

4 Sales Process Failures Threatening Your Sales Growth

Is your sales process effective and efficient? Or is it missing critical factors that could help accelerate your sales growth? If you aren't sure how to answer these questions, your sales process – and your company's overall sales performance – could suffer. Here's a closer look at some commonly overlooked sales process essentials:

Sales Process Definition

In order for your team to make the most impact with their sales efforts, they must first understand the organization's long-term sales goals – or your *Sales Strategy* – as well as be provided a clear roadmap that will inform every step they take – a *Sales Process*. For top sales performance and results, your [sales strategy should be...](#)

...a well-defined, goal-focused, clearly communicated, and mission-oriented plan that positions your solutions (i.e., your products and services) uniquely in the minds of your targeted customers while also providing actionable direction for your sales organization.

Naturally, it follows that an effective and efficient sales process is the mechanism by which your sales strategy gets accomplished. In particular, a sales process is...

...the series of steps necessary to complete stages in your sales cycle; that is, ideally, to turn a lead into a prospect and a prospect into a customer.

The best sales process is:

- Well-defined and goal-oriented with meaningful benchmarks and milestones
- Clearly communicated and understood within your sales organization and can be consistently executed by all members of your frontline sales team
- Measurable, with results having a direct correlation to stages in the process so improvements can be made when appropriate
- Customer-focused, with the end goal of solving a customer pain point or satisfying a want or need

Before you can start streamlining your sales process, it's important that you establish clear objectives. What do you want to achieve? Are there any specific goals or milestones that need to be met? You should also think about what resources will be needed to reach these objectives. Once you have established these objectives, you can begin creating a plan for achieving them.

Of course, we understand it's easier said than done, so if you are unsure where to start, we have a few best practices to steer you in the right direction:

1. **Fail fast.** See what works and what doesn't. "Holding on to an unreliable, losing methodology too long keeps you from hitting your goals sooner."
2. **Document your sales process.** Even if you are unsure if the process has all the necessary stages, it's important to put it on paper so you can improve and build upon what you have. Beyond this, make sure your customer relationship management (CRM) system matches your sales process

3. **Follow your documented process.** The only way to know whether your sales process works is by following it consistently. By sticking to your process, you can pick out places to test something different. It's like performing an A/B split test on a piece of marketing. When everything else is done the same way, making a small tweak in your method half the time will reveal whether the tweak makes it better, worse, or has no effect.
4. **Stay open for best-practice adjustments.** If success rates begin to dip over time and you've been consistent in following your sales process, it is probably time to make adjustments. The buyer's journey is a dynamic process, and your selling processes should follow suit.

DO YOU KNOW HOW TO REPAIR AND OPTIMIZE YOUR SALES PROCESS?

Mapping out the sales process can be a daunting task. Our easy to follow Sales Process Template will help get you started.



[Download here:](#)

Now, let's explore those sales process failures that could be threatening your sales success...

Failure #1: Not Putting Your Sales *Pipeline* in Perspective

According to our recent research, only 15% of small to mid-size businesses prioritize their customers based on their potential. Before you take bold action to revamp your sales process, it is important to understand the influence of your pipeline and lead nurturing. Simply put, focusing on pursuing new business sales activity while ignoring quality prospects in your current sales pipeline is shortsighted. Ultimately, balance is important and this calls for assessing what is currently in your pipeline, at what stage, and the probability-of-closure timeline.

If your sales pipeline has weak overall conversion potential, your sales team will probably need to ramp up the focus on new sales activity, at least for a while. If your company has a healthy pipeline, however, closing deals within the pipeline should be far easier than starting from scratch and hoping unqualified leads quickly become customers.

Failure #2: Not Using Available Data to Optimize Your Sales Process

Measuring sales performance is key to being empowered to improve your sales management process. To make this easier, use a data-driven sales approach with your CRM system as the central hub. Of course, it is critical to first ensure the quality of your CRM and the data and level of detail within it. Remember that essential data can be influenced by technology, economic and market forces, your product and service mix, and even what your competitors are doing. So, make sure your CRM system is flexible, adaptable, and that you keep it up-to-date, both in its design and configuration and in the currency of data.

Use meaningful data, particularly leading (vs. lagging) Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), to provide critical benchmarks and mileposts throughout the sales process. For example, by aligning forward-looking sales performance metrics with important CRM sales process steps, you should be able to more accurately forecast sales. By analyzing how well your process moves prospects toward conversion, you could, for example, forecast a bottleneck where misdirected sales resources could cause an engaged target to drop out of the sales funnel, resulting in a missed opportunity.

In fact, data analysis should be a funnel of its own – one that first provides big-picture snapshots of overall performance, and then enables you to drill down to actionable detail. While the big-picture view can reveal the effectiveness of your overall sales strategy, it's at the detail level where *process* refinements can produce significant results.

Analyze the numbers when it makes sense. There's no need to wait for year-end or quarter-end to run reports. If your data is relevant and aligned with your processes, you should be able to analyze sales data when necessary to identify and fix trouble spots. Don't micro-manage but make sure your numbers have context, both internal and external. For instance, if your sales outperform your competitors in a tough economic landscape, even weak internal performance data could indicate that your sales processes are working despite market challenges.

Failure #3: Not Using Role Playing to Elevate Individual Performance

The best sales process is only as strong as the delivery of those executing it – the sales reps. And sales reps perform better when supported by training and individualized professional development. This calls for practice.

Hall of Fame NFL coach Vince Lombardi said, “only perfect practice makes perfect.” That's why well-designed and delivered sales role-play can be critical to informing and improving your sales process. Certainly, sales role-plays can be an effective way for salespeople to hone their presentation skills in a safe sales training environment customized to their needs, your business solutions, and especially, your customers.

How should you use role-plays?

- Make role-plays a regular part of your sales meetings, not only when there is a perceived problem
- Make your role-play training realistic, but also challenging, including possible tough customer objections and even tense interpersonal exchanges
- Always remember that role-plays should not be used to shine a harsh light on a salesperson's mistakes or weaknesses; instead, it should provide constructive – not destructive – training for enhanced sales performance
- Never practice sales techniques on your customers. Make sure you have explored scenarios and solutions beforehand, so your reps don't falter in front of a key prospect or buyer
- Use our [role-play feedback tool](#) to help provide constructive notes for your sales team

Failure #4: Not Using a Sales Playbook to Keep Moving Toward the End Zone

As Lombardi and all winning coaches know, your best performance on any field of endeavor depends on the strength of your playbook. Formal or informal, your playbook provides the strategies and processes for leading a prospect through the sales funnel – again, from turning a lead into a prospect and a prospect into a customer.



Your sales playbook should include:

- Well-defined sales processes
- Available resources and training materials

- Any documents needed throughout the buyer's *guided* journey (i.e., elevator pitches as well as scripts for handling anticipated sales scenarios and overcoming common objections.)

Used in conjunction with role-playing, the playbook can be a vital tool to optimize sales performance and results. Best of all, with the right pieces in place, you'll be able to use your sales playbook to both define and *refine* sales processes based on real-time conditions and results.

ACTIONABLE TIPS YOU CAN USE STARTING NOW


- Determine where you stand in key sales process and performance areas.
- Let go of what's not working.
- Clearly define, document, and communicate your sales strategy and your sales process, making sure there's an unmistakable link between the two.
- Analyze your sales pipeline in relation to where your sales team dedicates their sales efforts.
- Upgrade or make better use of your CRM, making sure meaningful and measurable data that should be in the system actually is entered into the system.
- Perform role-playing as a regular part of sales meetings.
- Begin building and maintaining your Sales Playbook.

Key Takeaways

Here are some essential things to remember for correcting these sales process failures:

- It's important to understand the relationship between your *Sales Strategy* and your *Sales Process*
- An effective and efficient sales process is how your sales strategy gets accomplished. In particular, it empowers you to *turn a lead into a prospect and a prospect into a customer*.
- The best sales process is customer-focused, well-defined, goal-oriented, clearly communicated, and well-understood within your sales organization. It is measurable, too, with metrics that facilitate ongoing process improvement.
- When assessing or changing your sales process, it's important to consider your current sales pipeline and lead nurturing efforts with an eye toward what is currently in your pipeline, at what stage, and the probability-of-closure timeline.
- *Measuring* sales performance via Key Performance Indicators is key to improving your sales process.
- Sales role-plays can empower salespeople to hone their presentation skills in a safe sales training environment; and can be critical to improving your sales process.
- Along with role-playing, the sales playbook can be vital to optimizing sales performance and results and helping refine sales processes.

Do you have questions or need help?

Please contact Michel 713.907.6310 mprive@salesxceleration.com