The Case for Sales Scalebooks™

Sales Scalebooks™: The Key to Increasing Sales Productivity and Scaling your Sales Effort

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Executive Summary

Increasing sales productivity is the primary sales issue for small (<$50M annual sales) technology-focused B2B direct sales forces with high growth aspirations. This paper explores sales productivity challenges and proposes a sales productivity system with the Sales Scalebook™ – the collection of documented sales best practices throughout the selling process - playing a central role in increasing sales productivity and scaling the sales effort.

The Sales Productivity Dilemma

Sales productivity -- typically tracked by time-to-first deal, win rate, average deal size and sales cycle length – has long been a major issue at growing technology companies. Less than 60% of sales reps are making their goals *(CSO Insights, 2007)* and reps with track records of success at previous companies consistently flounder in new selling environments. Scaling a sales force with low sales productivity is inefficient, unpredictable and expensive and many companies fail because of these dismal selling economics.

Advantages and Disadvantages of Sales Productivity Approaches

The six primary approaches I typically see used to increase sales productivity are:

- Sales profiling
- Sales targeting
- Sales process
- Sales coaching
- Sales training
- Sales tools

These approaches taken together represent a sales productivity system. Each approach has different strengths and weaknesses, outlined below.

Sales Profiling: Figuring out and replicating the successful rep profile for your company / solution can reduce turnover and increase sales. Unfortunately, even the best fits struggle if they don't have easy access to the best practices of their peers and rep ramp rates and sales growth rates will suffer.

Sales Targeting: Consistently targeting markets and companies that are attractive and winnable will increase win rates as your sales force develops knowledge around industry dynamics, trends, models, metrics, players, vocabulary and successful case studies. However, leveraging the credibility this expertise garners reps will be diluted and the scaling effort will be negatively affected if it is not carefully documented and made easily available to reps at the right time.

Sales Process: Giving your sales force a clear deal road map will limit misdirected rep energy and increase sales manager deal visibility. To effectively scale the sales process, though, reps also need the next level of detail– what they should say and do in the many different selling situations they encounter.

Sales Coaching: Sales leaders typically create and collect the best sales strategies and tactics over time and verbally convey them to their sales reps during sales meetings, 1:1s and prospect calls. This mostly ad hoc approach of sharing tribal sales knowledge is difficult to deliver consistently across the sales team and is ultimately unscalable.

Sales Training: Training sales reps how to win will deliver predictable new rep ramping rates and increased win rates. As a practical matter, though, sales training is often delivered irregularly and tends to be product and sales process-centric instead of being focused on the deal winning best practices that will really drive win rates and sales growth.

Best Practice Sales Tools: Best practice sales tools document the selling best practices that reps, managers and trainers can leverage to scale a sales organization. The challenge with best practice sales tools is that sales teams are not incented or often capable of documenting their own best practices and marketing teams often don't have enough sales cycle exposure or domain to do it themselves.

Six Pillars of a Sales Productivity System

Approach	Concept	Advantages	Disadvantages
Sales Profiling	Hire the right reps	• Less turnover • Lower sales costs	• Even the right reps will fail if they don't know what to do and when to do it
Sales Targeting	Sell to industries / companies / profiles that are attractive and winnable	• Increase win rates • Develop expertise	• When expertise not documented some benefits of scale through focus are lost
Sales Process	Win more by following the right steps	• Get management control over the sales process • Give reps roadmap for winning	• General roadmap doesn't help rep say or do the right thing at the right time
Sales Training	Train reps how to win	• Predictable rep ramping and win rates if training materials strong and training is regular	• Training often product-centric • Training materials often weak • Training often irregular
Sales Coaching	Sales manager collects and spreads tribal knowledge	• Win more when sales manager directly involved • Transfer knowledge to sales force	• Not scalable • Often inconsistent delivery
Best Practice Sales Tools	Write down top rep best practices throughout sales process	• Makes winning scalable • Makes targeting, training and coaching more effective • Accelerates sales process	• Sales often doesn't document best practices • Marketing often doesn't know what they are

The disadvantages in the sales productivity system highlight the need for a systematic and timely approach of delivering sales best practices

Best Practice Sales Tools are a Critical Sales Scaling Driver

Strong best practice sales tools are critical to boost sales productivity for several reasons:

- They drive an evolving, best-practice, uniform and scalable selling approach throughout a sales organization by documenting what the best reps do and say in different situations.
- They are, unlike training and coaching, always accessible to salespeople
- They have a powerful 'halo' effect on the other productivity levers: they make sales processes actionable, sales training valuable and sales coaching scalable as well as magnifying the sales profiling and targeting benefits.

Why Sales Tools are Underutilized

If sales tools are the lynchpin of sales productivity, why are they an afterthought at most companies? Three forces contribute to this frequent sales tool blind spot.

Domain Knowledge Gap: Sales teams typically figure out best practices sales cycle by sales cycle. However, they don't systematically document them and in fact are often not disciplined documenters. Marketing professionals are typically strong documenters but often don't have the domain expertise or the prospect exposure to create strong sales tools.

Sales Forecast Ownership: Documenting and delivering best practices takes time and the payoff can take a quarter or two, depending on the length of the sales cycle. Unfortunately, no line manager owns the 6 – 12 month forecast. The VP of Sales has an annual quota but is focused on the next 90 - 180 days. She is typically not investing in things like capturing sales best practices because if she misses her quota 2 quarters in a row she may lose her job. She usually focuses on activities and investment that affect short term results, like sales coaching. The VP of Marketing often owns the 12+ month forecast and focuses on strategic and expansion markets. That leaves the CEO as the owner of the 6 – 12 month forecast and he is usually not focused on executing tactics to enhance sales productivity.

Make versus Buy: Many smaller companies feel they do not have the resources to 'make' reps and so 'buy' them: they pay more to hire experienced reps that have relevant domain expertise. Unfortunately, this thinking is often misguided as many experienced reps with domain knowledge need lots of help to ramp up quickly at a new company (contributing to the low quota attainment rates found in CSO Insights surveys cited above).

The Sales ScaleBook™ Solution

To truly address the sales productivity and sales scaling problem, companies need to document their best practice selling techniques and make them easily accessible when the reps need them.

This collection of scaling best practice tools – strategies, tactics, documents and workflows – is called a Sales Scalebook™.

Sales Productivity System Reconfigured

Sales Scalebook at Core

Sales Scalebooks™ are the lynchpin of increased sales productivity
and a powerful lever to scale sales efforts

There are two dimensions to a Sales Scalebook™: the tools themselves and timely delivery.

Creating the Tools

The best practice tools in the Sales Scalebook™ are divided into two general groups –tools that support actual steps in the sales process and tools that prepare the manager and the sales rep to sell.

Corresponding with the stages in the sales process, sales process-specific tools answer four questions: 'why buy anything?' (earlier stages), 'why buy your product / service?' (middle stages), 'why buy now?' (later stages) and 'why buy more?' (post-sale stage).

The 'why buy anything?' stages include tools such as precall research plans, customer momentum news releases, emarketing touch plans, industry benchmarks, pitch kits by title, objection handling, master demo scripts. The 'why buy ours?' tools can include surveys, value calculators, 1st call presentations, leave-behinds, and evaluation plans, the 'why buy now?' stages include compelling event generators, solution presentations, reference approaches, and pricing strategies and the 'why buy more' stage includes customer welcome letters, customer launch agendas, implementation and on-boarding success stories, usage reports, client surveys and rep reengagement triggers.

The ‘preparing to sell’ tools address how to manage sales and how to sell. This group includes tools such as win / loss / stall analysis template, lead-to-close waterfall models, sales, comp, lead gen, territory and large account plans, outside, inside, cross-selling, forecast and reference processes, public case studies, in-house case studies, competitive silver bullets, industry best practice white papers, analyst reports, research (i.e., Hoovers) and web conferencing (i.e., WebEx) tutorials, call reports and new rep checklists.

Different companies will have different priorities, focusing their scalebooks on the tools that will make their own reps most successful.

Anatomy of a Sales ScaleBook

Preparing to Sell						Selling					
How Do We Manage Sales?			How Do We Sell?			Why Buy Anything?			Why Buy Ours?	Why Buy Now?	Why Buy More?
Sales Analysis	**Sales Planning**	**Sales Mgmt**	**Sales Process**	**Sales Infra-structure**	**Right Rep - Fast Ramp**	**Precall Research**	**Initial Contact**	**Qualifying**	**Solution Presentation**	**Propose, Negotiate & Close**	**Sales & Service Teamwork**
Win-Loss-Stall Analysis	Target Market Plan	Pipeline Management	Field Sales Process	Ongoing Sales Training	Right Rep Profile	Domain 101	Vertical Market Guides	Initial Presentation	Solution Presentations	Proposals	Customer Welcome Letter
Lead-Close Waterfall Metrics	Sales Plan	Forecast Accuracy	Inside Sales Process	CRM Configuration	Interview Packet	Industry Reports	Title Specific Call / Email Guides	Initial Follow-up Presentation	Pricers / Quoters	Reference Calls	Service Configuration Questionnairre
Sales Model - Productivity Targets	Comp Plan	Rep Productivity Report	Cross-selling Process	CRM Adoption	New Rep Checklist	Industry Benchmarks	Fit Assessment	Master Demo Script	Analyst Frameworks	Statement of Work	Handoff Meeting Agenda
	Lead Gen Plan	Sales Kickoff Agendas	Lead-to-Opportunity Process	CRM Tutorial	Training Bootcamp Agenda	Hoovers 10Ks	Opportunity Scorecard	Value Calculator	Industry Best Practice Metrics	Master Agreement	Go-Live Timeline
	Customer Expansion Plan	Sales Meeting Agendas	Forecast Process	Account Research Tool Tutorial	Interactive Training Case Studies	Analyst Call Transcripts	SPIN / Sales Ready Questioning	Positioning vs Competition	Pilot vs. Full Boat	Negotiation Strategies	Implementation Success Stories
	First 90 Day Plan	E-Staff Formats	Reference Process	Web Conferencing Tool Tutorial	First 90 Day Expectations	Linked-In Connections	Objection Handling	Evaluation Email	Make vs. Buy	Win-Loss Reports	Usage Reports
	Territory Plan	Board Meeting Formats	Call-Down Process	Sales Analytic Tool Tutorial	Cutomer List by Industry	Industry / Competitor Sites	Case Studies	Sponsor Letter	Competitive Silver Bullets		Customer Success Monitoring
	Account Plan		Integrated Appt. Setting Process	Other Infra-structure Tool Tutorials	Company Contact List		Company / Solution Overview	3rd party Metrics	Detailed ROIs		Client Survey
	Opportunity Plan				Customer Success Metrics		Call Reports (share w/ Product Mgt)	Solution Surveys	Close Plan		Rep Re-Engagement Triggers
	Call Plan							Coaching Your Coach Emails	Call Reports		

Sales Managers

Sales Reps

Examples of best practices across the selling spectrum that drive a more predictable sales scaling effort

Delivering the Right Plays at the Right Time

Ensuring that the plays are at the reps' fingertips when they need them is critical.

There are currently three general ways to effectively deliver a Sales Scalebook™ – a home grown online repository, a CRM- integrated scalebook and collaborative, wiki-based scalebooks.

Home grown online scalebook repositories need to be hierarchical (so you can nest sub-directories at least 3 levels deep), taggable, searchable and versionable. Create sections that mirror your sales stages and the general categories mentioned above, post the tools and continue to update and version them as they evolve.

Kadient Inc in Lowell, Massachusettes delivers a scalebook solution that integrates directly with Salesforce.com. Their scalebook converts Salesforce.com's standard opportunity into an 'active opportunity' that displays the right plays for the current sales stage in an easily accessible and trackable way.

The Sales Process Group in Moraga, California delivers a collaborative wiki-based Sales Playbook that has a nice hierarchical posting infrastructure as well as discussion forums, blogs and other tools focused on delviering an easy-to use playbook that will evolve as sales tools change and more information is known about selling situations.

The Right Scalebook Author

The biggest challenge in creating strong scalebook content is finding a person who understands the enterprise selling effort and has the skills to effectively document and create sales best practices.

In-house VPs or Directors of Sales are typically poor choices to own the Sales Scalebook™ content. They do not have the bandwidth to create or manage the creation of the Sales Scalebook™. They have their hands full making calls with reps and coaching them on deals, evolving value propositions, running sales and pipeline review meetings, preparing and attending management team and board meetings, figuring out the sales forecast, managing sales operations, running reports from the CRM system, getting product management customer feedback and hammering on marketing for leads.

The right person to build the Sales Scalebook™ is typically not a marketing person or a sales operations person as these profiles often do not have deep sales domain knowledge. The best scalebook author is usually a 'student of the game' sales person who approaches sales as a science and who has had success running and growing sales organizations.

Getting Started on Your ScaleBook

Sales Scale Partners works with you to build and deliver your Sales Scalebook™. Paul McGhee, the founder of Sales Scale Partners, has spent the last two decades carrying a quota in sales, business development and senior sales management roles at Oracle, J.D. Edwards & Company, Mercury Interactive, Nimblefish and MotionPoint. He has grown companies 1000% and average selling prices 3500% and has managed both field and inside sales teams in on-premise, technology-enabled-service and SaaS delivery models. He has actively attacked the sales productivity problem and rapidly grown these companies leveraging Sales Scalebooks™.

Depending on need, content for an initial playbook will take a month or two to create with some additional time needed to post to the playbook, integrate with the sales process, tie to the sales management process and train the sales managers and reps. Ongoing quarterly scalebook updates and new rep training are additional services available to help you evolve and leverage your Sales Scalebook™.

Sales productivity will continue to be spotty and growth rates unpredictable until companies commit to capturing their sales best practices and delivering them to their sales force at the right time.

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