



Top Sales Management Secrets of HubSpot's Mark Roberge

Part 4: On Running Sales Meetings

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Meet the Authors



Mark Roberge

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"I think one of the mistakes a lot of managers make during opportunity reviews is focusing on opportunities that are already deep in the funnel."

The advertisement features the Signals by HubSpot logo on the left. On the right, there is a profile picture of Roselyn Dwight and a notification icon with the text "Roselyn Dwight" and "Opened your email: 'Signed Contract'". Below this, the main headline reads "SEE WHO OPENS YOUR EMAILS" and a sub-headline says "Works with Gmail, Outlook & Salesforce". At the bottom right, there is an orange button that says "GET IT FOR FREE" with a right-pointing arrow.

Meet the Authors



Zorian Rotenberg

Zorian is a VP of Sales and Marketing at InsightSquared. He has been on management teams of several high-growth global software companies, ranging between \$8 Million to \$100 Million in sales, all growing over 100% annually. He was also the CEO of StarWind Software, a global software company with customers in over 50 countries. Zorian has been a speaker at a number of industry conferences and online events including the American Association of Inside Sales Professionals (AA-ISP), Inside Sales Summit, Chief Sales Officer (CSO) Insights, Mass Technology Leadership Council, The Conference Board, Heartland Technology Group, and B2BCamp among others. He has written for and contributed to The WSJ Accelerators Blog, Top Sales World, Salesforce.com blog, Revenue Marketing Podcast, DemandGen Marketing Report, OpenView Labs blog, and iMedia among others. Zorian has a degree in Finance and minors in Applied Mathematics and in Computer Science from Lehigh University and earned his MBA from Harvard Business School.



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Mike is a content writer and journalist who enjoys diving into complex issues and exploring the world of data-driven business intelligence. Before coming to InsightSquared, Mike earned an English degree from Oberlin College and wrote for several newspapers, websites and marketing firms around the country.



Introduction

Meetings form the backbone of sales management, so you need a consistent meeting cadence to get the best performance from your reps and the best chance to hit your number. This doesn't simply mean putting a series of meetings on the calendar at the beginning of the month – it means holding the right meetings at the right time with the right people and the right objectives.

In this section, Mark explains his own sales meeting strategy, including:

- How to create a meeting blueprint
- What types of meetings to hold
- How to conduct effective meetings

Q: What types of meetings should a Sales Manager have with his reps?

A: The specific cadence really depends on the context of your business, but here is a general blueprint:

1. **A one-on-one coaching meeting on the first of the month** where direct managers discuss how the last month went for each rep and look at the month ahead. This is a very metrics-driven sales coaching meeting that should ideally highlight the one skill that rep is going to focus on for the rest of the month.
2. **Opportunity review meetings twice a month.** Again these should be one-on-one and they should be used to review each rep's individual pipeline. It's important to really look at the newer opportunities toward the top of the funnel. I think one of the mistakes a lot of managers make is focusing on opportunities that are already deep in the funnel. Your influence over that is so small. You should always focus on the early-stage opportunities.
3. **Team meetings once a week** that focus on general coaching. This is when I'll do a "White Hat/Black Hat" meeting where we'll have one rep on the hot seat, and we'll listen to one of her calls and have one person assigned to give positive and another to give negative feedback.

Q: Do you have specific tips for conducting regular meetings?

A: You can't overlook the importance of regular meetings with your reps. Here are some of the fundamentals:

1. All manager-and-rep one-on-ones should be on the **first of the month**, and they should take your whole day.
2. When you identify a specific skill for a rep to improve at one of those coaching meetings, you should **book the follow-up meetings right away.**
3. Opportunity Review Meetings should start by **reviewing new, early-stage opportunities**, followed by stage 2, stage 3 and then review each stage count and \$ amount and drop-offs.
4. Managers should **meet twice a week with new reps**, and less frequently with more senior reps.
5. Have one team meeting a month that focuses **on general news** about the company, the product, etc.
6. Spend the rest of your time executing **coaching plans.**

Q: As an executive, how do you use meetings to guide a rep's continual improvement?

A: Basically, I make sure that the first-of-the-month meetings are unfolding in the way I just explained. So, on the 2nd day of the month, I sit down with all of my directors and go through every single rep on their team. **What's the one skill that person is working on this month?** How did last month turn out for them? This ensures that all of my directors are sitting down with the managers who report to them, and that managers are meeting with all the reps under them on the first of the month and holding the meetings the way I described in the last question. **I use meetings with my managers as a way to ensure the meetings they're holding with their reps are focused on continual development.**

Hold Sales Team Accountable to Effective Coaching

	1 st Day of Month	2 nd Day of Month
Morning	<p>Sales Person / Manager Independent Reviews</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Think through qualitative performance • Review individual metrics • Think about Skill/ Development Plan 	<p>Director Meets with Manager</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review Skill / Development Plans for each sales person
Afternoon	<p>Manager Meets with Sales Person</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss qualitative performance • Review individual metrics • Co-Create Skill / Development Plan 	<p>VP Meets with Director</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review Skill / Development Plans for each sales person

Source: HubSpot Presentation

Q: How should I conduct my weekly group meetings with the Sales Team?

A: These group meetings are not meant for coaching but instead to give your entire team a more general update.

1. Give a **general update** of where things stand for the month.
2. Reminder of current **promotions, contests, SPIFs or marketing campaigns**.
3. **Update** on new product features.
4. **Ask reps to share** new ideas about talk tracks or strategies.
5. **Be positive** and show appreciation.
6. Show **bookings trend**.
7. Show forecasts and **where your team stands** against its goals.
8. Show where your reps are month-to-date in terms of **activities against goals**.

Q: How should I use film review meetings to coach my team?

A: Yeah, like I said, I really like having team meetings where we have what I call “Black Hat/White Hat” team film reviews. Basically, about once a week, I’ll have a team meeting where we listen to a recorded call from one of our reps. I assign one person to give positive feedback and one person to give negative feedback to the rep after we listen to the recording. So the positive person (or “white hat”) explains what they thought the rep did well in that particular conversation, and the person giving negative feedback (the “black hat”) will pick two or three things they think the recorded rep could have done better. It’s just a great way to spark a natural dialogue and have everybody learn using a real-world example.

Q: How should I conduct the first monthly 1:1 meeting with each rep?

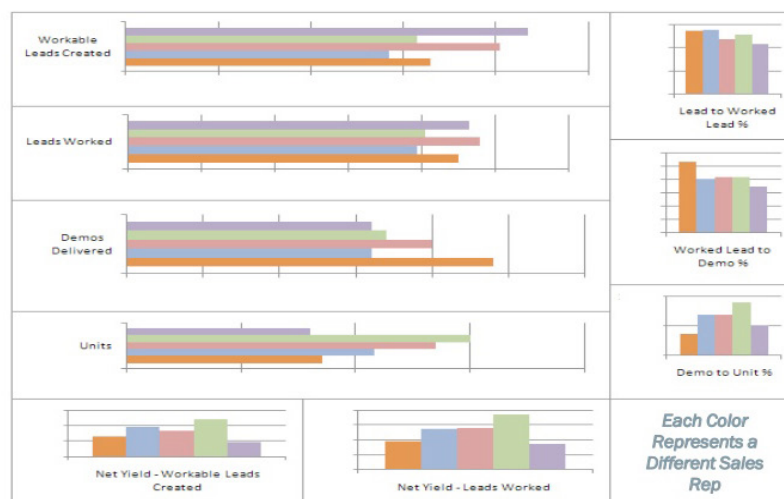
A: The first-of-the-month review meeting might be the most important meeting you have all month, so you should have a standard procedure for it:

1. Hold them on the **first selling/business day** of the month.
2. **Review** last month's numbers with the rep.
3. Have an in-depth **conversation about last month** and why turned out the way it did.
4. Have the rep **self-assess** qualitative and quantitative performance.
5. Determine a **single skill** to work on.
6. Work with the rep to **co-create** the coming month's development plan (using **specific metrics**).
7. **Customize a coaching cadence** for the rest of the month based on the discussion and actually book three 90-minute sessions right away in that meeting (this is critical to do immediately together and not delay because sales management is all about sales coaching and this is a priority).

Q: How should I run the Sales Coaching Meeting with each rep?

A: Coaching meetings are separate from Forecasting Meetings and Pipeline Reviews. As a sales manager, you need to have a coaching cadence during the month and three of them should be 90-minute sessions, which you will have booked right in your first 1:1 monthly meeting with your rep. It's a skill development meeting. Well, you need to lean really heavily on the data. Each rep will have a different set of strengths and weaknesses, so it's important to start at the top and use data to precisely identify where each one needs coaching.

Diagnose the Skill Issue: Start at the Top



** Data has been altered from actual HubSpot data for the purposes of this presentation*

So, for example, if you use data and notice that one of your reps isn't working enough leads [like the salesperson represented by the blue bar in the second section of the figure above] you need to dig in and identify the root causes for this shortcoming. Is he **over-investing** in unqualified opportunities? Does he have **time management** issues? Does he have a **fear** of making calls? Does he have a **lack of personal goals** or not enough motivation? This will determine how you co-create a coaching plan to address that shortcoming.

You should look for one skill to improve and focus on that until you feel the rep has improved. This is why you need to use "metrics-driven coaching" and measure carefully whether your coaching is moving the needle. You need to diagnose the problem they're having, drill down until you've found its root cause and then coach the rep on the one skill that will help resolve that problem.

The biggest mistake new sales managers make is trying to work on too much at once. Almost every new manager makes this mistake. No rep is a rock star on day one, even if they have the potential to be, so a lot of managers see so many ways they can improve their reps that they end up just throwing too much at them, which ultimately overwhelms them. So the first step to really effective coaching is to ask what is the one skill they can improve that will make the biggest difference right now.

After you've identified the one skill you need to work on and used metrics to create a customized plan to address it, you need to get buy-in from the rep. Reps respond much better if their managers come in and co-create a plan with them instead of just coming to the meeting and saying "OK, I've looked at the numbers and this is what you're going to work on this month."

Instead, it's more effective to have a conversation like this: "I've done some research about your performance and I have a few theories on where you can improve, but I want to talk to you about it."

And there's two reasons I do this. First, like I said, I get the buy-in, which helps the rep become more invested in the improvement process. And second, sometimes I actually

am swayed by their own interpretation. I mean, I can go through and identify the skill I think they need to work on, but sometimes I'll go through the whole presentation and they'll say, "Listen, I'm really struggling with my email prospecting." And they nailed it! So at that point, it's much easier. I have buy-in from the rep and we've identified a problem and then we can co-create a plan for resolving it. "So you need help with your emails? OK, I helped Tom with this a few months ago, so let's schedule 3 meetings this month and we'll work on a way to improve your connects." And then you should actually schedule those 3 meetings right then and there.

And this process is a really important part of the way I train all my reps. It's tailoring the training to them while still ensuring that they get the same training in general so that I can more accurately and consistently evaluate them.

Q: How should I conduct Pipeline Reviews?

A: This is a meeting that is intended to oversee how the reps are managing their open opportunities.

1. Hold **30-minute opportunity reviews** at least twice a month with each rep.
2. Start with **newly added early-stage opportunities**.
3. Make sure all new opportunities are **properly entered**.
4. **Explain process changes**. You will always have reps who don't agree with your process, but you should make sure they understand why it's important.

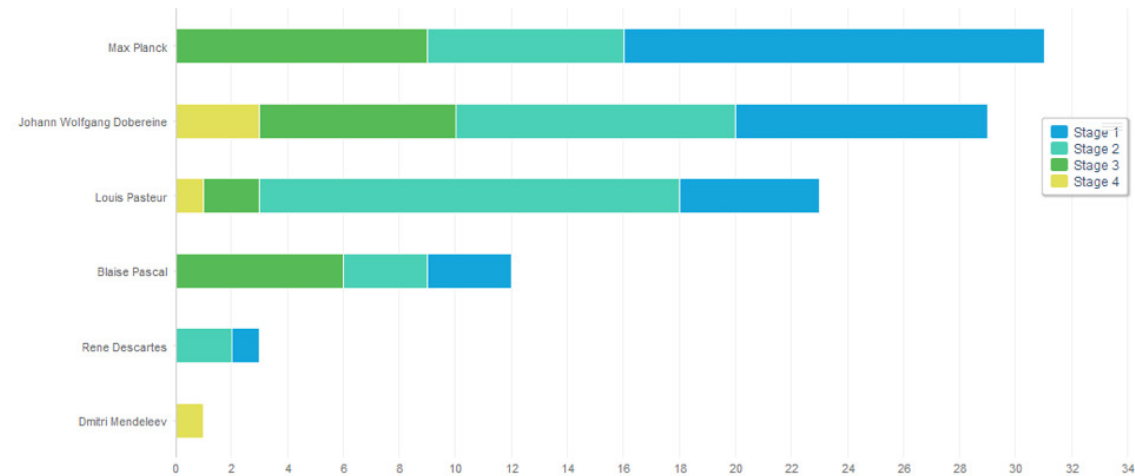
Here is a report from InsightSquared that offers a great example of what you should be using to review the current set of Opportunities (categorized by stage) in the Pipeline in total and per rep each week:

What stage are my opportunities in?

Custom Last This To Date Trailing Forward

12 open opportunities per employee, on average, closing in the next 90 days

7D 30D 90D 12M



SELECTION

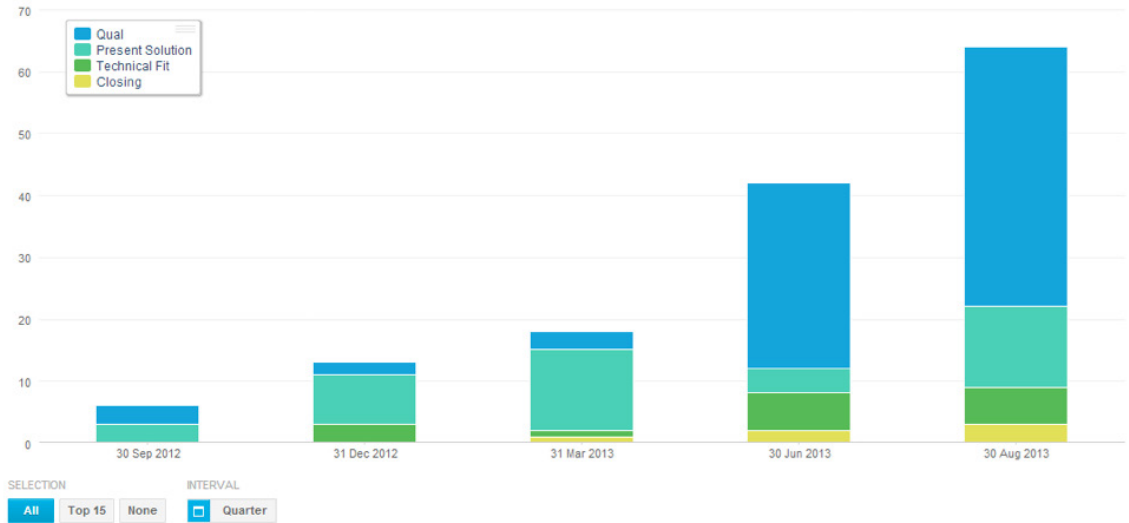
Additionally, during your pipeline review meetings, you should be looking at pipeline history for each rep and in total for all of your reps. How much is the pipeline changing or how many open opportunities are in your pipeline over time, broken down by stage? Are there more opportunities in your pipeline than there were last week? Last month? Last quarter? Based on your historical pipeline data, does your team and each individual rep currently have enough opportunities to hit the number? Analyzing your pipeline count over time in your Pipeline Reviews allows you to see if your pipeline is growing and how well your current pipeline sets you up to hit your number.

How is our pipeline count changing?

Custom Last This To Date Trailing

64 opportunities in the pipeline today

7D 30D 90D 12M



SELECTION

INTERVAL

All Top 15 None Quarter

How is your pipeline changing over time?

Q: How should I run the Forecasting Meeting with each rep?

A: This meeting is more for inspection rather than general review of the rep's pipeline. It's a good idea to separate your deal inspection or forecasting meetings from your overall pipeline review meetings. In this meeting you should know the total forecast for the current selling period and you should also clearly understand what changed from the previous forecasting meeting and why. Also, one of the key objectives of the Forecasting Meeting is to help your reps identify how to close their opportunities and ensure you figure out what areas you can assist them with (is it qualifying and doing a better needs assessment, ensuring you are talking to the decision maker, negotiating, etc.).

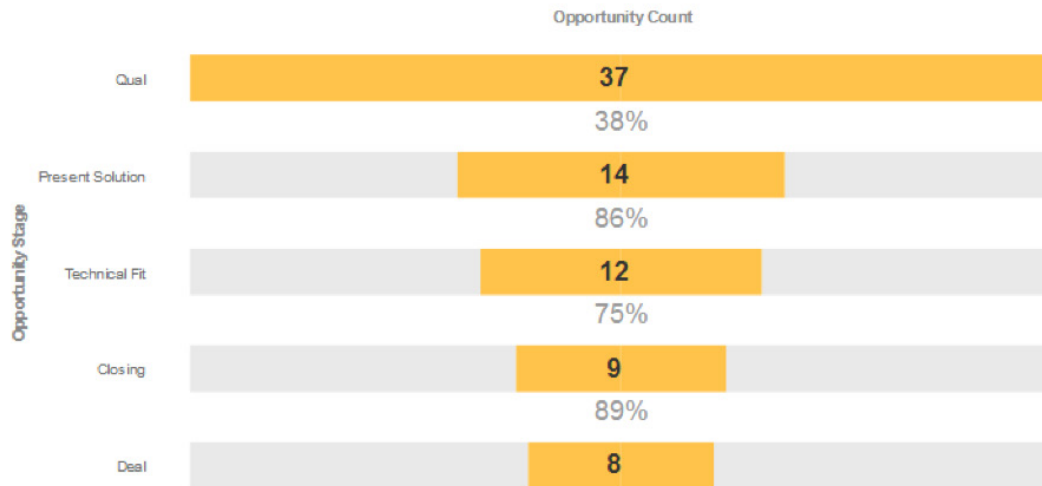
Also, remember that the frequency for these meetings is different for seasoned reps than for your new, inexperienced reps. If you are meeting someone very experienced who hasn't missed a number in a year, then you can be scheduling this 1:1 Forecasting Meeting every two weeks for 30 minutes each but for new reps you would do this weekly and for a full hour. So this is really circumstantial. Finally, in a Forecasting Meeting you want to make sure your rep's activities are on track and determine the key skills your reps should work to improve that you can help them with that during your coaching sessions.

Here are a few other things to keep in mind:

1. This is a 1:1 meeting between the sales manager and the rep and you ideally want to start these meetings on the **first selling day of each month**.
2. **Drill into every forecasted opportunity** and start by carefully reviewing the opportunities that are just entering the pipeline (your top-of-funnel or early-stage opportunities) instead of only looking at the late-stage opportunities that are about to close. The reason to look at early-stage opportunities is, because by the time they are late stage, it is too late for you to help your reps. Many managers make a huge mistake of just digging into opportunities that are deep in the funnel which is totally wrong – your influence at that point is so small that at this point everything is pretty much done and most issues that creep up at the end of a sale can't be helped at this point.
3. **Lock each rep's forecast in** halfway through the month.
4. Create a forecasting chart – rep by rep – that shows what they locked in mid-month vs. what they actually closed – **above the line means they were sandbagging, below the line means they underperformed**.
5. At the next meeting, **adjust their forecast** based on their historical performance and explain why you are doing that based on the previous point.

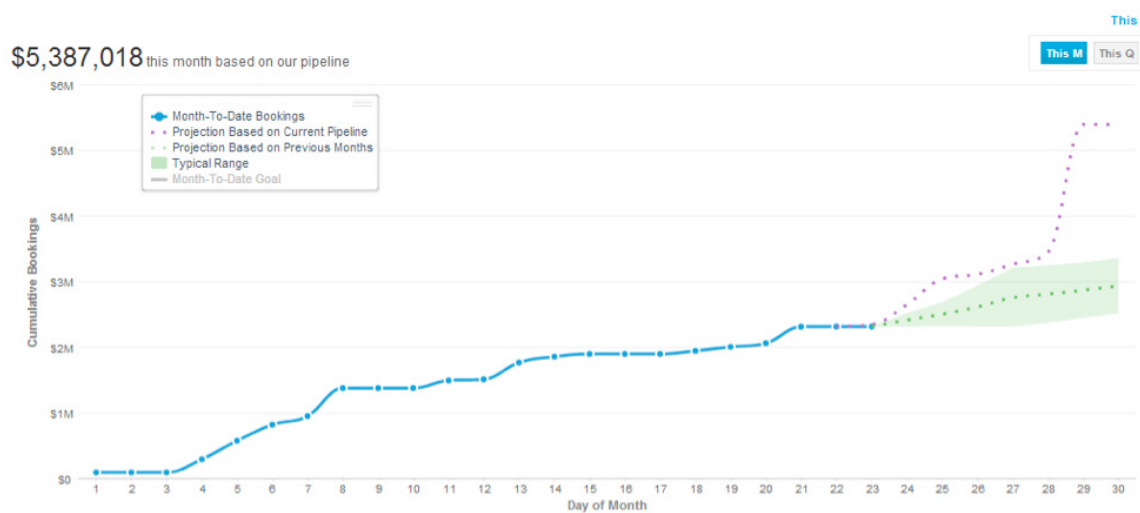
I like to look at a sales forecast that is “metrics-driven” rather than merely intuition-driven and that’s based on Pipeline Stages (stage to stage conversions) rather than traditional Forecast Stages (such as Commit vs. Strong Commit or Upside vs. Strong Upside). So for my forecast, I take historical conversion rates from the funnel and apply them to the opportunities currently in the pipeline. Here is an example of what that looks like.

Below is a Sales Funnel showing stage to stage conversion rates:



Stage to Stage Conversion Rates

And then I apply those conversion rates to my reps' open opportunities to get a “data-driven sales forecast,” which is another report from InsightSquared and looks like this:



A metrics-driven forecast from InsightSquared

Conclusion

Meetings form the background of sales management and coaching, so it is essential that you really know how to plan and run meetings. This installment in the series explained Mark's personal blueprint and philosophy behind the meetings he uses to drive his team's success: one-one-on opportunity reviews, team meetings, forecasting and more. By following his advice in these areas, you can use meetings to not only check in with your reps, but also ensure that your Sales process is functioning properly.

In the next part of this series, the 5th in our 6-part series, Mark explains exactly how HubSpot handles Sales and Marketing alignment, by answering the following questions:

1. Where does alignment start? When should a company start using marketing to generate leads?
2. How do you work with Marketing to ensure a consistently high quality of leads?
3. What metrics demonstrate Sales and Marketing alignment?
4. What does an SLA really look like?
5. What are your favorite tips for improving Sales and Marketing alignment?

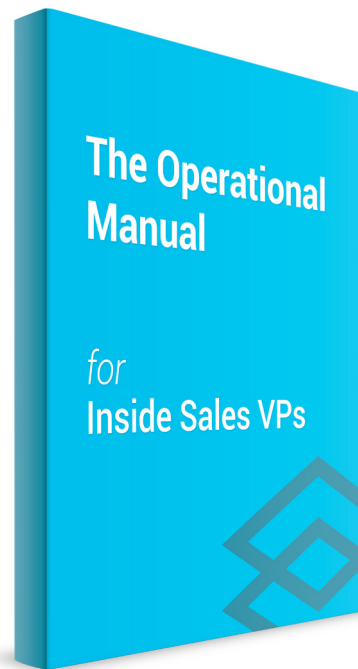
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