INSIGHTSQUARED

The Definitive Guide to

Writing Effective Sales Emails

Contents

Introduction

Email has changed the sales game. Sure, cold phone calls are still an essential part of the modern sales process, but they have taken a back seat to the sales email, which most salespeople now consider the main vehicle for getting (and staying) in touch with prospects.

But there's a problem. Most salespeople's ability to write an effective sales email has not caught up to how prevalent they have become. If you've been on the receiving end of a sub-par sales email (and who hasn't?), you know what I'm talking about: Impersonal, boilerplate, vague sales emails are unfortunately the norm.

In fact, we've gotten so many questions from sales leaders about how to get their reps to write effective sales emails, that we decided to write this guide. We talked to sales experts, studied our own results, and compiled the best thought leadership around to produce this eBook designed to help you and your sales team write emails that actually get results.

To do that, the eBook is divided into 2 main sections:

1. Sales Rep's Email Toolkit
2. Writing Guide to the 4 Types of Sales Emails

The Sales Rep's Email Toolkit is designed to be a one-stop shop and general primer to help your reps write effective sales emails. It's filled with the latest research, data-backed tips and an overview of the philosophy behind modern sales email strategy.

The second section, the **Writing Guide to the 4 Types of Sales Emails**, offers 4 examples of the most common types of sales emails, as well as simple ways to improve them and increase their response rate. The 4 types discussed are:

1. Cold Emails
2. Scheduling Emails
3. Trigger Emails
4. Nurture Emails

Together, these sections will give your sales reps everything they need to write effective sales emails that stand out from the rest and drive results.

Section // 1

Sales Rep’s Email Toolkit

Summary

Before they even compose their first email, sales reps must have a solid understanding of the components of an effective sales email strategy:

- **Content**: How should a sales email be composed and what words should you include or avoid?
- **Timing**: What is the best time and day to send sales emails? How long should you wait before sending a followup to an unresponsive prospect?
- **Implementation**: What are the best tools for writing and sending sales emails?

In this section, we comb through the data to provide salespeople with the answers to these questions and more. Together, the elements in this toolkit will give your sales reps the information they need to not only write effective sales emails, but also give them the best chance of actually being read and soliciting the results you’re after.

The Sales Rep’s Email Toolkit is designed to give sales teams that rely on email for lead and pipeline generation an understanding of what goes into an effective email strategy, and the tactics to put it into action.

Here’s what’s included:

- The 10 Golden Rules of Sales Emails
- 8 Essential Sales Email Tools
- 8 Data-Backed Email Tips From Yesware
- New Data on the Best Time to Send Sales Emails
- Pre-Email Checklist

The 10 Golden Rules of Sales Emails

An effective sales email program starts with the fundamentals. Ingrain these 10 sales email golden rules in your sales reps to make sure they're basing their behaviors on the right foundation.

1. **Do Your Homework.** Most sales reps have so many emails and calls to make each day that they tend to feel like they can't devote much time *preparing* for those calls and emails. While understandable, this mentality ends up making reps' jobs harder, not easier. Invest 10 minutes into researching your prospect — their role, their social presence, their company's website — and you'll see your response rates rise.

2. **Devote Time to Crafting Your Subject Line.** Most sales emails never get opened; sad but true. That's why the subject line is so disproportionately important. Making sure the subject line is specific and targeted (including the prospect's name or their company's) is an effective way to get passed the initial "send to spam" hump.

3. **Stay Focused.** Your company probably does a lot of things, and that's great, but when you're sending a sales email it's best not to muddy your message by listing every feature and value prop. Stick to one and make it as clear and direct as possible. Which one should you pick? Use your pre-email research to pick the aspect of your product or service that most closely aligns with the prospect's pain.

4. **Always Include a Strong Call to Action (CTA).** The goal of a sales email is not to sell your product — it's to get a response. And that's why having a clear, simple CTA is perhaps the most important rule on this list. If your prospect isn't sure exactly what you're asking for or how he or she is supposed to respond to your email, you will never get a response. Any time you send a sales email, make sure your CTA is actually aligned with the response you want, and that it is an easy, straightforward action to complete.

5. **Tailor Your CTA to the Prospect.** This one gets overlooked all too often. You can't use the same CTA for all of your sales emails. For example, if you're emailing a CEO at a mid-sized business, it probably doesn't make sense to ask for 30 minutes on their calendar. Instead, your ask could be for a referral to the right person. Whatever you do, make sure that your CTA isn't only clear and direct, but also tailored to the specific prospect you're reaching out to.

6. **Remember the "Why You? Why You Now?" Structure.** There's nothing worse than getting a sales email and not knowing why. Avoid making your prospects go through this by following a simple "Why You? Why You Now?" structure. Essentially, this is just a way of crafting your email so there's no ambiguity about why you're reaching out to that particular prospect, and why you're reaching out now.

7. **Always Be Helping.** Some salespeople view any contact as the right time to make the hard sell. Realistically, though, this approach comes off as overly sales-y and aggressive. Instead think of yourself as an advisor. Your product or service should help a prospect solve a particular problem, so use your email as a way to start thinking of ways for your prospect to solve or mitigate that problem. Pertinent articles (especially your own marketing collateral), free tools, data — these are all useful things to add to an email. Once the prospect has discussed their pain with you, then you can start showing how your product can help them.

8. **Utilize Your Signature.** Email signatures are most often an afterthought, but they are actually an essential part of an effective sales email. Sure, there are the basics: include your work phone number, role, and maybe a link to your LinkedIn profile. But there are also a few ways to get even more from your email signature, such as promoting an upcoming event, linking to a popular piece of content, or even including a link to your calendar (using an app like Assistant.to) so that eager prospects can book meetings themselves.

9. **Do a Thorough Quality Check.** Nothing saps your credibility more quickly than a mistake. It's an easy step to skip, but double checking your emails for typos, missing words, and broken links is one of the most effective ways to maximize the number of responses you get from your daily sales emails.

10. **Be Human.** Be thoughtful, be detail-oriented, be helpful, be focused, but, above all, be human. Everyone knows what a form email looks like. Everyone knows what a sales pitch is. And no one responds to them. Let your personality show through (but not overpower) your sales emails and you'll have a lot better luck connecting to the actual humans on the other side.

8 Essential Sales Email Tools

Writing effective sales emails is a huge concern for B2B companies, so it's no surprise that a cottage industry has developed around providing tools that simplify and/or automate the process. Here are some of our favorites.

Google Alerts: This free tool will keep you updated on prospects and their industries. It's useful to set up alerts for the company name, signature products, competitors, even the name of the prospect. These alerts can be the perfect way to use trigger emails (see Section 4).

Litmus: Another email tracking tool, Litmus also shows you how your email and subject line will appear on a wide range of devices and email clients.

Mention: In addition to news, this tool lets you track social media, blogs, videos, forums, even images. You can also manage the mentions (like responding to tweets) in the Mention dashboard, which means no switching between windows.

Newsle: Using Newsle, you'll get updates whenever your LinkedIn connections or email contacts appear in the news.

Sidekick: A freemium email tracking tool from HubSpot that shows you social profile details of the person you're emailing. It also sends a notification when they open it.

ToutApp: ToutApp allows for easy email tracking and analysis, plus, with its Salesforce integration, simple lead tracking and campaign management.

Yesware: This tool allows you to track email open and reply rates, link clicks, attachment opens and presentation pageviews.

ZoomInfo: Use this tool to augment your Salesforce data with up-to-date profiles of and information on your prospects.

8 Data-Backed Email Tips from Yesware

Yesware cares a lot about the data behind email opens and responses. Through research they've conducted and compiled, they've found several rules that salespeople should follow if they want to give their emails the best possible shot at eliciting the response they desire.

Here are a few we thought were particularly pertinent, but if you're hungry for more, check out their eBook on the topic.

1. **Subject Line Length Doesn't Matter.** Shorter is better for email copy, but not necessarily for subject lines. Yesware's research didn't show any correlation between subject line length and open rates.

2. **But Word Choice Does.** When trying to schedule a meeting, words like "call" and "meeting" perform well, while "time" and "calendar" don't do as well.

3. **Send to 2 or More People.** Including multiple recipients on your email (especially in the cc field) improves open and reply rates by up to 12%.

4. **Don't Wait for a Reply.** If your email doesn't get a response within the first day, you're better off grabbing the bull by the horns and sending a follow-up. 91% of emails that get read, get read in the first day.

5. **Mention Other Stakeholders.** Social proof encourages prospects to take action on your email, especially if someone they know is mentioned or involved in the email's subject.

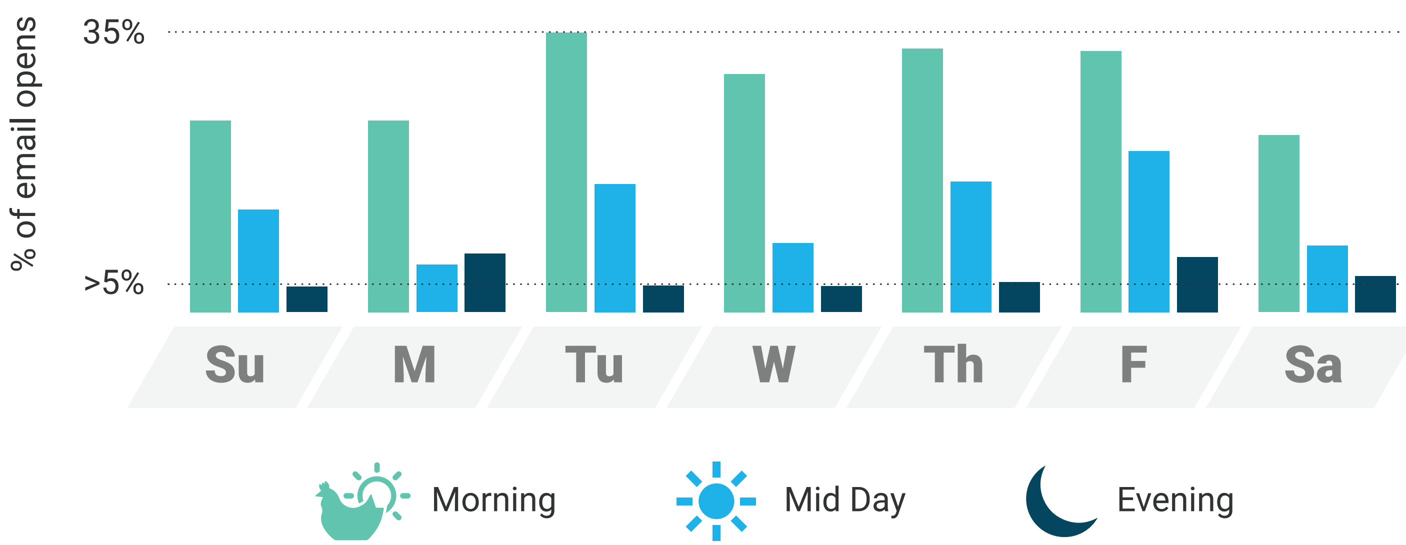
6. **Center Your Email Around a Clear CTA.** If you want a certain action, be clear and direct about it. Using the word "because" after your CTA is shown to increase compliance.

7. **Brevity is Key.** Numerous studies have shown that shorter emails spur quicker replies. A recent MIT study suggests taking this advice to the extreme and capping your emails at roughly the length of a tweet, 140 characters.

8. **Mention the Prospect's Name.** Using a prospect's name has been shown to increase their receptiveness to a meeting, as well as make the email appear more personalized.

What is the Best Time to Send a Sales Email?

Even the best, most thoughtful sales email won't get the results you want if it's sent at the wrong time. In 2014, InsightSquared performed an in-house study of our sales and marketing emails to determine what hours and days had the highest open rates.



1 Send in the Morning

The most unambiguous takeaway from our email study was that it is far better to send in the morning than it is to send at any other time of day (or night). Across the board, emails that were sent after noon were less than half as likely to get opened as emails that were sent in the morning.

2 Send in the Middle of the Week

According to our analysis, Tuesday mornings were the most effective times to send emails, followed closely by Thursday, Friday, and Wednesday. Interestingly, Mondays (often thought to be a top day for emails) were nearly as bad as Saturdays and Sundays (which are commonly considered the worst days to send business emails). If you're hoping to get your email read (and responded to), it's best to skip Monday and aim for one of the other days in the week, particularly Tuesday.

3 The Takeaway: Find Your Email Sweet Spot and Plan Around It

Email open metrics vary depending on your industry and product, so it is important to do this research for yourself. Measure your own email metrics to identify the best times and days to send, and then have your reps plan around these findings. If, like us, you find that Tuesday mornings are optimal, have your reps block off a few hours during this window every week to send the bulk of their sales emails.

Pre-Email Checklist

- Have you included all the **right recipients**?
- Re: Is your subject line **clear, personalized and compelling**?
- {!} Are there any **template remnants** (like {!name}) left in your email?
- Aa Is the **font and size** consistent?
- Will your email fit on a **smartphone screen**?
- Do all of the **links** work?
- Do you have a **clear, tailored CTA**?
- Are there any **typos**?
- Is your **email signature** error-free and up-to-date?

Section // 2

Cold Emails

Summary

Few things in sales are harder than writing a cold email. No one likes getting them, they're usually awkward, and, worst of all, only a small fraction of them ever get any response.

But unfortunately, cold emails are a fundamental part of modern sales. No matter how strong your product is or how persuasive your closers are, if you don't have sales reps persistently reaching out to prospects, you're never going to hit your sales goals.

That's why you need to coach your reps to write cold sales emails that are as effective as possible. And luckily there are some quick tips that can help you transform your reps' cold emails from "send to spam" into emails that actually get your prospects to respond.

In this section, we take a (sadly) representative cold email and offer a few simple ways to turn it into one that actually elicits responses.

Actual Message

Subject Line: Can I put some time on your calendar? Too much too soon

Hi Frank,

My name is Ben and I'm on the sales team here at Trajektry. We sell software that helps your marketing team manage and generate leads more efficiently, and I think it would be perfect for helping your company grow. Impersonal

Weak CTA *Can we schedule a quick call sometime in the next few weeks where I can tell you more about our software and how it can help you?*

Looking forward to hearing back,

Best,
Ben

What's wrong here?

The good news first: This email is short and to the point, which is good.

Now the bad news: Everything else. This email is clearly from a template, and its lack of personalization nearly ensures that your prospect will delete the email before finishing it (and maybe even before opening it). And even if she does read the whole thing, the odds are pretty slim that she'll respond to it because there is no clear CTA (aside from the bland "can we schedule a quick call sometime?").

Worst of all, this email falls into the "**all about me**" trap: It focuses only on what benefits you're offering and not at all on the prospect's pain or why you decided to send them an email in the first place.

A Better Way

Subject Line: How Trajektry can help Acme get more leads from its blog

Hi Frank,

Makes it about the prospect *I love Acme's blog and read it every day. I thought I'd reach out to you today because I'd like to learn a little bit more about your demand generation environment. We've had success doing just that with MomCorp, a company very much like Acme, that we helped 3x the amount of leads generated through their blog.* Keeps focus on prospect

Social proof

Just a touch of flattery *What's the best way to earn a 10-minute call with you Tuesday or Wednesday afternoon? Let me know what time works best for you and I'll set up the call.* Clearer CTA

Best,
Ben

What's different here?

The biggest differences in this email are the **increased personalization** and **stronger CTA.** Compared to the original email, this version has a much higher likelihood of getting a response because it keeps the focus on the prospect (and their presumed pain) and offers a very specific way for them to respond.

Cold emails are difficult, but by tailoring them to your prospect (and avoiding obvious templates), including a clear and concise value prop, and providing a concrete, easy-to-act-on CTA, you give yourself the best chance of achieving your desired result.

Section // 3

Scheduling Emails

Summary

With very few exceptions, the goal of an initial sales email is to schedule a time to talk live with the prospect about your company's service or product. That's why, when a prospect responds to a cold email, the most common next step is to send a follow-up email scheduling a sales call with that prospect or someone else they've named as the right person for you to speak to.

And this is when things tend to start to go sideways. For such a simple mission, scheduling a live call can go wrong for any number of reasons.

In this section, we look at a standard scheduling email and then offer a few tips for transforming it into an email that is much more likely to solicit the desired result.

Actual Message

Subject Line: Good time to call?

No greeting?

Steve,

Don't just name him; copy him on the email

Frank told me to reach out to you about setting up a call so I can tell you more about Trajektry. I'm looking forward to telling you how Trajektry has helped similar companies skyrocket lead generation.

All about you

Another weak CTA

Is there a good time for me to call you this week or next?

Thanks for your time,

Ben

What's wrong here?

Again, this email gets points for its brevity, but it immediately loses them for falling prey to a host of problems commonly found in scheduling emails:

- Very little context for the recipient
- "Me-focused" value proposition
- Overly vague calendar options

An email like this is bound to torpedo what could have been a promising conversation with a potential buyer. Check out the revised version on the next page to see how a few quick fixes can drastically improve response rates.

A Better Way

Subject Line: Referral via Frank B.

Colleague's name adds credibility

Frank, thanks so much for the introduction.

Steve, it's nice to meet you over email. I was speaking with Frank (moving to bcc) about how Acme can get more leads from your blog, and he advised me to continue the conversation with you specifically. My schedule is relatively flexible, but below are some available times, in case they work for you.

Social proof & reason for call

Makes it easy for prospect and uses a clear, strong CTA

All times in Pacific:
Today - until 11am
Thursday 10/12 - 11am on
Monday 10./16 - all day
Tuesday 10/17 - after 10:30 am
Wednesday 10/18 - all day

If none of these times work, I can send my schedule further out.

Best,
Ben

What's different here?

One word: **specificity**. Instead of a generic and vague "hey, your colleague suggested we speak - what's a good time?" this email provides all of the context and action items the prospect needs to reply quickly and positively. There is no question about who referred you to reach out to Steve or why — it's all there in the email and subject line.

Section // 4

Trigger Emails

Summary

Sales emails are a lot like conversations - they work best when there's a natural reason for them to occur in the first place. That's why triggers are so effective.

What's a trigger? Essentially, a trigger is an external stimulus that acts (nominally, at least) as the reason you're reaching out to a particular prospect. In general, there are two times to use triggers:

- when a news item or event reveals a brand new prospect for you to reach out to
- when a news item provides an opportunity for you to nurture an existing prospect

Because a trigger email to a new prospect is so similar to a classic cold email, we will focus on the second variety of trigger email in this section. If a company that you're currently working secures a new round of funding, receives an award, or hires a new executive, it could be the perfect opportunity for you to warm up a sales conversation that has gone cold.

But only if you do it right. In this section, we look at trigger emails and how you can use them to revive a conversation that has died on the vine.

Actual Message

Subject Line: Resuming our previous discussion

Hi Frank,

I saw your recent interview with Inc. It was great! It also reminded me to reach out to you again to see if now would be a better time to give you a tour of our product and show you how I think it can help your marketing team create more organic leads.

Weak trigger

Not focused on answering questions

Another weak CTA

Is now a better time? Let me know and I can schedule a meeting sometime this week or next.

Thanks!
Ben

What's wrong here?

While this email technically uses a trigger, it doesn't make any use of it other than to segue into a standard-issue coldish email. When using a trigger, make sure to tie it back directly to your value prop. In this example, did Frank mention anything in the interview that points to a pain that your product or service can solve? If not, it might not be the right trigger to use.

Furthermore, this email fails a second time by resorting to a weak CTA for a followup call. What will you discuss on the call? Why is a call likely to be valuable now when it wasn't the last time you reached out to Frank? These are all important questions to answer if you're thinking of sending a trigger email to a previously engaged prospect.

A Better Way

Subject Line: Great interview on Inc.!

Hi Frank,

Makes you seem like a human

I saw your recent interview with Inc., and I thought it was really interesting. I hope to run my own company one day, and a lot of the ideas you discussed really resonated with me.

Specific trigger

The thing that stuck out to me the most was when you were talking about how difficult it is to generate good inbound leads. I couldn't agree more, that's such a tough thing to master. And it's the very reason my company, Trajektry, was started: to help growing companies optimize their blogs so they can quickly ramp up high-quality lead creation.

Quick, trigger-pertinent value prop

Circles back to initial coversation, and adds something new

Since we last spoke, we've added some functionality to our product that I think would be perfect for Acme. Do you have 15 minutes next Tuesday or Wednesday morning when I could tell you a little more about our recent improvements and how I think you could use them at Acme to fuel lead growth from your blog?

Best,
Ben

What's different here?

In the original version of this email, the trigger is weak and transparently just an excuse to send another essentially cold email. In this version, the trigger shows that the rep has done a little research and has a concrete reason for reaching out to **this specific person at this specific time**.

This concept — using a trigger to make it clear why you're reaching out — has been called the "Why You? Why You Now?" (WYWYN) technique, and it's a great way to structure your trigger emails. Bolstering the trigger by adding another "why now" point (new functionality in your product) makes this email seem even more pertinent and timely.

Section // 5

Nurture Emails

Summary

Believe it or not, not all of your sales emails will get responses. But that doesn't mean that your reps should simply give up on every prospect they email but don't hear back from. In fact, the opposite is true: **re-emailing unrepsonsive prospects at specific intervals is one of the most effective ways to set up a call**. In general, these types of emails are called "nurture emails" and they're essentially a combination of a trigger email and a cold email.

Tools that automatically remind you to send a followup (after a week, a month, etc.) to unresponsive prospects makes nurture emails one of the easiest tactics to employ. Unfortunately, they're also among the hardest to execute well.

In this section, we look at a common example of a nurture email and a few simple ways to turn it into a method for not only re-engaging a prospect who's gone dark, but also adding value to the conversation and putting yourself (and your company) in the best light possible.

Actual Message

Subject Line: Checking in again

Vague, spammy subject line

Hi Frank,

I'm following up on a few attempts to connect as I wanted to introduce myself and Trajektry.

Weak trigger

Trajektry is a tool that marketing teams use to increase the number of leads they generate from their blog. I think it would be quite useful for you.

Vague and impersonal

Another weak CTA

Let me know when I can put some time on your calendar.

Best,
Ben

What's wrong here?

Other than the phrase "I'm following up on a few attempts to connect," this is, note for note, a cold email. If the initial emails didn't get a response, there's almost no way this one will either. It doesn't show any interest in the prospect or his or her business. It rests on a vague CTA, and offers almost no indication about how the tool could potentially resolve any of the prospect's pain.

Yes, this email serves the purpose of keeping the prospect in your orbit, but it doesn't add anything else. Simply reminding a prospect that you've reached out in the past does not qualify as nurturing them. Providing them with additional content, an update on your product, or another piece of new information is the best way to ensure that you're not just reaching out for the sake of it, but adding something to a conversation you wish to re-ignite.

A Better Way

Subject Line: A new case study I thought you'd like

Hi Frank,

Keeps the focus on the prospect

I'm following up on a few attempts to connect as I wanted to learn a little more about Acme and see if I and Trajektry can help Acme continue to grow.

Acts a trigger and adds value

When I last reached out, I mentioned that Trajektry has helped companies like Acme generate more leads from their blogs. We actually just released a case study with one of our clients, MomCorp, that I think does a good job of explaining how our tool helps companies like Acme.

I'm excited to answer any questions you have and to learn more about Acme — what can I do to earn 10 minutes on your calendar next Tuesday or Wednesday?

Best,
Ben

What's different here?

This email is much more than a second cold email sent after a certain period of time. It shifts the focus to learning about the prospect, it enters a new (and relevant) piece of content into the mix, and uses a strong CTA to prompt the prospect to action.

This email may not restart a stalled conversation, but it has a much better chance of doing so because it's focused on the prospect and offers something new instead of simply "reaching out again."

Conclusion

Like it or not, emails are an essential part of an effective B2B sales process. So it's important to know how to do them right.

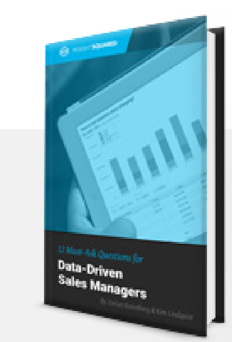
This eBook laid out the fundamentals of a strong approach to sales emails — the data and philosophy that undergird them as well as specific tips for improving them. But the truth is that, in order to get the most from your sales emails, you must constantly be testing, iterating and analyzing. The core principles in this eBook will help you hit the ground running and avoid common pitfalls, but much of the puzzle is still ahead of you.

And remember: a great sales email is just the first step of the sales process. Once you get a prospect to agree to a meeting with you, the hard (and fun!) part begins. Check out some of InsightSquared's other **free resources** to learn about the rest of the sales process: metrics, management and more!

More Resources For Your Sales Team

New data-backed guide on **the right time to make sales calls**.

80-page guide with everything you need to **build an outbound leadgen machine.**



The **12 questions every data-driven sales manager** should be asking.

Sign up for a free demo of InsightSquared today.

(617) 370-8100 / insightsquared.com / sales@insightsquared.com

At InsightSquared, our mission is to help small and midmarket companies run their sales team by the numbers. Our turnkey sales analytics unlock million dollar insights for teams without million dollar budgets.

We help businesses see the true impact of their service organization on the bottom line. Service Analytics helps teams spot churn risks, make smarter hiring decisions, and identify costly aspects of their product offering.