



Management Group, Ltd.

Building organizations
through the execution of
strategic sales management

How to Manage Sales for Predictable Revenue

The 40 Critical Sales Management Activities that Drive Results

If you're a sales manager responsible for building predictable revenue for your company, you need resources to help meet this complex challenge. You may not be aware of all the actions required for building a high-performance sales organization. And in an increasingly competitive sales environment, you can't afford to maintain mediocre sales performance for another minute.

In order to hold salespeople accountable, executives need to understand the essential activities sales managers must focus on to be a catalyst for change, foster continuous improvement and create a sales culture that drives results. This white paper is an essential tool for understanding the duties performed by an effective sales manager.

- *The key actions that the sales manager (SM) must perform to be effective*
- *The purpose and objective of each action*
- *Why each action is important for growing revenue*

Sales Achievement

- ❖ **Purpose:** The top objective of sales management is to drive sales, capture new revenue, and exceed monthly sales and margin objectives. The purpose of the action list below is to keep the objective of sales achievement as a constant focus.
 - Perform sales strategy development with each salesperson on Monday morning, at a minimum, and in a formal one-on-one meeting during the week.
 - This action is to ensure the salesperson is focused, has effective strategies in place and is working on the right opportunities.

- The sales leader must use strategic tools and questioning techniques to ensure the prospects are qualified and the strategy is valid. This will also teach the salesperson to use the same tool set, how to think strategically and to work smarter. ([Acumen Sales Strategy](#))
- Attend key sales calls early in the sales process and help close sales opportunities.
 - This action is to help the SM better understand the opportunity and the people involved; when the SM is involved early in the sales process, a relationship with the prospect is initiated.
 - The SM's role is important in establishing company credibility, if required; early visits will help the SM be a better coach.
- Review pipeline analysis and qualification to ensure adequate values exist.
 - This action is critical because the SM must be looking 90 days beyond the current month to make sure sales and marketing pipelines carry the necessary sales opportunities in units and dollars to meet goal.
 - The SM should track both values and number of opportunities and know the ratios between future pipeline values and future monthly quotas. This should be done twice each month. New marketing campaigns help ensure adequate levels of future sales opportunities.
- Document the top 10 largest sales opportunities and visibly post them.
 - The purpose of this action is to showcase "large" opportunities that make the month; average opportunities move the organization to achieve quota.
 - A visible display of the top 10 keeps the sales organization's focus; "*out of sight-out of mind*" can occur when opportunities are buried inside a CRM system.
- Keep the top sales opportunities by salesperson "by month" visible.
 - Visibility breeds focus. Each sales person needs a visual reminder in their personal workspace.
 - The reason the SM should continue to probe on pipeline values and specific accounts is to ensure the salesperson is keeping them front-of-mind. Each salesperson should have their opportunity list with them at the weekly Monday morning meeting.
- Create a defined sales process and ensure the sales team understands and follows it.
 - The purpose of the workflow is to keep the salesperson working their opportunities in a consistent, proven format. The sales process builds trust and confidence and *must prove your value proposition*.

- The reason the SM should design, document, and manage the sales process is that certain sales actions must be in alignment with the buyer's buying process. Effective sales management ensures the salesperson is working the opportunity effectively.
- Clearly monitor and track monthly objectives vs. sales/revenues and metrics by salesperson.
 - This action helps the SM create the right formulas to measure the effectiveness of marketing, sales and sales activities. The goal is not only to track numbers, but also to work with the individuals on *improving the results*.
 - The reason the SM must create a "dashboard" or scorecard is to document the right level of activities for each salesperson. Because of the differing capabilities of each salesperson, personalized activity management is critical.

Marketing Plan Development and Execution

- ❖ Purpose: To build and execute a marketing program within the company. The program must be both carefully designed and brilliantly executed. Effective marketing will ensure the right number and value of opportunities are created along with long-term brand recognition.
 - Create key Marketing Messages/Value Proposition for the company.
 - This action is critical to ensure everyone in the company can recite these mantras as written.
 - The reason the SM must focus on the Value Proposition is to ensure it clearly describes what you do, why people buy from you, and how you are different from you from your competition.
 - Create a rolling six-month marketing calendar that incorporates all aspects of a go-to-market campaign. These include public relations, networking events, monthly seminars, industry events, etc. The calendar includes events that you may or may not attend.
 - This action helps the SM build an on-going level of lead generation and local, regional and/or national recognition.
 - The reason for this six-month plan is to make sure there are coordinated programs being run that touch various market segments.
 - Develop an ongoing series of marketing events to drive lead generation by product/practice or service.
 - This action is a subset of the above item and ensures that all practices are included in building a marketing program

- The reason the SM must focus on a balanced program is to ensure utilization ratios of support teams and that product sales are in alignment with corporate goals.
- Develop an ongoing series of networking events to build market awareness.
 - This action is a subset of the above item to ensure all salespersons attend specific events.
 - The reason the SM should be involved in networking by salespeople and others in the organization is to ensure they are expanding the company's sphere of influence, understanding trends, and seeking partners to "leverage" for additional sales opportunities.
- Develop a public relations program to build market awareness. Create a media outreach campaign and nurture all writers/editors who are involved in the company's industry.
 - This action is a subset of the above to ensure specific actions are taken to build a long-term relationship with key individuals.
 - The reason the SM should nurture local/national PR campaigns is to lower the cost of marketing and create a unique position of awareness within the community.
- Create in the defined sales process a methodology to prove the Value Proposition in conjunction with sales actions above.
 - The SM must build certain actions or steps into the sales process that allow the prospect to see and feel why your messaging is real.
 - The reason this is important is that many salespeople simply speak to the Value Proposition and *do not demonstrate it!*
- Develop creative brochure /web site/collateral sales tools to represent the presence of your company, by each practice. Make sure they have clarity and focus on your key messages.
 - This action is important to ensure the sales team has the appropriate leave-behinds and sales tools that describe the benefits your organization provides.
 - The reason the SM should focus on these materials is to help the average salesperson "sell the company" and the prospective client to better understand the clear messaging of the firm. Many times it gets diluted during the sales process. In addition, marketing needs the front-line input that the sales organization provides.
- Create a client Advisory Council and meet with them three times per year to gain insights into the market.

- These groups should be made up of not only your best clients but a cross section and include 5-7 individuals.
- This action is important for the SM to better understand the market, and to use these individuals to test new ideas/offerings and evaluate your quality assurance.

Salesperson Development

- ❖ **Purpose:** An active focus on salesperson development is an essential element in building a sales culture that breeds long-term sales success. The role of sales management must focus on training sales teams in the office and in the field. A well-trained sales team is sharp, strong, and confident, resulting in increased win rates. The following are examples of training.
 - Create a New Hire On-Boarding Process and track closely the effectiveness of the new salesperson.
 - This action is critical to ensure the new hire is quickly brought up to speed with the right knowledge and skills to effectively sell.
 - The reason the SM must focus on a fast-start program and actively manage it is to set the tone of expected performance and move the salesperson to a faster ramp-up.
 - Create and publish a 90-day Sales Training Program for the entire sales team that includes sales skills, product and industry knowledge, and company operations.
 - This action helps the SM keep their team sharp and up to date on product knowledge and sales skills. 90 days allows enough time for the SM to cover a variety of sales training skills. HINT: in the training, utilize salespeople in the sales training events.
 - The reason for a 90-day training plan is to ensure the sales team moves forward each quarter from a skill perspective. A longer-term plan outperforms a 30-day or weekly sales training plan.
 - Bring in outside speakers, customers, and training organizations to reinforce sales skills development and performance.
 - This action helps the SM bring in new voices that reinforce existing sales policy and introduce fresh ideas to your team.
 - The reason the SM should use professional sales training along with in-house training is to broaden skill levels and create a common language for the entire sales team.

- Twice per year create a [Salesperson Development Review Process](#), using Acumen Tools.
 - This action plan will ensure that the SM and salesperson formally evaluate progress against goals and that the professionalism of each person grows.
 - The reason the SM must formally use the Development Review process is to increase the level of communication between themselves and individual members of their teams and set proper expectations.
- Coach and Mentor the salesperson before and after prospect sales calls, per Acumen coaching tips.
 - This action is designed to help the SM teach the salesperson the proper pre-call planning discipline and help them evaluate the effectiveness of their sales calls. *“What would you have done differently, if anything, if you had that call to do over again?”* Make this a routine question or statement in all training situations.
 - The reason the SM must coach in this manner is to teach salespeople to coach themselves when the SM is *not* with them on the sales call.
- Twice each year the sales team should read a book on sales and share their knowledge.
 - This action will bring new levels of sales training to the team. Each week, assign a salesperson a certain number of book chapters to read and to report to the rest of the sales team as to how the information applies to your business and sales process.
 - The reason the SM should incorporate reading into the sales training process is to leverage and reinforce training concepts and make it easier for the SM to train salespeople.
- Make on-going sales calls with members of your entire sales team each month to monitor performance on the first call, second call, etc.
 - This action is important in the development of your sales team to test if they are applying new skills and if they are using them correctly.
 - The reason the SM must *inspect what you expect* in the field is to ensure that the skills are being properly implemented in the field, so behavior will change.
 - Make sure salespeople can sell the company. Role-playing in the training room and observing sales calls in the field are telling.
 - The reason the SM should include role playing is to help the salesperson practice prior to live customer meetings.

Management Systems

- ❖ Purpose: The sales manager must understand their business. Creating the right management systems allows the manager to easily and effectively operate in an environment that demands multi-tasking and feeds distraction. The following are examples of systems that sales managers should utilize.
- Utilize a sales meeting agenda format each week for the sales meeting review. This will ensure the meeting stays on track.
 - A formal agenda will ensure the salespeople know what is expected of them and they will be prepared to share the information on a timely basis.
 - The purpose of this action is to keep the SM organized on the key subjects of responsibility of their position, focusing on revenue generation, activity and development.
- Create salesperson and sales team dashboard/scorecards to ensure marketing and sales activities are achieving desired actions.
 - This action will help the salesperson and SM evaluate performance measured against the balance of the team and determine which elements of their performance needs improvement.
 - The reason the SM must have their scorecards updated is to communicate to other members of their management team current levels of performance.
- Create sales performance and pipeline analysis reports to ensure necessary levels of sales activity and pipelines are being created to achieve future quotas.
 - This action should measure the existing dollar value of pipelines levels, at each sales stage and future sales period vs. the necessary pipeline dollar values required to exceed future actual quotas.
 - The reason the SM needs to fully understand pipeline management is to effectively predict cash flow and receivables to the management team.
- Create sales contest rules and tracking systems for all contests. Run an annual sales trip contest and quarterly sales games to focus on activity or other programs.
 - The purpose of this action is to create a fun environment and direct the actions of the sales team towards specific objectives. All rules and definitions need to be clearly defined prior to the announcement.
 - The reason the SM must consider sales contests is to create a culture of performance recognition and competition, and provide a common objective for the sales team.

- Meet with clients on an ongoing basis to review satisfaction with the sales/implementation process.
 - This action by the SM and others on the management team is designed to “stay in front” of a large percentage of your client base. Design this action to meet with key clients three times a year, others less frequently.
 - The reason the SM needs to pay attention to customer satisfaction is because without satisfied clients, sales objectives will be much hard to achieve.
- Perform won/lost reports on a periodic basis to test sales effectiveness.
 - The purpose of this action is to contact prospects you have sold and others you have not sold, to validate what worked, what didn’t work, and what you can improve in the sales process, company image, products and sales approach.
 - The reason the SM needs to ensure this process is completed is to keep aware of competitive threats, changing markets and the effectiveness of sales development.
- Determine appropriate market/territory coverage strategy—defined, open, mixed, account driven.
 - This action allows the SM to assess necessary manpower requirements and effective sales organizational designs, and may assist in market segmentation strategies.
 - The reason the SM must consider a variety of sales coverage strategies is to evaluate cost of sales, designs of marketing programs and market penetration ratios.
- Compensation plans must be in alignment with corporate strategies and objectives. The SM must make sure compensation reconciliation statements are accurate and ensure sales compensation reconciliation is effectively tracked and statements are prepared by accounting.
 - This action is important to assess on a quarterly basis. As management teams review their objectives, strategies and goals, the SM must check to ensure that compensation models and their desired actions complement management objectives. The role of sales management is also to make sure barriers are removed and execution is timely.
 - The reason the SM must understand how compensation plans are designed is to ensure they are driving desired behavior and results.

Recruitment

- ❖ The most critical function of sales managers is to ensure their sales teams are staffed with quality salespeople. Recruiting must be considered an ongoing active program. High-performing salespeople are not always looking when your organization requires a salesperson.

- Create an active salesperson recruitment campaign using a variety of resources: run advertisements in the business section of the newspaper and on appropriate websites, and interview at all times, even when a specific job posting is not active; post a job opportunity every 60 days.
 - This action by SM in recruiting could be the most important aspect of their job. Finding and retaining top talent and not “living with” weak talent is an important philosophy of top-performing sales managers. Many times SMs retain salespeople too long based on a perceived investment or no available replacement.
 - The reason the SM must focus on quality sales talent is it makes YOUR life easier!
- Create an effective salesperson interviewing process with a minimum of three company individuals involved using [Acumen tools and assessments](#).
 - This action is necessary to ensure quality candidates are selected and that lower quality candidates are not! Hiring is the hardest job of a manager, but the most critical.
 - The reason the SM must follow a defined interviewing process is much like following a defined sales process, when steps are skipped, mistakes are made in hiring. Mis-hiring is the most expensive mistake a SM can make.
- Network with all vendors and others in the community seeking quality candidates.
 - The action of the SM at conferences, in vendor meetings or at industry events should always be focused on seeking talent. Other discussions at events are important, but the SM must continually be focused on finding the right person.
 - The reason the SM must constantly be alert to finding talent is that quality salespeople may not be looking for a position when the SM decides to seek additional talent.

Management Communication

- ❖ **Purpose:** Management must be kept informed of plans, actions and potential issues at all times. Communication can resolve or prevent all types of political and other challenges that sales managers face each day. A recurring task schedule in Outlook should be used to ensure ongoing communication occurs on a regular basis. We recommend face- to-face meetings if possible.

- Prepare and review weekly sales/marketing results and plans with all levels of management teams.
 - This action by the SM is critical to build respect with other levels of the management team and to allow discussions as to how others on the team could assist the sales team in exceeding targets.
 - The reason the SM should communicate often is to increase the trust and confidence level in the sales management role within the company.
- Meet with appropriate department heads that directly impact sales delivery on a weekly basis.
 - The purpose of this meeting is to ensure that monthly and quarterly quotas are attained and resources can be shifted to achieve goals.
 - This action by the SM is important to build rapport with key individuals to ensure cooperation is attained when necessary.
- Prepare defined rolling six- and 12-month sales plans and communicate at monthly and quarterly meetings.
 - The purpose of rolling sales and marketing plans is to ensure predictable revenue is attained and peaks and valleys are evened out.
 - This action by the SM assists in long-range planning and documents the needs of the sales team.
- Focus communications and actions on removing sales barriers within the organization.
 - Sales barriers can result from a previous poor sales process or management, and they limit the company's ability to achieve their sales objectives.
 - The reason the SM must focus on this action is continue to build a sales- driven culture.
- Make recommendations to management for new growth of the business.

- This action is important to keep the product/service offerings fresh and competitive.
 - The reason the SM is a key member of the business strategy is they have the most intimate knowledge of customer needs and own customer relationships. The SM is constantly at the forefront of new ideas, market conditions, limitations and customer ideas. The sales team generates most new ideas for improvement.
- Make recommendations to management on salesperson terminations.
 - This action by the SM is important, because sales management must be proactive in managing the sales team and budgets, and developing the right sales environment.
 - The reason the SM must take control of this issue is the SM must show maturity and sound business judgment.
- Meet with the company president on an ongoing basis, formally each week to ensure work tasks are properly aligned to the priorities of the firm, and quarterly for a review assessment and to plan for the future.
 - This action is critical for the SM because of time management challenges where multiple tasks from a variety of people are a constant reality.
 - The reason the SM must meet with the president is to keep the communication lines open, have a dialogue about sales expectations, ensure clear mutual understanding, and confirm the SM is working on the right things at the right time.

About the Author:

Ken Thoreson, Acumen Management Group Ltd. president, is a recognized sales management thought leader with more than 20 years of software/technology experience, including 17 in niche market distribution with emerging and high-growth national companies. The sales management strategist is regarded worldwide as an expert in sales execution, channel management, revenue generation, sales analysis, forecasting, recruitment, and training within the sales function. Prior to founding AMGL, he led development-stage, entrepreneurial, and \$250-million national vertical software sales organizations as vice president of sales.

Ken is a frequent speaker and keynote presenter at major industry conferences, including Microsoft Worldwide Partner Conferences, Cisco Systems Worldwide Partner Conferences, Sales and Marketing Executives International Conferences (SMEI), CA World, TechData/TechSelect Member Conferences, Ingram Micro's XChange Conferences, SAP Partner Conferences, SolidWorks World, Gartner IT Visionshare, CompTIA BreakAway, and NASBA Management Academy. He has authored two books and many articles spanning a variety of sales management topics, which have appeared in *Personal Selling Power*, *VARBusiness*, *Reseller Management*, *Business Products Professional* and *SmartReseller*. He is

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