you going to have to do to achieve the outcome?"

# DON'T LET YOUR GOALS OVERSHADOW GOOD TEAM MANAGEMENT

Who chooses the activity goals for reps? Should that be the manager's job, or should the reps be allowed to pick their own activity goals?

Answers to these questions were varied, but boiled down to this: Know your team, and know what your team has to do to get results.

"I think it depends on the relationship a manager has

with his team," Purde said. "But managers shouldn't forget their role, to orchestrate a team so they get better results."

Although certain sales teams may be capable of setting their own goals, Purde leans toward advising managers to set the activity goals for everyone.

"I notice that different sales people tend to like different activities," he said, adding that some reps might focus too much on one activity, and not enough on others.

"Someone who likes meetings might say 'I think it is nonsense to count how many deals I put in the pipeline, let's just work on proposals.' But that's too late-stage, because some guys might not have enough fresh leads to have proposals," Purde said.

"The manager would then need to agree on a different goal with them — let's have a goal for you to add two new potential customers to the pipeline every week. Then it's hard for the sales manager because he has different goals with different sales guys. It might work, but it's much easier to have a simple goal with everyone, but you can only do it if their businesses and skills are comparable. For rookies, you might need to allow some ramp-up time."

Purde said managers should make sure they choose goals that work best for their team, based on their experience and their reps' experience, and of course, reps will need to buy into the activity goals. But, Purde said, it's the manager's job to direct his team and their goals.

"It should be a main task for any sales manager to detect what actions lead to result and then get everyone doing them," he said.

Hunter comes down in favor of a manager working in concert with reps to set goals.

"I want my salesperson to make their own decisions, so my objective as a sales manager is to develop you to where you can make all those decisions on your own," Hunter said.

He believes that a manager should sit down with new reps and walk them through the process of setting goals that support the team's goals, but after a rep learns the ropes, he wants that person to be able to choose their own activity goals.

"If I wind up making all those decisions for you, the salesperson, all I've got is a robot out there," Hunter said. "That's all I've got, and I don't want a robot. I want somebody who is thinking."

Some salespeople don't need the same goals that the rest of the team needs, but managing those overachievers can be difficult.

Purde recalled an incident that happened at the start

of his career: he was 21 years old, and had been made marketing director at a telecom company. He was managing a team that included one sales rep who was a headache for him, not because the rep was lazy or ineffective, but because this rep was more efficient than the others. He didn't add as many deals to his pipeline, but that didn't matter, because he was closing so many of his deals.

"He was very good in sales, but he gave a bad example to others," he said. The rest of the team decided that they didn't need a lot of prospects in their pipelines, either.

If he had it to do over, Purde said he would set an activity goal for the team, but work with the other rep to create a different goal for him.

"It's an individual decision of any manager how to solve the problem of those superstars," he said.

"Sometimes you reach an agreement with the superstars, but sometimes you need to get rid of your superstars if they behave in a way (that makes you) unable to manage your sales team."

## DO BE SPECIFIC ABOUT YOUR ACTIVITY GOALS

It's not enough to tell your team to make 5 visits a day. What kind of visits are they making?

It's important, Purde said, that precise activity goals are set.

"I think the biggest mistake most managers make is that when they define those activities, the definition of the goal is too vague," he said.

Take, for example, the manager who decides that everyone on the team must complete 5 visits a day. After he tells his reps this, he may notice that reps are all counting visits differently: some are visiting old customers, some are visiting new customers, and some are counting follow-up visits. Activity goals work best when the activity is specific. For example, the manager may correct his mistake by telling everyone on the team to contact 5 fresh leads a day.

"The sales manager should define this goal: It has to be a new visit to a customer, with an attempt to get a meeting. And the visits where you left a voicemail, or where the customer says 'no,' this is zero. You

need to make a new one," Purde said. "Everyone needs to understand the goal in the very same way, then it starts to make sense. Without that, it doesn't work."

Hunter suggests that sales managers and reps drill down and try to understand which specific activities are having the most impact on results. Everyone knows, for example, that to close more sales, a rep needs to spend more time prospecting. But "prospecting" includes a broad range of activities.

"The specific part of prospecting might be just sourcing this very specific type of lead," he said. "Maybe best way to contact that source of lead is by telephone, so I keep subdividing and subdividing and subdividing until I get down to the point where I have one very small activity that is generating maximum results. Now I have efficiently used my time."

This specificity extends to tracking those activities as well. Managers shouldn't overwhelm themselves by trying to count every activity their reps do; they should simply track the metrics that have the most impact on their bottom line.

"It can just be one or two metrics — it's rarely productive to track four activities simultaneously," Purde said. "In order to stay focused you need to find few key metrics which you know, if you are the manager, have mathematically proven themselves: 'If I do enough of those, that will give me enough of those.'"

## DON'T THINK YOU HAVE TO CHOOSE BETWEEN ACTIVITIES AND RESULTS

While some sales experts work to result goals and others work to activity goals, it's important to understand that both results and activities are important.

Purde said they cannot exist without each other.

"People usually say: 'It's not the activity I want; I want the result. So why bother?' They are making a mistake — it's not this or that. They think it's a fight against results or activities — actually you need to focus on both," he said. "You can't get the result without focusing on the activity."



# News from Printex

Printex held its 12th Annual Sales Conference in Faisalabad  
on 27th September  
and had a tourism trip of Sales Team  
to Swat Valley for 3 days.

Some Pics of the Conference and Trip are for reference.











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