

LEAN BUSINESS, FAT PROFITS SERIES

GET *INFORMED* ON LEAN

B2B SALES

WAYNE MOLONEY



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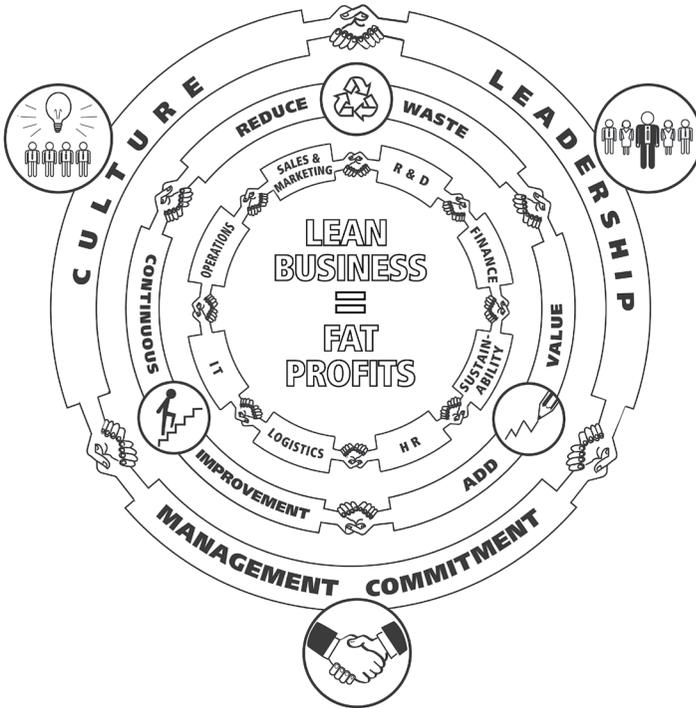
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LEAN BUSINESS



Inform's consulting philosophy is based around the principles of 'Lean Business'. Indeed, we believe that a LEAN BUSINESS equals FAT PROFITS!

As shown in the inner circle above, Lean principles can be applied to every system, every process and every function within every organisation, including Sales and Marketing, Finance, IT, HR, Logistics and Operations.

The second circle depicts the 3 broad principles of the Lean philosophy, i.e.:

- Understanding *who the customer is* and *what they most value* from the product or service being provided
- Understanding that *every function or service* within a business is a *process* that can be *documented, standardised,* and most importantly, *continually improved*
- Identifying and eliminating any *waste* within the process, where waste is defined as any activity that adds no value from the customer's perspective, i.e. it is the extra (wasted) resources (time, labour and materials), spent producing the product or service.

Of course, implementing Lean across any organisation, be it service based or manufacturing/production based, needs to be carefully planned and executed. It requires true leadership, management commitment and a constructive culture (the final, outer circle).

In this series of eBooks, we provide some insight into the challenges and opportunities of applying Lean principles to each of the key functions within an organisation, and along the way hope to inspire you to create your own Lean Business.....with Fat Profits!

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Inform Consulting Group

We are a specialist management consultancy formed in 2006. With many years of practical business experience in diverse areas, Inform consultants have a broad range of skills that qualifies us to consult with you at a general business level, and then to provide specialist pragmatic advice to improve your business.

We assist you to 'operationalise' your business strategies by improving your processes, with a rational and balanced focus on policy, process, people and technology.

With our emphasis on providing integrated solutions based on the Lean philosophy, we strive to improve your business through the application of holistic solutions that are simple and practical, rather than complex and expensive.

Wayne is Inform's 'go to' person for business strategies and Lean sales & marketing.

Wayne Moloney

A business strategist with a passion for sales, marketing and business development, Wayne has enjoyed a career spanning 30 years and the continents of Australia, Asia and Europe. He has held leadership positions in these areas, as well as in the roles of General Manager and Managing Director.

Wayne's experience in managing and growing businesses is not constrained by industry. With a belief that business management and sales development are processes that transcend the specificity of a product and service, he has successfully applied his principles to businesses as diverse as construction, fluids handling, manufacturing, pollution control, software development, telecommunications, education and many more.

GETTING *INFORMED* ON LEAN B2B SALES



Businesses exist for the purpose of making money. Whatever a business makes or service it provides, revenue is only generated when these goods or services are actually sold to a customer. The ability to “sell” is therefore the cornerstone of every business.

“Nothing happens until somebody sells something”

This quote has been attributed to many people, but regardless of who is responsible, truer words have rarely been uttered with respect to business.

Of course we have all heard the old adage that ‘cash is king’ and although true, it all starts with a sale.

The key driver of every business today remains the ability to find and connect with others who will benefit from their products or services, the critical word being ‘benefit’. Essentially people buy for two reasons, they need to avoid pain or loss or they want to gain pleasure or profit. Identifying how your product or service delivers against these needs is critical to achieving not only success in sales, but ultimately your business. Only by translating the features of your product or service into ‘benefits’, can you deliver *real value* to your customers. Sales is no longer about convincing someone to buy what a business produces, it is about delivering what the customer sees as sustainable solutions and benefits. To be effective in sales, you need to be able

to identify your ideal customer, their potential needs, and then be able to present your product or service in a manner that will highlight the benefits that they see as *value*.

The ability to consistently achieve value-driven, relationship-rooted sales in today's wildly competitive and erratic marketplace, is literally separating the wheat from the chaff, which is good news for those businesses that 'get it'. As customers become more informed and connected, they are forcing suppliers to change and become more professional, and principled in their sales efforts, which ultimately benefits both parties.

In this short eBook I share with you a selection of posts from the Inform Consulting Group's blog that will help you better understand the role of sales in your business and how to get the most from your sales efforts.

For more helpful hints and business tools, [visit our website](#).

Wayne Moloney
Partner, Inform Consulting Group

SIMPLE MEASURES CREATE SALES SUCCESS



Over the years I have been surprised to see how many business owners and managers measure their total sales, cash flow and profitability – and micromanage where not necessary – only to fail to give consideration to individual measurements that can really help them understand their business. This is particularly so in sales.

KPIs (Key Performance Indicators) are a critical tool for any manager wanting to stay on top of their business and understand underlying trends – in sales it is no different. Measuring sales efficiencies at different points in the business (individual, region, product etc) can provide indications of poor performance and allow early intervention.

Here are several simple measurements that can be considered when determining an individual salespersons efficiency:

- Personal sales as a percent of total sales. How much are they delivering to the business?
- Sales call by type. The number of calls the individual has made within a given period of time and the revenue that have been generated per call. This may be broken down into cold calls; leads followed up, repeat business etc.
- Cost of sale. For every dollar paid to the individual sales representative, how much revenue do they return to the company?

- Gross margin dollar per cost dollar. For every dollar paid to the individual sales representative, how many dollars of Gross Margin do they return to the company? This will reveal discounts and therefore individuals who may be selling on price alone.
- Revenue from new business a sales person generates.
- Repeat business revenue a sales person generates.

These basic but practical measures are just an example of what can be used to get an accurate picture of the efficiency of an individual or sales team. Where an salesperson is failing to meet targets, KPIs can help identify specific areas of weakness or underperformance and allow managers to take appropriate action.

What you measure will vary from business to business, the sales approach your company takes and any specific areas on which you need to focus. There is plenty of information available online to help you determine the most appropriate KPIs for your sales team or overall business. What is important is to remember the old management adage that has stood the test of time, *"If you can't measure it, you can't manage it"*, so start measuring.

6 THINGS SUCCESSFUL SALES PEOPLE KNOW



Success in sales doesn't just happen, well not continually. Sure we have all had a 'blue bird' from time to time, but to enjoy long-term success in sales you need to work at it. This doesn't suggest I am taking sides on the debate on whether sales people are born or made. Regardless of where you sit on that argument, success comes to those who put in the smartest and greatest effort.

Here are 6 things I have found consistent with those sales people I have worked with and who have enjoyed the greatest success:

1. They know their ideal client. This might sound obvious and simple, but successful sales people know this in depth. They know in what industry their ideal clients operate? In what area they operate? What benefits they can deliver to this ideal client that will be seen of value? They know who in the organisation is the decision maker?
2. They know their product/service, their company and their competition. Again this appears obvious, but good sales people know this from the buyer's perspective. What is it their product or service can do for their client? What problem does it solve? How does it help increase profits? What value does it add? How does it differ from others in the market? What weaknesses are the competitors likely to target? What are the strengths and weaknesses of the competitors?

They are always looking to 'take a walk in the buyers shoes'

3. They spend the right amount of time with the right prospects and clients. Once good sales people have identified their ideal client, they learn where they 'hang out' and how best to communicate with them. The right contact help them identify the real needs of the organisation and those involved in the decision making process. The level of contact and form of communication is appropriate and 'fit for purpose'. Good sales people know how to best communicate with their prospects and clients and develop a sound process for doing so.
4. They know how to build networks. Depending of the research, it is thought that buyers are 50% – 70% into their decision making process before engaging with a sales person. Good salespeople build a network of individuals and businesses so they learn of opportunities early and can build their and their company's credibility.
5. They know how their own system works. All too often sales people think their job is done when the order is signed. Good salespeople know that the delivery, implementation and ongoing support of what they have sold are critical to future opportunities. To achieve this they know internal networking is as important as building their external networks. Good sales persons sell themselves and their opportunities internally as well as they sell to the prospect. Senior managers, marketing, support personnel, R&D can all have an impact on their ability to deliver what they have sold on time and fully compliant.
6. They know when to walk away. Despite all doing all the right things in identifying and developing a prospect, all sales people will find at some time they are working with an opportunity that just doesn't fit

the mould. Good sales people know that time spent on opportunities that have little chance of success is wasted time. Time that could be better spent on finding or developing the 'right' opportunities.

These 6 traits appear to come naturally to good sales people, but all sales people can improve their success by focussing on these behaviours. Then they will know what needs to be done to create a sound relationship where the sale comes as a natural part of the process.

PERFECTING YOUR SALES PRESENTATION



The following tips will help you perfect your sales pitch so you are presenting your product or service in the best possible light for your prospective client.

Know your prospect

It is vital that you have a solid understanding of your potential client's business. You can use the Internet to do some background research on their company. Start with having a look at the company's own website, which should give you a good overview of the business, then follow up any sites that look like they might provide further insight – maybe they mention other firms they do business with and that you will be competing against.

Then talk to the company, preferably to the person who will be primarily instrumental in deciding whether or not to go with your product. Tell them that you are calling for some information in preparation for the meeting – you want to make the meeting as meaningful as possible so as not to waste their time at all. You can ask them what they expect from the meeting and who will be attending.

Never assume that all prospects are the same and will be sold on your product in the exact same way. Some will be more interested in the technical aspects, others in the selling points or cost involved. Get to know as much about the prospect's likely area of interest and develop some

marketing messages that tailor the presentation to those interests.

Avoid surprises

Find out how much time you will have for your presentation and in what sort of venue (e.g. office or a meeting room) it will take place. That's so you can get an idea of what equipment is likely to be available to run the presentation and what you will need to supply. If you're preparing a PowerPoint presentation for example, you will need a data projector. Does the room have one or do you need to bring one yourself?

Get the audience involved

Getting your audience involved will make your presentation a lot more interesting to participants. You can ask each participant for suggestions on what they would like you to cover and refer back to these individuals when addressing the issues related to their question. If it's feasible hand around samples of the product or present a hands-on demonstration to make it real.

Focus your presentation on the prospect's needs

Don't waste their time or stretch their patience by taking up time talking about you. The presentation isn't about you, it's about the prospect and their needs, so the focus has to be on the benefits your product or service has for them. Talking too much about yourself could talk you out of a sale.

Close by creating an opening

Your presentation must end with a call to action of some sort. If appropriate ask for the sale then and there. Where

the prospect is going to need a little time before they can come to a decision ask for an indication of how long that might be. In this circumstance a good closing might be to ask them for a follow-up meeting in a week to talk about the next step or to answer any questions that may have come up meanwhile.

Researching your prospect, getting organised and developing a close – all essential parts of delivering a winning presentation. But in the time between these and the actual presentation don't forget to practise. A couple of dry runs in front of someone on your team will identify any weaknesses in the storyline, provide you with ideas about how to get your points across and give you time to memorise the information so that the presentation goes off smoothly and professionally.

Want to know if Inform can help you introduce Lean sales and to your business? We are happy to meet with you over coffee, no strings attached, and discuss how Inform can help you.

[Click here](#) to arrange a time to chat.

RISK OF TOO FEW CUSTOMERS



Concentration Risk! Not a risk with concentrating so hard your brain hurts, but the risk associated with your business being reliant on too few customers.

For many businesses, once they win the first BIG deal there is a feeling of excitement and achievement. You've finally got that deal that will deliver the revenue you have been chasing and allow you to set in place the business operations and processes to deliver the profits you have been targeting. The problem for most businesses is the fact that this win often drains resources and there is little or no follow-up to generate more significant sales. The risk is obvious, if this customer leaves, for whatever reason, your business is vulnerable.

We were recently engaged by an engineering company who found themselves in this unwelcome predicament. 60% of revenue was generated from just one customer. A customer who was now on the market and the suitors all had alternate suppliers to our client. Their business was at risk. How did this happen? Effectively the business was so busy looking after the interests of this major customer, they 'forgot' to continue with business development. This customer provided adequate revenue to sustain the business and the lifestyle of the owners so they saw little reason to have to build the business further. Fortunately for them, they had developed a very strong relationship with a key individual in the business who was retained by the new owners and whose opinion was valued when new contacts

were being let. They 'dodged a bullet' but did not want to be in this situation again. We have since worked with this client to establish a sound business development plan that focusses on:

1. Marketing and sales initiatives that identify their ideal clients and how to engage with them
2. Having a clear value proposition that resonates with the target audience
3. Diversifying across a wider range of industries
4. Customer profitability, not simply revenue
5. Regular customer engagement across the depth and breadth of the business to ensure they understand their needs and identify unforeseen problems
6. Annual (at least) risk assessments that consider the likelihood and implication of of an event on the business and what would be done should it occur – plan for the worst and hope for the best!
7. And of course, building the customer base.

If you think this is a problem for start-ups and small business, think again. The corporate world is littered with the corpses of businesses (or sometimes just CEO's and CSO's) who got 'fat, dumb and happy, riding the back of a whale. In October 2014, GT Advanced Systems filed for bankruptcy protection under Chapter 11 for what many believe is being too reliant on Apple, and also being focussing on a small number of products. This made the business less flexible and unable to react to the needs of new opportunities. When the apple fell from the tree, there does not appear to have been a back-up plan.

I also have seen this first hand in a large 'start-up when I was involved in the formative years of one of Australia's major telco's. In the early stages of deregulation, the costs associated with connecting business and individuals to our

network were significant. So much so that the business had to focus on major corporations. Despite having won the business of a number of these key accounts generating significant revenue (and creating a few headaches for the incumbent), there was always concern at the impact the loss of any one clients would have on our future success. A major focus of the business was to spread this risk by having a greater percentage of revenue generated through residential customers and SME's. This meant a significant investment of time, money and human resources in developing network access, legal negotiations and development of financial platforms. Sure, it took away from short-term revenue but the investment was necessary. Without having the security of a bigger pot of revenue the business was vulnerable.

For any business having a plan to diversify and spread the risk is essential – we all know what they say about having all your eggs in the one basket.

SALES REPS NEED A PLAN



Without a plan, sales reps have no choice but to do their own thing – which may not necessarily be what your company needs them to do to achieve its sales targets. Undirected sales reps are likely to be too often found in the office or out on haphazard travel, spending time with the friendly accounts and pushing the easier to sell (but not necessarily profitable) products.

With a good INDIVIDUAL plan that has some discipline built into it for the rep the chances for sales success increase dramatically and ensure the focus needed at the individual level to get the right things sold to the right customers.

A good sales rep plan can be built if you keep these things in mind.

Base it on business goals, not whim – the company sales plan must be clear on what needs to be achieved. That puts the onus on you to have done your homework and developed an annual strategic plan for marketing that includes sales and gross profit goals and strategies for increasing sales to current customers and developing new ones. If management doesn't know what it wants from its sales team, how can the sales reps know what is expected of them? How can you measure their effectiveness? How reasonable is it to complain of their ineffectiveness?

Include strategies to guide action – too often sales reps are given no more direction than to “Get out there and increase

sales by x%". If management 'planning' is at the level of just tacking on an x% increase in sales volume in the budget without having developed the strategies for achieving it, that doesn't provide any direction for sales reps. In this situation reps are likely to fall short of their goal even though the budgeted increases may be realistic. Their sales plan will start with some strategic objectives but must then detail the activities expected of them that will allow them to achieve these objectives.

Each rep needs their own plan covering which customers they are to contact, when, how often, and so on.

In B2B you also need to decide on the person they will need to contact/persuade. Is this the Chief Executive, a Managing Director or a head of department? And will you need to talk to somebody else first before you get to this person?

If the rep is in a territory making calls it is often helpful to create a routing plan that directs him through the territory on specific days and weeks to make the most effective use of time and minimise backtracking. Planning this aspect can help significantly in getting reps out of the office and into the field.

Other things that could be set into their plan to be accomplished in a given period (such as each week or month) are number of client phone calls to make, number of contacts, appointments set, appointments conducted and value of sales to close.

Monitor results – since the plan has covered the goals and strategies down to task level, such as which customers or prospect groups are going to be approached, how frequently and so on, then each activity and the resulting

sales can be monitored and checked to see if they are reaching the plan.

Don't make recording activities a burden to the rep but recognise that tracking a few key performance indicators is essential to keeping your company sales plan on track and will form the basis of your assessment of a reps performance. Reviewing can take place on a monthly basis. Sales management excellence involves reviewing the results against the plan to determine missed opportunities and areas for improvement.

A genuine sales effort requires regular planning, tracking, and review to achieve the targeted results. Every sales rep requires their own action plan to direct their day-to-day activities and set up their accountabilities. An individual plan will force a rep to become more disciplined in his or her approach to selling and provide better opportunity for successful selling.

Want more information on this topic? [Click here](#) to access our FREE library.

ADD BENEFITS TO INCREASE SALES



When someone makes a purchase they buy more than just a product or service. At the time the product or service is probably the most important element, but they also buy a range of benefits that can over the long-term become their reason for being satisfied or dissatisfied with their purchase and with your business.

These are called 'added' benefits because you add them to the products or services that you sell. They can make a big difference in how customers see your business and be an important differentiator between you and your competitors.

Make a list of the added benefits you provide. These can include:

- A product guarantee or warranty that reassures customers
- The service given by the sales team during a purchase
- The availability of your backup service – 24 hours, 7 days?
- The speed with which your company fills customers' orders
- The follow-up from your business after the purchase
- How your location suits customers – is it convenient?
- Their perceptions of your business – stable, efficient, friendly?

- The quality of your product offerings – all your products and services
- Manufacturing locally – appeals to their sense of patriotism
- Your premises – attractive, clean, bright?

Some added benefits cost you nothing or very little. The way your sales team treats customers is a function of staff selection and training, and that doesn't add much to your total wages costs. Others, such as the condition of your premises can be as costly as you want to make them.

It's up to you as the manager to determine how far you're willing to go to deliver the best package of added benefits with everything you sell.

Once you've listed your own added benefits, list the added benefits provided by your competitors. If they're more successful than you at selling the same or very similar products the reasons could well be their added benefits package.

Conduct some simple research using groups of your own customers, and those of your biggest competitors if possible. Let customers tell you how they value the benefits you add, and how your benefits compare with your competitors'. Ask them for their suggestions as to what additional benefits you could provide to increase your sales.

Incorporate their comments with your own perceptions and analyze every added benefit that you and your competitors provide. Note why these benefits are attractive to customers and whether each is expensive or inexpensive to provide.

Are there some that are impossible for you to match (for example, location)? Which are you now providing but

capable of improving? Which are you not now providing but could provide with minimal additional expenses?

Remember, you're trying to put together the best package of benefits and probably won't be able to match the competition in every category.

Now be creative and devise some new added benefits that aren't on your lists. These can be time-related – offer a free inspection or service in twelve months, financial benefits – a guaranteed trade-in value on the old one when repurchasing, or an add-on such as 'spend \$30 more and get \$100 worth of genuine accessories'. Add some benefits nobody else is offering and stand out from the competition.

Once you've worked out the full contents of your added benefits package you have to find a way to communicate them to your existing and potential customers. Start by educating every member of your team – not just salespeople but everyone in your business. Give each person a list of your added benefits so anyone receiving an enquiry is familiar with all of them.

Summarize these benefits for customers. You could put them into your monthly invoices, display them on the walls of your office, use them in your advertisements, or include them on the calendars you give away at Christmas. Just be sure your customers know what else comes with every purchase they make.

By putting together a really attractive package of added benefits and making sure everybody knows about them you'll be able to increase sales at the expense of your competitors.

LEADS ONLY HAVE VALUE IF THEY'RE MANAGED



But that doesn't mean these leads have any real value. Regardless of how you prospect for new business, leads aren't really that hard to come by. Leads can be purchased, developed, nurtured, or created through effective marketing. They have to be contacted, made an offer, and usually followed-up several times before they can be converted into customers. This is a time-consuming and often expensive process, and it's where most businesses get it wrong.

A lead is really just raw material, waiting to be turned into something of value. This value-add requires careful management, from the moment the lead is acquired until finally the sale is made and a new customer joins the database. Like any other industrial process that converts raw material into a finished product, lead management can be viewed as a series of steps that, when followed, will yield the desired results.

Leads are like raw materials in another important way – don't do anything with them and they'll just stay as they are, unprocessed commodities with no real value to your business. If you've bought a list of leads and don't manage them correctly your results will be predictable and expensive.

There are many lead management software applications on the market and as you'd expect, some are better than

others. Some are suited to smaller businesses and others cater to the needs of larger firms. We'll just say that having a lead management system that incorporates one of these applications is always a good idea.

Modern lead management systems are a combination of people, software and processes that work together to acquire, manage and convert leads into sales. Lead management isn't just having a team of salespeople that prospects and sells, although selling is an essential part of the process.

If your business already has a lead management system in place that doesn't depend on a software application you may want to consider acquiring a program that's compatible with your firm's system. If you don't have a lead management system but want to design one, here's a way of going about it.

What is the sales process in your business?

How is selling carried out in your company? Are your products sold directly to purchasers or through a dealer network? Do you use agents? You need a clear understanding of the sales process now happening in your business including the people and processes involved. Which channels work best and which deliver the greatest profits?

You also need to identify responsibilities within the sales process – not just who does what, but who is in charge of the process. If you have multiple selling channels prepare an outline for each one. It's important that everyone in the sales process is accountable for their achievements.

How are leads managed now?

Whether formal or informal, your business will have a lead management system of some kind, even if it's just a database on the sale manager's PC. Document the way in which your company manages leads from the time they enter the business until the time they're either converted to a sale or abandoned.

Review this process to identify the trail of leads through your business. As you did with the sales process, identify responsibilities for everyone involved with handling and managing leads.

How do you create leads?

List your current sources of leads. Some will be purchased and others acquired through your own lead-generation activities. Leads are the 'input' into any lead management system and their sources need to be accommodated by the processes your business uses to deal with them.

Brainstorm what you've found

This is the fun part. You've documented what's already been happening with sales and with leads; now comes the time to review it with everyone involved in the process.

Just by reviewing the processes now in use you'll have identified several weak points or places where leads are being mishandled or not handled at all. Go through every step in your selling and lead management procedures and iron out the rough spots. Build on successes and get rid of the failures.

It's most important that you identify any places where leads can be lost or drop out of the system. This is often the case when the next 'trigger' in managing leads depends on

some sort of feedback from the prospect. They don't always respond like they're supposed to.

What you'll end up with is a system with which you're already familiar, but now it's been 'repaired' and will work a lot better than it has before. Take this system to a specialist in lead management and look for the right application to bring into your business to help you get the most out of every lead.

Want to know if Inform can help you manage your sales leads and grow revenue? We are happy to meet with you over coffee, no strings attached, and discuss how Inform can help you.

[Click here](#) to arrange a time to chat.

WORK SMARTER, SELL MORE



Finding suspects is not difficult.

Finding prospects who really want your products or services though can be very hard.

Today, in B2B sales you can't afford to waste time with opportunities that do not have a great potential to deliver results. And your clients and prospective clients do not want the deal with suppliers who waste their time.

In sales, like in any other area of your business, you need to be working to minimise waste and add value. And the greatest waste is time spent on opportunities that provide little or no real potential. These add no value to your business or the prospects. Prospects get motivated to work with you when you help them to discover that you can solve their problem better than anyone else.

The challenge for every business is to have a sound qualification process.

Qualify fast....qualify early!!

Qualifying your opportunities early in the sales cycle helps you focus on business you can win and not waste your time chasing opportunities you can't, or are very unlikely to win.

Qualified opportunities are those that have been screened for their level of interest in what you offer; people you or your sales team has a good chance of closing a sale with – they're prospects.

Successful salespeople develop techniques to check out enquiries to determine whether the buyer is serious or 'just looking' – they develop a series of careful questions that qualify the prospect 'IN' or 'OUT'. The nature of the questions may vary from business to business and one individual to another, but they all need to answer the same basic question – "Is this opportunity real, or am I just wasting my time?"

The questions should give you an idea of the prospect's 'sales readiness' and as well as determining how much effort you are going to put into this lead as it can also influence your approach.

There are many ways to qualify prospects, but the simpler you keep your process, the more likely you are to adopt it, and for you to be able to systemize it with your staff.

For any enquiry you need a quick and reliable test to be sure you are going after the right opportunities and you need to know now!

You can use this quick **Litmus Test** – 8 simple questions that are ranked to give you a final score that indicates the reality of the opportunity.

First, start by creating a scoring system for your questions. The following works well:

1. *Very Weak*
2. *Weak*

3. *OK*
4. *Good*
5. *Strong*
6. *Very Strong*

Will your lead pass the *Litmus Test*?

Score each question and then add up the total at the end to see if you have a real opportunity or just a 'tyre-kicker'. Not all leads are opportunities and not all opportunities can be won. The *Litmus Test* helps you filter out the good leads from the bad. Those to drop, those to chase and those you might want to 'park for later'

1. Has the prospect got a need?

Is there a need for the products and services you are selling? Does the prospect have a problem you can solve? Does your product/service/solution help them generate more business? Do you understand their need?

If in doubt, check it out. If the prospect is serious, they will share information with you that will help you deliver the best solution. If they don't, that's the first 'red flag'.

Remember, your business is unique; your products have different benefits, your business a different competitive advantage. You have your own strengths (and weaknesses) and way of packaging a solution. Make sure they understand this and that it is what they want.

It's quite easy to assign a score to this by understanding how much pain they are in and what are the consequences of not solving it. Or conversely, the increased sales or profit your solution might create.

1. **Is there a compelling event?**

What is driving the customer to make a decision or a change in the current situation? What is the payback if they make a change? What are the consequences if they do not act? If there is no compelling event, the urgency to make a decision can delay the sales process and waste your time.

1. **When do they need it?**

What specific date is associated with the compelling event? What is their timing? When does the problem have to be solved? When does the target need to be met? If it isn't urgent then are they really looking for a solution now? If there is no urgency, treat the opportunity as 'suspect', keep in touch for when they may be ready, but don't waste time that could be better spent.

1. **Do you know the prospects decision-making process?**

If you don't know who and how the decisions are made within the prospects business, if you are not dealing with the right people, this will score low. If you cannot get to the right people, it's a strong indication you will struggle to close the deal – it's a low score.

1. **Is there future opportunity with this prospect?**

Is there a strategic reason or long-term gain for winning this business? If you win this business what other opportunities might you be able to uncover? Does this company have affiliates or contacts that may be useful in the future? Is it part of a larger organisation that, if you do well here, might lead to greater opportunities? You don't want to spend a lot of time and expense on a small deal at low margin if you can't see any way to sell something else in the future.

1. **Can they afford you?**

The prospect may have a need, may be the right person, and may even be willing, but without the money, your sale won't happen. Determine that the prospect has the necessary budget for your service. They may not tell you their budget but you can usually get an indication and also get confirmation that a clear budget has been approved.

1. **Can you support them?**

Depending on the type of product or service you are selling, this can be a non- issue or critical. You need to be able to service the sale. Is this done remotely (internet or phone) or do you need to do it personally? And it's not just location. Do you speak their language? How you provide follow-up service can make or break your business, especially in today's world of social media. Be realistic.

1. **Have they got the skills to use it?**

This is often overlooked, but is very important. Have they got the right skills and sponsorship to implement your solution? You want them to implement your solution and be a great reference.

How did you score?

If you used the suggested scoring you will have a result from 0 to 40.

Total Score: _____

Drop It (Score 0 to 12)

If you scored less than 12 forget it. It's hard to say 'NO' but don't waste your time. Spend the time on the opportunities you can win and not those you can't. A prospect list is just a sales funnel and not everything can go through. So don't try to force poor leads into opportunities – let go early!

You must give your time to the few that will return rewards, not the many that will waste your time.

- **Gather More Information (Score 12 to 30)**

In between you need to ask a few more probing questions before you decide.

- **Chase (Score 30 plus)**

If you scored more than 30 the opportunity is well qualified and deserves your time.

But even if you scored above 30 and had a low score several questions, you need discover more information on those areas.

With your opportunity qualified in or out, put together a sales plan to target the business. If it is real, commit the necessary resources to win the deal. Make sure you understand what the prospect sees as value and work to deliver this.

By working on less opportunities and adding more value, you will win more business.

RELATIONSHIP SELLING IS NOT DEAD



There is a lot of talk at the moment that relationship selling is dead. Even the Harvard Business Review has come out to state – “selling is not about relationships”.

To this I say “RUBBISH!” It is particularly not true in B2B sales.

Sure, you will find your clients and prospects may no longer be able to meet and chat as they have in the past, but this is because of the pressure of work and the ‘instant response’ environment we have created for ourselves. Their days are full with meetings. Their phones are full of voicemails. Their desks are full of emails. And they are more than likely ‘up to their butt in alligators’. They don’t have time to build relationships, or do they?

The fact is people are now looking for relationships that add value and ‘cut to the chase’, they have no time for idle pleasantries. This will be bad news for the old school order takers, but great news for those in sales who know how to bring value to a relationship.

If you want to build a relationship with a prospect or client, they need to see you as a valuable resource. Ask yourself:

- Will the prospect/client see me and my product or service as relevant?
- Will they see me as someone who can provide value?
- Do they see the problem I can address as urgent?

- How much effort will their 'solution' require to implement?

If you can't answer these questions you will struggle to build a relationship. You need to do your homework. Research the prospect. Learn more about your client's business and become a true 'consultant' in your area of expertise (your products and services). So to build a relationship, you need to:

- Know the prospect or client's business needs
- Offer solutions to these needs – solve a problem, help them increase sales, reduce costs etc
- Keep it simple – make it easy to make a decision
- Become an invaluable source of relevant information, trends, market information etc.

Relationship selling isn't dead – it is just different. People still buy from people they like – and more importantly people they trust and who can help them be successful. Your challenge is to earn the trust – the relationship will follow.

WHAT MAKES A GOOD SALESPERSON?



The following comes from professional motivational speaker, US based Dirk Beverige. Here are his top 11 top sales person separators:

Clearly Defined Expectations

Is everyone under your leadership on the “same page,” or is someone marching to a different drummer? Improved productivity and performance require the clear communication of expectations. Our sales representatives should:

Know their roles and responsibilities — what they should and should not do. For example, they should let customer service representatives service while they themselves focus on consistently executing the sales function.

Understand the desired end game – what they must accomplish.

Work toward set goals and use those goals to measure their performance.

Planning

Planning and organization at the territory level are critical to sales success. Each sales representative must develop and execute a strategy that proactively addresses the dynamics and changes in his territory. Effective planning means

establishing clear objectives and organizing specific sales activities into integrated yearly, quarterly, monthly, weekly and daily work plans. The sales representative should:

Develop a plan for maximizing the territory's potential.

Follow a process that begins with an annual plan and filters down to shorter-term quarterly, monthly, weekly, and daily plans.

Develop a plan for each call that includes specific objectives for that call.

Practice organizational skills that make his work both efficient and effective.

Understand The Customer's Needs & Business

To compete at the highest levels, sales representatives must develop professional interviewing skills that establish their credibility and expertise, as well as demonstrate empathy. Additionally, they'll use these skills to reveal the customer's important business needs, goals, priorities and points of view. Each sales representative should:

Focus on the customer as a "market of one."

Cultivate skills that allow him to drive a discussion around the strategies, objectives, and initiatives of his customer's business.

Avoid dumping information, and instead, listen while the customer does most of the talking.

Cultivate skills that help him communicate effectively at all levels in the customer's business. This includes participating

in quality business discussions with those higher up in the customer's organization chart.

Passion For The Business

Passion creates the energy and drive required to succeed over the long haul. Sales representatives with a natural enthusiasm and passion for their business need no motivation. Members of the sales team must:

View their work as more than "just a job," love what they do and the market they're in.

Have the work ethic to do what it takes to succeed.

Creativity & Innovation

Developing new and better solutions to customer problems requires a big dose of creativity on the part of the sales representative. Innovation and creativity hearten perseverance and spark performance breakthroughs. Our sales team must understand that:

Required solutions are not always easy to find.

The sales cycle at times may become a drawn out process. The sales representative must find ways to stay engaged and lead that process.

Create new opportunities

Some seize existing opportunities and call it a day, only to wake up the next morning in a cloud of dust left by trailblazers who have created their own fortunes from the most unlikely and overlooked places. Top-producers not only take advantage of existing opportunities, but find

ways to create them as well. Our sales representatives must understand that:

Selling requires more than sustaining current business.

They must create new business not only within current accounts, but also through new accounts.

Know your company

Only by fully understanding our resources and total capabilities can we know what it is we take to market; and, as those capabilities expand, what we take to market changes! Because of this, our sales team must understand:

That selling is more than taking orders (i.e. some sales reps run to management saying they need certain products that we don't represent).

Our capabilities – what we do well and not so well.

The suppliers we represent, our product offerings and the applications that they best address.

Our value proposition and competitive advantage.

Authors Note – This is a huge void in most distribution sales organizations. Generally speaking our sales people do not understand our capabilities and how to present them as solutions to our customer's business needs.

Know the market

"The ability to learn faster than your competitors," says business strategist, Arie de Geus, "may be your only sustainable competitive advantage." Because markets and

tastes change, our selling opportunities change. Our sales representatives must learn all they can about their selling environments, including:

The markets and industries in which they compete.

The strengths and weaknesses of their competitors.

Personal development

Tennis champion, Venus Williams' candidly observed, "You either improve or retire. I try to keep evolving." Likewise, survival in today's business climate mandates a continued evolution. "All of the top achievers I know are life-long learners looking for new skills, insights, and ideas," says author, Denis Waitley, "If they're not learning, they're not growing . . . not moving toward excellence." Our sales representatives must:

Desire continued growth and accept the support our company offers to achieve it.

Commit to continued growth (When is the last time they did something for the first time?)

Agree to after-hours development (Remember when sales meetings were held on Saturdays?)

Collaboration

Collaboration allows us to "huddle" with co-workers to produce greater results than we could ever achieve on our own. It's based on the belief that early involvement, teamwork, defined responsibilities and processes can turn good ideas into dynamic solutions. Our sales representatives

should demonstrate the willingness to share knowledge and expertise.

Integrity

More people are watching you than you think. The University of Notre Dame Athletics Department advises participants in its sporting events to be their “best” selves because “everything we say and do (and don’t say or do) sends a message about our values.” Notre Dame describes integrity as doing what’s right even when it’s unpopular or personally costly. “By not making a wrong right, you are supporting the wrong. By inaction, you condone the behaviour. If you know the truth, speak it loud and clear. In other words, don’t hide behind the presence of officials – play as if you are refereeing the event.”

Want help getting your sales people to adopt these traits of top performers? We are happy to meet with you over coffee, no strings attached, and discuss how Inform can help you.

[Click here](#) to arrange a time to chat.

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