



MICROGUIDES

SALES SYSTEMS

Proven methods to take your team's
performance to the next level

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INTRODUCTION

The MicroGuides are your shortcut to staying current on the world's top Business, Leadership, and Personal Development books. They are used by individuals looking to better themselves, as well as by teams and organizations looking to create and foster cultures of continuous learning and development.

The MicroGuides are meant to serve as your starting point for identifying your goals and the obstacles that are standing in your way of achieving them. In addition to participation in regular ActionClasses, we urge leaders to use the content in these guides as inspiration for developing your own unique ActionPlan to make your ideal state a reality.



SALES SYSTEMS

Sales is the lifeblood of any business, and your top line growth depends on the competency and dedication of those responsible for closing deals. Knowing that, having a distinct strategy for prospecting, converting leads into customers, and expanding existing relationships is a non-negotiable. Sale goals and objectives are one thing, but clearly defined steps to achieving those goals are the heart of any sales system. So why don't more sales managers have them clearly defined?

Having a clearly defined sales strategy not only gets all of your sales reps on the same page, but also gives you the framework to continually make improvements to the way your team interacts with customers and conducts sales. Keep reading to learn more about what it takes to build an effective sales strategy.



01

The Challenger Sale

by Matthew Dixon and
Brent Adamson

01

The Challenger Sale

Taking Control of the Customer Conversation

by Matthew Dixon and Brent Adamson

In their book, *The Challenger Sale*, Dixon and Adamson tell us that surveys suggest that customers place the highest value on salespeople who make them think, who bring new ideas to them and who find innovative ways to help their business.

Customers expect salespeople to teach them things that they don't know, and these are the core skills of Challengers – the new type of salesperson we should employ. Join us for the next ten minutes as we find out more about the Challenger, and how to take control of the customer conversation.





Lesson 1: Sales Reps R Us

Dixon and Adamson suggest that there are 5 types of sales reps.

- Type 1 - Hard Workers: Hard workers show up early, stay late, and are always willing to go the extra mile. They have their nose to the grindstone, are self-motivated and don't give up easily.
- Type 2 - Relationship Builders: These reps focus on building and nurturing personal and professional customer advocates. A latte and a friendly chat is their bread and butter.
- Type 3 are the Lone Wolves: Lone wolves are so self-confident they follow their own instincts and break every one of our rules. They bring in the sales, but not in a way we would be confident to repeat.
- Type 4 are Reactive Solvers: These reps are highly reliable and detail focussed. They make sure all promises are kept once the deal is done.
- Finally Type 5 – the Challengers: Dixon and Adamson identified Challengers as reps who understand the customer's business and make them think deeper and differently. Challengers are not afraid to be controversial.

So here is the question: which of these types are prevalent in your workforce?

Logic tells us that the relationship builder should be the most successful profile, and this seems to be borne out by a large number of companies. But not so says Dixon and Adamson. They tell us, and their research supports the fact, that customer decision makers want to be served by the Challenger.

With their unique perspective on the customer's business and their ability to engage in robust two-way dialogue, Challengers are able to grow the customer's own knowledge during the sales interaction.

Because Challengers possess a superior understanding of a customer's economic and value drivers, they are able to deliver the right message to the right person within the customer organization. Challengers can also ensure the right fee is achieved. They are comfortable discussing money and can press the customer to take the sale at the seller's best asking price.

On the other hand, however strong a customer relationship may be, familiarity alone isn't enough to win the business. As Dixon and Adamson say, a check-in call with a customer can be a great way to find business, but it's not a very good way to make business. As a result, in a world where easy-found business has disappeared, Relationship Builders are doomed to fail.

Lesson 2: "I'd like to teach the world to buy..."

Dixon and Adamson believe teaching in sales is all about offering customers unique perspectives on their business and communicating those viewpoints with a passion to draw the customer in.

Sales engagements often start with visits to find out what customers want. But what if customers don't know what they need? What if a customer's greatest need is actually to figure out what they need? In that case, rather than asking customers, a better technique might be to tell customers.

Adaptive reflection question:

Considering the 4 types of sales reps, what are the demographics of your sales team?

That's what Challengers do. They win not by understanding their customers' world as well as the customer know it themselves, but by actually knowing their customers' world better than their customers know it themselves...teaching them what they don't know but should.

The challenge for the challengers is to teach the customer something new. If we don't change how a customer thinks and acts, we've not taught them anything.

So how do we ensure that our sales teaching efforts - what Dixon and Adamson call commercial teaching - will actually lead to more business? Here are three rules...

Rule #1: Lead to Our Unique Strengths

Commercial teaching must tie directly back to something where we outperform our competitors. If so, our teaching will lead back to what we do better than anyone else, putting us in the best position.

There are two notes however: we need to actually be the best, and we need to know actually what we're best at. Unless we can ultimately connect the insights we teach our customers back to capabilities only we can offer, we're much more likely providing free consulting than commercial teaching.



Rule #2: Challenge Customers' Assumptions

Whatever we teach our customers has to challenge their assumptions and speak directly to their world in ways they haven't thought of before. Whatever insight we provide must change their perspective. Dixon and Adamson give us a good way of recognising this. Is a customer responds with a thoughtful pause we've hit the mark. They're wondering, "What exactly does this mean for my business?" or even better, "What else don't I know?"

Rule #3: Kick off Action

We've got to get them to act. Customers are easily distracted, so our message needs to be so compelling they remain focussed. If not, they become like Doug, the dog in the Pixar movie "Up" - distracted by every squirrel.

Lesson 3: The End Solution

So how can we make that compelling teaching pitch? Dixon and Adamson give us six steps.

Step 1: Tell and Show

A great commercial teaching pitch starts with a sound statement or demonstration of our assessment of our customer's position. Forget asking the hackneyed question, "What's keeping you up at night?" We should tell them what we're seeing and hearing as the key challenges of similar companies. Share our stories from engagements with other companies that align to their experience.

Dixon and Adamson suggest it will feel to the customer much more like a "get" than a "give"—they get our informed perspective rather than having to educate us with information we should have been able to figure out on our own.

Adaptive reflection question: What strategies, if any, do you currently use to teach your prospects how to buy your product or service?



Step 2: Stir the Hornet's Nest

Having made the customer sit up, and perhaps even nervous, given our insight, make the challenge even bigger by introducing a new perspective that connects those challenges to either a bigger problem or a bigger opportunity than they ever realized they had. If they were perhaps able to shrug off the first statement of threat they will certainly be more noticeable of the bigger unknown.

Step 3: The Evidence is Clear

The third step is where we lay out the business case for why the challenges of step 2 are worth our customer's time and attention. This is the time for the facts and figures: the PowerPoint slides often shown in the first minutes of a traditional pitch. Now it's time for the true, often hidden, cost of the problem or size of the opportunity they'd completely overlooked. We've all used this before: the "FUD factor"—fear, uncertainty, and doubt.

Step 4: Make it Personal

The customer must be in the picture. Step 4 is all about making sure that the customer sees themselves in the story we're telling. What we need to avoid is a counter-argument stating "interesting, but we're different". So how do you counter the "we're different" defense?



You begin by painting a picture of how other companies just like theirs went down a painful path by engaging in behavior that they will immediately recognize as typical of their own company.

Step 5: A New Hope

Then you have to convince them of the solution. This is a point-by-point review of the specific capabilities they would need in order to make money, save money, or mitigate the risk that we've just convinced them they're facing.

Step 6: We've just the tonic!

The goal of step 6 is to demonstrate how our solution is better than anyone else's to equip them to act differently. As Dixon and Adamson say, if our competition is still in the running at this point, then we have either failed to identify capabilities that are truly unique or we have failed to lead them as convincingly as we'd hoped. Don't lead with, lead to. Bring them to your solution.

Lesson 4: We are one.

While we might have assumed that things like price and willingness to customize a solution would top the list for decision makers, these features are significantly less important to the decision maker than widespread support and ease of doing business.

It turns out that the path a sales rep needs to take to earn a decision maker's support, is one via the customer's team—identifying, nurturing, and encouraging key customer stakeholders across the organization.

So how do we make this journey?

One of the biggest obstacles a normal sales rep meets when it comes to dealing with consensus-based buying, is how to tailor the sales message to different stakeholders to achieve maximum resonance. Dixon and Adamson suggest we should start at the broadest level—the customer's industry—and work our way down, through the person's company, the person's role, and, finally, to that individual person.

Difficult? Yes. But the vast majority of sales messaging being used in the market is not contextualized at any level, let alone at each of these levels for each kind of stakeholder.

So we need to get together with our marketing team and find out what's going on in terms of industry trends and current events. Has a big competitor recently folded? Has there been a meaningful merger? Is the customer rapidly gaining or losing share? What about regulatory changes? What do the company's recent press releases and earnings statements suggest about strategic priorities?

Dixon and Adamson suggest Challenger reps aren't focused on what they are selling, but on what the person they're speaking to is trying to accomplish. The product is the tool to achieve the goal.

Adaptive reflection question: How do you tailor your sales messaging depending on the client profile?

Lesson 5: Taking Control of the Sale

The following scene takes place millions of times in a business day. A Relationship Builder comes to the end of a customer meeting. Pregnant Pause. What next? They won't push hard on next steps – closing the sale - for fear of ruining what was otherwise a positive interaction.

On the other hand, Challengers understand that the goal is to sell a deal, not just have a good meeting; they are focused on moving ahead. Challengers take control across the entirety of the sales process, not just at the end. In fact, one of the prime opportunities for taking control is actually right at the beginning of the sale.

We have to agree that many sales opportunities that may have appeared viable on the surface were little more than veiled “verification efforts” by a customer. In other words, the customer has already chosen a vendor to partner with, but feels the need to do some due diligence—to make sure they're getting the best deal.





Adaptive reflection question: What specific Challenger sales behavior(s) can you adopt today to improve your chances of making a sale tomorrow?

Because the customer has no intention of actually buying from these other suppliers, they only allow reps to meet with the junior contact, never permitting access to more senior decision makers. But even in this early stage of the sale, Challengers know better. They sniff out these “foils” immediately and press the contact for expanded access in exchange for continued dialogue. If the customer isn’t interested then neither is the Challenger. They’ll not waste their time. They’ve moved on to the next opportunity. Do you have the confidence to say enough is enough?

Challengers “lead and simplify.” Rather than assuming that the customer knows how to execute the purchase of a complex solution they teach the customer how to buy the solution.

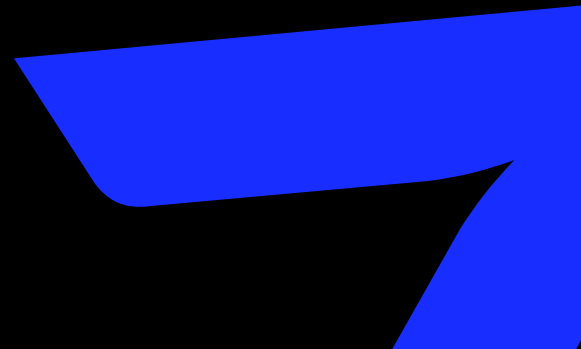
As a challenger, we are teaching our customers things that they didn’t know before. We have practical experiences from hundreds, if not thousands, of implementations, while this may be the first such implementation for them.

Taking control means that we know the value of those resources and we don’t bring them to bear willy-nilly on a customer who isn’t serious about the decision. Before they buy our solution, the customer has to buy us and our perspective of the solution.

02

Spin Selling

by Neil Rackham



02

Spin Selling by Neil Rackham

Neil Rackham starts his book *Spin Selling* with some key advice: “Don’t trust what top performers tell you.” We could surmise this is so they protect their “secret sauce” and maintain their competitive edge. But Rackham tells us it’s not. By spending a significant number of hours, he and his team have pulled together the real reasons, and all the true information we need to take on board. Having spent time observing top performers, he has distilled their expertise into a methodology we can all use to better our sales: SPIN Selling. Join us for the next ten minutes or so to find out exactly what that methodology is and how best to use it.





Lesson 1: A sales call in four stages.

Nearly all effective sales calls can be broken down into four stages.

Stage 1: The Preliminaries – the warming up events at the start of the call.

Rackham tells us there is no better way of opening a sales call. Conventional wisdom says that if we can somehow tap into an area of personal interest of the buyer we can form a relationship more quickly and the call will be more successful. For example if there is a family photograph on the desk, talk family: if there's a golfing trophy – talk golf. But this is all conventional wisdom. It may have worked ten years ago when the world was not as connected and people bought from people they liked (or knew).

Today in the connected and distributed world, this is far from reality. The problem is greater with large sales when the transaction consists of many interconnected discussions and evaluations of your product or service, many taking place when you're not there. It's hard to be liked by or known to everyone in that loop. Today we are more likely to hear, "I like [enter your name here], but I buy from his competition because they are cheaper."

Adaptive reflection question: How do you ensure your sales calls stay focused and always moving towards an objective?

Alternatively we could make an opening benefit statement: “Better performance is a key issue in your market today, Sir, and our product can increase that tenfold!” Again conventional wisdom, but it’s not effective. By immediately focusing on our perception of the buyer’s needs, we are running the risk of alienating them and having them put up barriers. Who are you to tell them what they need? Who are you to offer unsolicited option?

Rackham suggests the preliminaries, while needed to break the ice, are not as critical in the successful large sale. Instead, he suggests we should focus more on how long the preliminaries take. Too short and we appear overly keen and abrasive, too long and the buyer can get bored and disengaged. So timing is critical and time is precious. As a rule of thumb, Rackham advocates that it’s best to err on the short side: no-one has ever complained that a seller didn’t waste their time! Get in, focus on your objectives and get on to the more important stage: investigating.

Stage 2: Investigating - Where SPIN begins.

Use open questions to elicit fact. We’ve all heard that advice. Avoid questions that can be answered with a simple yes or no. Structure questions so they invite description. Take a leaf from Inspector Columbo and ask questions and investigate. In essence this is the heart of SPIN Selling... but it’s not without structure. Rackham’s methodology for investigating breaks down into four types of questioning: Situation, Problem, Implication, Need-payoff (or SPIN).

Situation Questions focus on establishing facts. Finding out the background of the customer’s situation and what they are doing now. This is critical if we are to advance our opportunity. For a small sale it’s binary - there are only two stages: Sale or No Sale. For a larger sale there are two more intermediate stages: Continuation and Advance. The continuation stage is effectively permission given to keep talking. We may not be progressing rapidly, but at least we are moving in a forward motion and it’s not a termination of talk. The Advance stage is more positive. It’s the cue to “tell me more.”

So, the more effective situation questions we ask, the more successful the interaction with the buyer will be, and the better chance of advance. Situation questions get the buyer talking. Situation questions control attention, identify needs and give clues. Rackham warns us however that situation questions persuade while reasons don't. Effectively, when we identify an interest in the buyer's response, we should avoid jumping in with reasons why our products meet their needs. There's more benefit to be accrued.

Problem identification is the second element of SPIN. A potential buyer who is 100% satisfied with the way things are, will not feel the need to change. Only when that level of satisfaction drops to 99.99% is there a chance of a sale. What we need to do is establish where there may be a problem, and from that problem, comes a need. It may start small with minor snags in the product or process, then develop into clear dissatisfaction and finally to a want, desire or intention to act. In each of these stages the problem is amplified and the need increases. That is the objective of this stage, to ask questions to identify the problem and grow its perception to the action level. Problem identification is key. Without clear definition of the need, there is simply no need to buy.



The third element of SPIN is Implication.

There are two types of need: implied and explicit. In the first type we find more complaints. “Our current systems doesn’t do X” or “I’m not happy with our product failure rate” are examples. In implied needs there is a problem but no real identification of how it can be resolved. This is not an issue to the SPIN seller. Indeed, developing implied needs is the key to breaking down 100% satisfaction, and identifying the chink in the armor which our product or service can resolve. We need implication questions. Implication questions increase the buyer’s perception of the problem’s seriousness. Implication questions tip the balance from the status quo toward the new problem-free scenario.

Rackham’s research suggests decision makers will respond favorably to a salesperson who uncovers implications. In essence, we are helping them see beyond the now and into the better future. But there is a negative side. Sellers who raise too many implications can make the buyer feel negative and depressed. If we make problems greater, we need to give a way out and that’s the fourth element of SPIN: Need-Payoff.

Need-Payoff. With implication things are a bit open ended. On the other hand explicit needs are more defined. “We need a faster system,” “We must have back-up capability.” These are explicit needs and point us, the seller, and the buyer in the same direction to problem resolution and sale. It’s in this area Rackham suggests that a great salesperson excels. When they hear implied needs they take notice and make the intangible tangible. They turn implied into explicit.

Basically, need-payoff questions build up the value or usefulness of the solution. Need-payoff questions focus the buyer on problems and solutions not problems and difficulties. Good need questions induce the buyer into personalizing the benefits of the solution and with personalization comes adoption. By asking the buyer to verbalize their thoughts we are effectively placing them as the “expert”...and everyone likes being considered an expert! This again, covertly moves the buyer to a positive decision, after all it was their idea – wasn’t it?



Rackham reminds us however, that for large sales many discussions on the viability of our product or service takes place without us being there. By focussing on needs when present, we align discussion to the buyer's lens – their needs and their business – rather than to our product which perpetuates the need when we are not present.

Stage 3: Demonstrating capability.

In many sales transactions capability is demonstrated by informing the buyer of the features and advantages of the product or service. Better however – according to Rackham – to focus on benefits. So what is the difference? Features describe facts, data and product characteristics. They are merely statements, maybe of use in a small sale but effectively neutral in larger sales. Advantages show how products or services (or their features) can help the customer. These bring some positivity – but more so in small sales than larger. Benefits however, show how products or services meet explicit needs as expressed by the customer.

A major barrier that may remain at this stage of the sales transaction are objections. If we do encounter them then we've performed poorly in the earlier stages. Rackham says, rather than skilling up on objection handling – which is a regular focus of other sales training programs – we should focus on objection prevention. Back to Need-payoff questions. Most objections are to solutions which don't fit needs. The cure is simple, don't talk about solutions until enough questions have been asked on needs. If objections are with costs then again there is a weakness in needs alignment. If the solution fully addresses a need, and that need is critically perceived by the buyer, money will be less of an issue.

So the crux of demonstrating capability is to ensure the buyer embraces the advantages and visualizes their use within their organization. Again it's personalization – putting your solution in the center of your buyer's vision.



Stage 4: Obtaining Commitment.

The journey is nearly over. We have three more activities to carry out. The first is to check that we've covered key concerns. In larger sales both the product and customer needs are likely to be complex. As a result, there may be areas of confusion or doubt in the buyer's mind as commitment nears. Successful sellers take the initiative and ask the buyer whether there are any further points that need to be addressed. If none, then purchase is one step closer.

The next step is to summarize the benefits. It's unlikely that the buyer has a clear picture of everything that has been discussed. Successful salespeople pull the threads together by summarizing key points of the discussion before moving to commitment. Finally, we need to propose a commitment. Don't ask for an order. That is not proposing a commitment. It's not what successful sales people do.

Successful sales people advance a sale. As a result of the commitment the sale will move forward in some way. (Remember the multiple conversations?). The commitment is the highest realistic pledge they are able to give. Successful sellers don't push beyond this point. If an order is the commitment – well done – however one step closer is better than nothing.

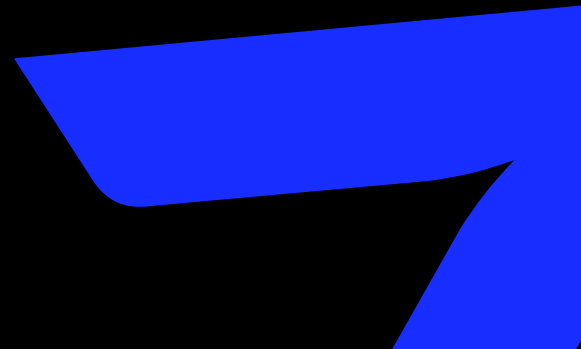
Adaptive reflection

question: How do you deal with objections when trying to advance a sale? What techniques can you take from this summary that may help you respond to objections in future sales negotiations?

03

Predictable Revenue

by Aaron Ross



03

Predictable Revenue

Turn Your Business Into a Sales Machine with the \$100 Million Best Practices of Salesforce.com

by Aaron Ross

Imagine that I'm a corporate spy, and I managed to hack into the networks of one of the most innovative and well known technology companies on the planet. And there, sitting on the server, was a document titled "\$100 million in 3 years." I open the document, and the first sentence I read is...

CONFIDENTIAL: This is the exact sales process we used in the last 3 years to grow our outbound sales process from \$0 to over \$100 million in annual revenue in less than 3 years.

Would you want a copy of that document? If you have anything to do with sales or growing a business, I'm guessing that the answer is "YES!".





That company, by the way, is Salesforce.com. And luckily for us, that document wasn't obtained through corporate espionage - it is a book written by Aaron Ross to show us exactly how he created and launched the outbound sales process at the company. And yes, he really did grow it from \$0 to \$100 million in a few short years.

In the beginning of the book he states that building a "sales machine" that creates ongoing, predictable revenue takes three things: (1) predictable lead generation, (2) a sales development team that connects marketing and sales, and (3) consistent sales systems.

However, as he points out, predictable lead generation is the most important thing for creating predictable revenue, so that's where we are going to focus our time. That also comes with the added bonus that you can implement this portion of his system whether you are a large multi-billion dollar company, or a 1 person startup. How do we know that? Because this is the portion of the plan that Aaron first executed on his own at Salesforce.com.

So buckle up - your very own sales rocket is about to launch.

Cold Calling 1.0 vs Cold Calling 2.0

At the core of Ross' predictable revenue strategy is something he calls Cold Calling 2.0.

Ross defines cold calling as “calling someone who doesn't know you and who isn't expecting your call.” Cold Calling 2.0, on the other hand, means prospecting into cold accounts without ever making any cold calls. With this method, you are expected to qualify accounts and contacts before calling, and research rather than sell.

There are 5 steps in the process, and we'll go through them together one-by-one. Remember, this is a process that only works if you follow all of the steps. So with that in mind, let's start with the most important step...

Step #1 - Get clear on your ideal customer profile

The first thing you need to do in order to create your own predictable revenue machine is to get clear on your ideal customer profile. This is going to help you maximize your productivity and your sales by finding great prospects more easily through smart targeting, and disqualifying poor prospects more quickly.

If you don't yet know exactly who to be selling to, you should be thinking about where you have the highest likelihood of winning business, and where you have the highest potential for generating revenue.

You will need to be clear on which criteria matter most to your business, but here are some sample criteria to get your creative juices flowing:

- How many employees does your target company have?
- What industries are they in?
- What geographies are they in?
- What is their sales model?

Adaptive reflection question: Think about your best customers. What do they all have in common? What does that say about your ideal customer profile?

- How much money per month do they spend on what your company sells?
- What specific products/services are they using today?
- What is the financial status of the company - are they growing and profitable?
- What values do the people you most want to deal with have? what is the exact role/title of the person you need to reach in that company in order to close a sale?
- What are the core challenges the company you are trying to sell to faces regularly?

Ross suggests that you can have more than one “ideal customer”, but you should limit yourself to 1-5 types of profiles. Your criteria will also be changing as you go through this process and learn more about what’s working for you and what isn’t, so remember to keep refreshing this list regularly.

Once you have figured out your ideal customer profile, it’s time to move on to step #2.



Step #2 - Build your list of targets

The second step in the process is to build your list of targets. As Ross points out, building marketing lists is beyond the scope of his book.

However, the general idea is that you should use one of the more popular list services, like Salesforce's Data.com, OneSource, Hoovers, InsideView or ZoomInfo.

The good news is that most of you have probably already started to build an internal marketing list, and that can provide you with your start before you dive into paid services.

Just ensure that before you move to step #3 that you have a list of people that fit the criteria you figured out in step #1.

Once you have that covered, let's move on.

Step #3 - Run outbound email campaigns

So this is the point where some of you say "Wait a minute! You want me to email a list of people that I bought from a list service? Isn't that spam? I read an article that said it was definitely spam. I'm not spamming people. No way."

It's important at this point to get clear on the ground rules. And by ground rules, I mean the law.

As of the date of this writing, you are allowed to send unsolicited email messages to companies in the United States that are not "opt-in" as long as you follow the rules set out by the FTC, which you can find here: <http://www.ftc.gov/tips-advice/business-center/can-spam-act-compliance-guide-business>

The most important ones are:

1. The subject and header must not be misleading.
2. You must have a valid physical address in your email.
3. You must include a way to opt-out from future communications.

Adaptive reflection question:
Which different mediums do you use to generate new leads?



It is important to note that if any of your ideal customers are in Canada, you cannot use this strategy because of the recently enacted Canadian Anti-Spam Legislation (CASL) which prohibits the sending of commercial messages to people who have not expressly provided their consent.

Assuming you have confirmed that you are legally allowed to send unsolicited email messages, you'll want to come to grips with one fact and then determine whether or not you want to employ this strategy. That fact is...this strategy works, and it will grow your business. When you are crafting your email, there are a few guidelines to follow.

The goal of your email should be one of the following: (a) to get a referral to the person you should be talking to in that organization, or (b) to figure out the best day/time to have a conversation.

The emails should look as if they are a single email that came from a salesperson - which means they should be text based.

They should be easy to read and respond to on a mobile device.

They should be short. This is not the time or place for your elevator pitch.

Here is a sample outreach email crafted by Marylou Tyler, the CEO of Predictable Revenue (the consultancy created to implement the strategies outlined in the book):

Subject: Can you point me in the right direction?

Email body:

[first name],

I'm sorry to trouble you. Would you be so kind as to tell me who is responsible for [insert your biggest pain point here that resonates with your ideal customer; OR insert function like "sales" or "recruiting"] and how I might get in touch with them?

Thank you,

Marylou Tyler
Chief Conversation Starter
XYZ Company
1234 Main Street
Des Moines, IA 50309
714-969-6213





Our advice? Start with that template and tweak as you learn more about who responds, and who doesn't. If you need some motivation, this is the exact template that Marylou used to triple her lead generation numbers in 90 days.

You should be sending out between 50-100 of these targeted emails per day, with a goal of having 5-10 responses per day, including negative responses.

In the book, Ross suggests that you use a mass email tool like that found in Salesforce.com (or Mailchimp, or Infusionsoft, etc). However, one of the Predictable Revenue case studies was from a company called Crunched, who found better results by outsourcing the sending of these emails to a remote assistant in the Philippines who sent the emails one at a time.

Two more things before we send you on to step #4. First, you are most likely to get a hold of the people you want to reach if you send your emails before 9am or after 5pm. This makes sense, because those people are most likely in meetings most of the day, and most likely won't respond to your email then, and might be inclined to just delete it. Second, you should also avoid sending the emails on Monday and Friday.

Step #4 - Have the “discovery call”

So you got through to the person you wanted to reach, and they’ve agreed to a quick call to see if there’s a fit between what you provide and what they need. Congratulations!

When you are having the discovery call, the goal is not to sell. The goal is to get them talking about their business and to listen. Ross suggests that if you are talking more than 30% of the time, you are not asking the right questions.

Remember, this call is to determine whether or not there is a fit, so you are really just on a fact-finding mission to understand your prospect’s business at this point.

Here are some of the questions you should be asking:

- How are your ____ teams/functions organized?
- How does your ___ process work today?
- What systems are your teams using today?
- How long has the system been in place?
- What are your challenges now?
- What would an ideal situation look like to you?
- How will your decision-making process work?
- What is the probability of a project happening this year?

The first thing you are doing is qualifying whether or not the prospect has any real pain, and whether or not they are likely to act on it relatively soon. If they don’t have any pain, or aren’t likely to act on it soon, it’s better to know now so you can move on to accounts that are a better fit.

The second thing you are doing is getting the prospect to build the case for your product/service himself. Understanding the exact words your prospect is using to describe their challenges is like gold when it comes to closing the deal.

Finally, Ross suggests that if your prospect is interested, but they need to convince more people on the team, then you should turn your attention to making this person a Champion who can do the selling for you.

Adaptive reflection question: Discovery calls are the best time to focus in on a prospect's pain points. How do you research and prepare for these initial conversations?

If you give them what they need in order to be successful (including time) and are persistent (but respectful), you'll be building up the trust you need to close the sale. I've seen this type of scenario in action personally, and it's always best to have somebody "on the inside" to be doing the selling.

Step #5 - Pass the Baton

The last step in the prospecting portion of the Predictable Revenue method of selling is to pass the baton over to the account executive to close. Like we mentioned earlier, if you are in a smaller company, this person is still likely to be you, so there is no real hand-off.

But the principles are important to consider, even if you are running the entire process by yourself.

There is one thing that account executives hate - unqualified leads. There's nothing worse than thinking you've got a live one on the line, only to realize after putting in some work that it's actually an old tire that fell off the side of a boat.

Ross suggests that the compensation plan be set up for the prospecting rep so that very specific criteria need to be met before it can be counted as a lead.





This same rigorous process should be applied even if you are a one-man-show. Only continue to pursue leads that meet the pre-selected criteria you have set. It always hurts a little letting one off the line, but you are better off focussing your energies where you are more likely to be successful.

Conclusion

If you follow the process laid out in the book, it could be a game changer for you. There are plenty of case studies you can read on Ross' website - www.predictablerevenue.com, and I urge you to consider buying and reading the entire book if you plan on implementing the full system in your business.

Thanks for tuning in, and happy hunting!

Adaptive reflection question: Which of the Predictable Revenue strategies can you implement in your own sales process?

ABOUT ACTIONCLASS

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