Heinz MARKETING
Passion. Focus. Results.

# Secrets to Successful Inside Sales Management

Managing inside sales used to be quite simple. It was about dials, volume, scripts and quick closes. It was inexperienced sales reps that powered through lists and sold the same way to everybody.

Today's successful inside sales environments don't look anything like that. Inside sales is rapidly replacing field sales as the primary channel for many organizations, and the quality of professionals, as well as the more complex nature of selling to today's buyer, makes inside sales management best practices one of the linchpins of sales acceleration success for B2B companies nationwide.

Smart inside sales managers are combining a traditional, metrics and activity-based approach with buyer-centric, consultative selling practices that keep energy and progress on the sales floor high, while building meaningful buyer relationships that increase closed business and revenue growth.

This best practices guide will walk you through a variety of best practices, techniques and ideas to both tactically and strategically increase the efficacy, success and impact of your inside sales organization.

# Five Reasons Why Inside Sales Is Replacing Field Sales

This may feel redundant or obvious to those already using or managing inside sales teams, but the shift from field sales to inside sales—especially in companies and industries that have traditionally relied heavily or exclusively on outside sales teams—has accelerated in the past year.

Inside sales is cheaper typically to execute, but many companies have assumed that field sales—and the face-time it allows in front of prospects, based on their size or the complexity of their problems—drives greater success, differentiation and deal conversion. That's no longer true, and sales teams nationwide are proving it every day.

I believe this shift is happening for a variety of reasons, but these five seem to be the greatest accelerants.

### 1. Improvements In Web And Video Conferencing

Webinars have been around for a while now. Presenting someone a PowerPoint deck online while describing it over the phone is old technology, and not entirely effective. But the proliferation of more interactive, multi-media conferencing tools that combine images, presentations, demos and video of participants is getting closer to recreating the "we're here together live" experience of outside sales. It's allowing participants to see each other, use non-verbal communication signals, and keep prospects engaged during presentations.

### 2. Social Media and Profiles

A primary value of social media and social profiles for the sales process is to better understand who the prospect is—what he or she cares about, does during and after work, etc. It's about relationship building; a key asset in the sales process and previously difficult to execute without being there in person. Now, you can learn far more about the prospect and use that information before, during and after interactions from afar to build rapport.

### 3. Work/Life Balance

Inside sales used to be for the junior sales reps. It was a training ground, the minor leagues if you will, for graduating to higher-paying field sales roles. But those outside sales reps are increasingly tired of being on the road and away from their families. These reps want to stay in sales, continue earning high commissions, but do so without nearly the same level of travel. These people are working for companies that are leveraging their sales skills, experience and expertise (while still allowing them to be home for dinner).

### 4. The Cost Of Long-Distance Telephone Calls

This feels tactical, but it's a major issue for organizations that, in the past, have been able to compare long-distance bills with travel and entertainment budgets for their field teams. Long distance via traditional phone carriers is still pricey, but the cost of doing business all day via phone and Web (especially with VOIP phones, Skype and other Web-based means of prospecting and meeting) has decreased dramatically, which if nothing else has organizations re-evaluating their sales deployments.

### 5. Buyer Behavior And Preferences

As seller, we may prefer to have the face-to-face meetings. And historically, our buyers wanted that too. But more often, buyers don't want that level of commitment. They're busier than ever, and are just as good having a quick call or videoconference vs. an in-person meeting. It feels faster and more flexible, and the same business and outcomes result at the end.

# Seven Keys To Successful Sales Management

Much has been written about what makes for a good sales manager and effective sales management strategy. But as every sales rep, manager and executive knows, it's often the intangibles that separate good sales managers from the great ones.

Below are seven key attributes I most often find in the best, most successful sales managers. In this case, I'm defining success not only by how well they hit their number, but how well they inspire, empower and prepare their teams for sustained success as well.

### 1. Creativity

Even with a well-defined sales process, a consistent brand position and standardized tools, successful sales managers are constantly innovating and improvising to get more out of the market and their teams. This goes for everything from objection handling to internal contests and more. The very best sales managers are both creative and disciplined, meaning they're able to not only come up with great new ideas to test, but also effectively triage and measure their effectiveness.

### 2. Consistency

You can't play favorites. You can't adjust expectations too often. When your sales reps are facing adversity and a highly dynamic selling environment (often where "no" is the most commonly-heard answer), consistency on the part of the sales manager is extremely important. Consistency drives trust and credibility for sales managers, which allows them to get away with occasional bursts of creativity without implying that the entire ship is turning a different direction.

### 3. Curiosity

Great sales managers drive their bosses and often their marketing counterparts nuts. They're always asking questions—why is it like that, how did that work, why didn't we try it this way, should we participate in this new user group, etc. Similar to creativity, however, curiosity is best executed when there's a level of discipline and accountability behind it. Asking questions is one thing—having a productive opinion and volunteering to help identify or execute the answer or solution is quite another.

### 4. Conflict Management

No matter the size, age, nature or overall make-up of the sales organization, there will be conflict. I've heard some inside sales managers describe their culture as somewhat akin to middle school. Ineffective sales managers, in this environment, take up the role of that vice principal you remember who was always in charge of discipline. More effective sales managers enforce behavior and discipline standards but do it in a more productive way—leveraging their standards of both consistency and fairness to get the team focused.

### 5. Confidence

Don't mistake this for optimism. Great sales managers don't need to be glass-half-full people all the time. But they need to exhibit confidence in their teams, their products, their companies and the daily/weekly/regular processes that deliver results. Sales reps look to their managers daily for guidance and direction—not only in where to focus, but in how to act. Confidence from the top down drives behavior, effort and results.

### 6. Can-Do, Will-Do Attitude

I've worked with sales managers who have great ideas but rarely get their hands dirty. The best sales managers lead by example, regularly roll up their sleeves and work right along side you. They join you on sales calls, build the next-month sales promotion, dig through lead list options with the marketing team, and otherwise focus plenty of time and energy not just on managing but also doing.

### 7. Calm

Not necessarily calm as in quiet or shy. Calm as in patient. Even-keeled. Passionate at times but generally a combination of consistent and confident, steady when the day or the last sales call or the markets are roiling. This provides a foundation for the entire team to drive from.

# Eight Tips For Hiring Better Sales Reps

*Guest post by Juli Bacon, president, JB Consulting Systems*

In the course of my 19+ years of human resources experience, I have dealt with many issues due to poor hiring decisions related to sales representatives. Looking back over the various disciplinary or termination issues, I found that most employers make common mistakes in hiring, motivating, promoting and terminating sales reps.

Rather than addressing these mistakes one crisis at a time, I decided it is finally time to write some of my observations down and spread the word to a larger audience.

### Sales Representatives Must Be Motivated

People are different, so you have to figure out what motivates them to sell for you. For some, the almighty dollar is a significant motivation while the adrenaline rush of "making the deal" may energize others. Your sales person might be inspired by hitting a sales number, making a quota, hitting enough sales to push them to a higher commission level. If your business relies heavily on making cold calls, a person who sells best through building relationships is not going to perform well.

### Hire Only Sales Reps That Are Motivated By Your Commission Structure

If you have a set commission structure and you aren't going to make changes to it, then only hire sales reps that are used to selling under that type of structure. Otherwise you will not get the results you expect.

### Sales Reps Do Not Have To Be Experts On Your Product

Many companies make the mistake of requiring that a sales person have a certain amount of experience in their particular industry. This is rarely necessary. A good sales person with a bit of education in your industry will figure out the key information necessary to sell your product or service. You don't want them to be the expert. I think of a good sales rep as someone who can make you sell the shirt off your back and make you think it's your idea.

### Good Sales Reps Are Good Listeners

Prospective customers with the right prompting will tell you what their "pain" is and the right sales rep will listen for that and sell how your product or service will help stop the pain.

### Sales Reps Must Be Free To Sell And Not Be Bogged Down By Paperwork

I have seen many clients require outside sales people to be in the office a certain amount of time. I have seen clients require their sales staff to process a lot of paperwork. If they are in the office, they aren't out selling and if they are doing paperwork they are not on the phone making sales or out in the field making sales. If you have more than one or two sales reps, you might consider hiring a good administrative assistant or sales assistant to process the paperwork.

### Great Sales Reps Might Make More Money Than Anyone Else In The Company, Even The Owner And That's OK

I have heard owners make comments about their sales reps making more money than them and some have even terminated sales reps because they did make more money. If they are making a lot of money then your company should be making more money. I struggle with this issue more than most. At times, I have seen some instances where the company had a poor commission structure but other times it seems as if the owner just doesn't understand that selling more makes them more money.

### Don't Micromanage Your Sales Representatives

If you have given your sales reps time to learn your product or service, understand how the sales process works and then sent them on their way, you need to give them some time to make their sales. Many owners or sales managers schedule way too many meetings with their sales reps to find out how they are selling, who they are working on and when the deal will be made. This not only irritates a good sales rep but also demotivates them and wastes precious selling time. A weekly sales meeting early in the morning or during off selling time should be adequate. If it isn't, something isn't working right.

### There Is A Big Difference Between Inside And Outside Sales Representatives

Sales people who are really good at inside or outside sales can rarely make the transition from one to the other very well. There are those that do, but the positions require different skills.

Good inside sales reps do not have to be face to face with the customer to make sales, and they may not like or do well trying to sell face to face. They build their "sales persona" on the phone and that persona might not be who they really are. Moving them to an outside sales position where they have to interact with people can have a devastating affect on their esteem as well as their sales. Good outside sales reps rely on watching body language and looking their prospect in the eye. That same person may have difficulty making a meaningful connection over the phone.

# Ten Best Practices For Better Cold Calling

Cold calling is hard, there's no getting around that. It can often feel like a machete in the jungle, but some of the most successful salespeople in the world have and continue to drive their own performance and results based on the cold call.

Here are ten specific best practices to improve your cold calling approach, performance and results.

### 1. Have An Offer

Don't make the call with an ask, but call with an offer. Give something of value to the prospect, free of charge and with no strings attached. Make it something immediately relevant to their current business or priorities. Use it as a means of starting the conversation, breaking the ice, and building some quick early trust and credibility.

### 2. Stay Focused On Volume

Cold calling is either a numbers game or a ratio game, depending on who you ask. The numbers game implies focusing on a high volume of activities to reach interested prospects, and the ratio game implies driving a higher rate of success with the lists, offers and context in which you sell. Either way, results are driven by volume. As a cold caller, oftentimes the one and only thing you can control is the number of times you pick up the phone and dial again. Use volume to your advantage.

### 3. Get In The Zone And Avoid Distractions

It's all too easy to make a couple calls and find an excuse to get up. Refresh your coffee, chat with your manager, do a victory lap, whatever. Ignore the temptation to get up so often, and stay focused on more activity. Turn off your Facebook, put your phone away, put on your headset and keep working.

### 4. Get Comfortable With Rejection And Have A Short Memory

The majority of the time you're cold calling, you're hearing rejection. You will hear "no" far more than "yes," and the best reps in the world push right through that and into the next call. The best professionals in the world—athletes, inventors, innovators—all face failure constantly, but know that their next success is just one at-bat or idea or cold call away.

### 5. Learn From Those Around You

If your organization has a formal best practice-sharing focus (via a library or team meetings or otherwise), soak it up like a sponge. Find the other sales reps on your team who are successful cold callers and take them to lunch or coffee. Learn their best practices directly. Read books, blogs, and newsletters. Constantly improve based on what's already working around you.

### 6. Dress Up

There is a big difference between cold calling in ratty blue jeans and in nice dress pants. You may only be on the phone, but you will feel far more professional and your work product will relay that. Dress the part.

### 7. Use A Wireless Headset

I'm surprised at how many inside sales reps still prefers the handset phone. Anything that gets in the way of keeping a rhythm and staying in the zone when you're calling is a distraction. With a headset, you're also much more likely to evoke passion into your voice when speaking with a prospect, since you're hands and body are more free to move naturally as you speak.

### 8. Your Lists Are Always Going To Suck

It's not marketing's fault. Lists, inherently, aren't perfect. You're going to call someone who isn't at the company anymore, or who isn't the right contact. You're going to call a company that's not in your target market. Know that the quality of your list is part of the process. Work with your sales manager (and marketing team) to constantly improve list quality based on call results and conversion rates, but know when to quickly move on from a bad contact or number to the next one.

### 9. Set Goals And Mini-Rewards Throughout The Day

You're motivated by closed sales and commission checks, obviously. But also give yourself mini-rewards to work towards throughout the day as motivation to keep activity high. It could be a latte run after XX number of dials, or an afternoon treat once you hit a particular activity milestone. Find the tactical, tangible ways to motivate yourself throughout the day to keep going.

### 10. Use A Disposition Process And Move On

Just because you make one call and leave a voicemail doesn't mean you're done with that prospect. Create and/or use a disposition process to effectively work through each prospect—with a short sequence of calls, voicemails and follow-up emails over the course of several business days. If you don't have any response after this disposition sequence, mark the lead as "nurture" and move on. There's a short point of diminishing returns with a prospect who hasn't responded to your advances, and you'll be much more likely to reach a qualified prospect live if you play the numbers this way.

## Template For A Weekly, Metrics-Driven Inside Sales Rep Meeting

If you manage inside salespeople, you likely talk to them multiple times a week if not daily. But a weekly 1:1 meeting is still an important means of ensuring focus, productivity and results from every rep. Done right, it can also save you a lot of time through the week by consolidating a lot of information into one dedicated, managed period of time.

Below is a 30-minute sales meeting template you can use or modify for your organization. The key here is to make it as metrics-driven and objective as possible, with a focus on identifying and resolving obstacles to greater success.

### Opportunity Pipeline Review (10 Minutes)

- Closed-Won vs. Quota, quarter-to-date (or month, or whatever your selling period is)
- Pipeline volume with current-quarter close-date (Should ideally be at least 3X quota)
- Discuss roadblocks and challenges (Where are some deals stuck? How could the pipeline be bigger? Are there any future quarter deals that can be pulled into the current quarter?)

### Lead Review (10 Minutes)

- Current lead volume and follow-up (Are there any untouched leads? Are there any that are active but haven't been contacted in a long while?)
- Which current leads are close to becoming opportunities?
- Discuss overall lead disposition and follow-up (Why are some leads not moving forward? What are the primary lead-to-opportunity objections and roadblocks you are encountering?)

### Activity Review (5 Minutes)

- Metrics review (dials, talk time, demos—last week goal vs. actual)
- Discuss roadblocks and challenges (What specifically is keeping you from hitting activity goals? What tools, resources, etc. would make these goals easier to achieve?)

### Additional Challenges And Roadblocks (5 Minutes)

- What specifically is keeping you from selling more?
- What specific, additional support do you need to find and close more business?
- What additional support can the business provide to make you more successful?

## A Much Better Daily Metric For Managing Inside Sales

For inside sales teams, two traditional daily measures of productivity have been dials and talk time. Most inside sales teams watch the dial figure closely in particular, and have daily expectations or quotas for outbound calls.

When you think about it, that measure is not only arbitrary, but also misleading and potentially counterproductive. If I'm focused on dial volume, I'm not having substantive conversations with people I reach. I'm also more likely to hound prospects to the point of harassment. Not an ideal way to start a relationship.

Some inside sales organizations have combined dials and talk time into a far better metric to track on a daily or weekly basis—number of five-minute phone calls.

If you're on the phone for five minutes or more, it's likely a substantive call. You've engaged a prospect, and they've stuck around long enough to hear more about what you have to say. If that assumption holds true, I can likely build a predictable model based on how many five-minute phone calls are likely to turn into qualified leads and new opportunities.

For sales qualifiers (i.e. inside sales teams that qualify new leads for pass-along to account executives), this is a particularly valuable metric. But even for those who own the relationship to close, a prospect you catch off-guard isn't likely going to have time for an in-depth conversation or demo right then and there. A 5–10 minute call lets you ask some qualifying questions, gauge interest, and schedule next steps.

Hat tip to Josh for this.

# Improve Sales Forecast Accuracy With These Seven Steps

A consistent weak point across sales organizations is their sales forecast.

Yes, it's difficult to predict which sales will close. But your forecast drives numerous decisions across the organization. And when forecasts are wrong, the implications go well beyond commission checks.

To improve the quality and accuracy of your sales forecasts, starting immediately, I recommend the following seven steps.

### 1. Use Consistent Definitions

If your entire sales team is working from a consistent set of definitions (i.e. what is a good lead, what is a qualified opportunity, etc.), then it's easier to trust the data you have. If you look historically at your conversion rates—overall, by industry, by geography, by rep—it's easier to predict conversion rates and new sales from a future pipeline of opportunities. The entire sales and marketing team needs to understand these definitions, and sales management needs to enforce their usage on a regular basis.

### 2. Know Your Sales Cycle Length

If you get a good lead today, when will it likely close? This week? This quarter? This year? Many inaccurate sales forecasts get this one piece of data wrong, meaning your conversion rates are accurate but don't take place in the window of time you assumed. You eventually get the revenue, but not at the time your organization was expecting it. By building in a typical (or even conservative) sales cycle length into your model, you're making it easier to map expected sales to the week, month, quarter or year in which they're likely to land.

### 3. Read Market Changes (And Their Impact On Closing Behavior)

The model you built last year might not work this year. If market conditions are weak, sales cycle length may have spread out. If budgets are tighter, an earlier decision maker may need permission from the CFO to take action now. These changes can wreak havoc on your sales forecast if you don't anticipate, identify and adjust both behavior and expectations as a result.

### 4. Require A "Compelling Event" To Become An Opportunity

It's the right contact at the right company in an ideal market. They can surely benefit from your product or service. But do they want it? Is it a priority? Is there something internally that is driving urgency and prioritization of what you're selling? Requiring a defined "compelling event" for new opportunities may reduce the volume of opportunities created, but it also increases the likelihood that those deals will close, which in turn makes your forecast far more accurate.

### 5. Conduct Regular Deal Reviews

Sit down with your sales reps and walk through their pipelines. Not just names and numbers, but context. Ask for the back-story, why they're qualified, what the compelling event internally is that's driving action. This isn't about not trusting your reps; it's about establishing a culture of accountability, learning and collaboration.

Make these deal reviews about helping your reps brainstorm new ways of accelerating deals, establishing greater urgency with latent opportunities, and creating greater income opportunities for them personally. In the process, you'll have a more intimate idea of the quality and accuracy of the pipeline.

### 6. Make Updating The Forecast Fast, Easy And Mandatory For Your Reps

Opportunities change after they've entered the pipeline. Close dates move out. Or up. Deals that were on a fast track suddenly slow down, and perhaps should be moved back to an earlier stage. Most reps don't want to make these changes to opportunities in their CRM system, as that may imply weakness in their own pipelines and selling skills.

Instead, make it easy and mandatory to make these changes in real-time. Make it clear to the sales organization that these changes will help management improve selling conditions, and address real-time changes with the resources needed to close more business.

### 7. Reward Accuracy And Honesty

Very few sales organizations reward pipeline performance and behavior. They compensate based on closed business, but not based on how close reps come to their forecasts. Create incentives for your reps to accurately forecast their expected sales. Foster an environment where honest changes to forecasts, even if the news isn't good, is encouraged and rewarded.

Would you really reward a rep for reducing their sales forecast? Absolutely. Imagine the alternative; that they led you to believe their output would be much higher when they knew they couldn't deliver.

What strategies and tactics have you used in your sales organization to improve accuracy? What can you add to this list?

# The Six Elements Of A Perfect Sales Meeting

Do you dread the weekly sales team meeting? Feel like it's wasting your time? If so, somebody's not doing it right.

Reviewing a pipeline report may not be your idea of fun, but effective sales meetings are well-planned, well-executed, and full of information highly relevant to making reps better at both extracting and sharing information that can help the entire organization accelerate sales, customer and revenue growth.

Here are the six elements that, combined, make for a powerful regular sales team meeting.

### 1. Metrics

This is where you start. An empirical, objective, numbers-based look at current performance and what's left to achieve. This is cause for celebration and alarm (often with the same dashboard), and will set the tone for the rest of the meeting. There shouldn't be any surprises here, but it can drive urgency and focus in both the hour and days ahead.

### 2. Recognition

Take the time to recognize great performances across the team. It can be something as big as a huge new enterprise deal, or as small as the new guy's first successful appointment. No matter how difficult your market or month is there's always something to celebrate.

### 3. Voice Of The Customer

We're not selling in a vacuum. At each meeting, the customer should be heard. This can be an overview of new research, feedback from a recent customer briefing, review of new market trends or analyst data, or even a quick presentation or interview (live or recorded) with an actual customer. No matter how you present it, ensure the customer has a place at the sales meeting table on a regular basis.

### 4. Training

Constantly make your team better. Bring in outsiders to teach a skill or customer insight. Review the latest product features. Practice objection-handling or consultative selling skills. Do role-playing. Review and discuss a new perspective, blog post or article you found. Training and learning is an everyday thing for the best salespeople in the world. Institutionalize this in your organization more frequently than you do it today.

### 5. Deal Drill-Down

Choose someone on the team to walk through a current or recent deal. This can either be a recently closed deal and how it happened, or it can be a deal that's stalled (and how/why it got there). The former allows an opportunity for your team to learn best practices from others in context, and the latter allows the team to help each other break through roadblocks and move deals forward.

### 6. Motivation

End each meeting on a positive note. This is different and separate from individual recognition. This is about firing up your team to burst out of the conference room and back on the phones or into the field. How great sales managers do this is personal (a video clip, a joke, a motivational quote, etc.), but we know sales is an emotional job. Play to that and send your troops back out to victory.

What have I missed in this list? What are essential elements you have used or experienced in great sales meetings?

# Six Ways To Get Your Sales Reps Back Above Quota

In any given month, nearly every sales organization has someone under quota. Sales is a difficult job, and even the best reps have bad months or quarters. But if you have a rep in a prolonged slump, here are six things you can do to help get them back on track and above quota.

### 1. Focus On The Numbers

Start with a bottoms-up review of their pipeline, and be as empirical as you can. Start with closed business, work back through pending opportunities, and continue to get more granular and tactical until you find a specific area for deep dive and improvement.

### 2. Focus On What They Can Control

It's not productive to complain about lead volume, lead quality, market conditions, outdated collateral, or any of a myriad things outside of your and the rep's control. Instead, focus on what they can control, starting immediately and every day. Activity volume, outbound calls, crispness of presentation, lead follow-up, etc.

### 3. Compare Current And Previous Habits And Performance Measures

Athletes in a slump review video of themselves when they were "in a zone" to identify what they were doing particularly well (and may have stopped doing or adjusted since then). Salespeople can do the same thing, and you as a manager can help them. Look at their performance habits when they were at the top of their game. Not just funnel metrics but attendance records, follow-up rates, presentation close rates, etc. Figure out the right mix of measures for your business and sales floor, and look for what's changed.

### 4. Peer Shadowing

Have a trusted colleague shadow the rep for an hour or so—watch their activity, listen to their calls, sit in on a new presentation. It's often difficult to pinpoint on our own what we're doing wrong, but someone else (who isn't living it minute-to-minute) can often spot these things quickly—especially when they're filling a similar role next to you.

### 5. Deal Walkthroughs

Take a particular opportunity in the slumping rep's pipeline and walk through it in detail. Where did it come from, what are the prospect's needs, how are they qualified, what are the next steps or roadblocks to moving forward. Sometimes this level of detail can help identify something that can not only kick start that particular opportunity, but give the rep the confidence and momentum they need to push back up to their normal performance levels.

### 6. Evaluate Efforts, Attitude And Drive

Great salespeople go through slumps. But there's a difference between someone who's giving it everything they've got and those who are mailing it in. Look for signs that your reps might have a decline in motivation, initiative or passion for what they're doing. The source of this could be inside or outside the organization, but either way it's affecting their performance. Help identify and resolve any issues as best you can (without crossing any HR lines, of course).

### 7. Use Positive Reinforcement And Constructive Feedback

If a slumping rep isn't trying hard and isn't responding to the above steps, they might be on their way out the door. In every other case, they feel awful about their numbers. They know the organization isn't happy with them, and they're equally unhappy with the paychecks they're taking home. Have some sympathy and empathy for these individuals, and make it clear that you're equally committed to helping get them back on track.

# Eight More Ways To Get Sales Reps Back Above Quota

We had a lively discussion on the topic at the American Association for Inside Sales Professionals (AA-ISP) Seattle chapter meeting recently. Below are eight best practices that came out of that meeting.

### 1. Create A Friendly (But Spirited) Competition Between Reps

Salespeople are competitive by nature. They want to win. Put them into a friendly competition against each other for daily, weekly or monthly sales activity. One of my favorite times to do this is March, when a March Madness-style tournament can really get the competitive juices flowing.

### 2. Make Sure Your Comp Plan Requires Consistent Performance

Does your commission plan make it easy for reps to coast after a solid month? How could you restructure the plan to ensure consistent performance is rewarded? For example, can reps sustain some kind of commission multiplier if they stay above quota month after month?

### 3. Check For Personal Issues

Tread lightly here, but oftentimes sales performance has nothing to do with the market, their pipelines, or even their sales skills. Sometimes your rep may be distracted by something well outside of the office. This can be complicated to uncover and even more difficult to address. But simply isolating an outside variable, as a cause for poor performance, can be a good starting point.

### 4. Create A Longer-Period Contest Contingent On Quota Hitting

Most sales contests are contained within a specific selling period (week, month or quarter), but there's no reason you can't have a bigger prize contingent on maintaining or exceeding quota for multiple selling periods. Make the prize commensurate with the performance to keep your reps motivated and focused.

### 5. Go Back To Basics (Attitude, Focus, Activity And Skills)

Josh Hartnett from Datasphere talks often about the four basics of sales performance (especially for inside sales): Attitude, Focus, Activity and Skills. When his reps show declining numbers, he focuses on these specific and fundamental skills and often finds at least a couple things that can adjust to get the rep back on track.

### 6. Watch The Video Tape (Be Like Pujols)

Earlier this baseball season, baseball's best player wasn't hitting very well. He wasn't sure why. To help get back on track, Albert Pujols watched videotape of himself when he was on a hitting streak the previous season. By watching tape of himself during a period of peak performance, he was able to identify a couple technical issues with his current swing. After a couple days, he was back on track. This works for sales professionals too. Create and keep recordings of some of your reps' best work, and play them again when they're underperforming to rediscover what works.

### 7. Put Them On A Plan

A performance plan doesn't mean a rep is about to lose his or her job. It simply means their recent performance is sub-standard, and outlines specific steps the rep is expected to take to get back on track. Use this step wisely with reps that need a little extra motivation, or need to know you're very serious about getting their numbers back above quota.

### 8. Did You Add Too Much Process?

If multiple reps across your team record declining performance at the same time, look for systematic reasons. If you implemented a new CRM system, for example, there may be a learning curve that takes away valuable selling time. Look for other process or bureaucratic symptoms that may be taking reps away from critical selling activities.

# Your Sales Reps Need Bigger Toys

Some of your best inside sales reps might need more motivation. I'm not talking about training or comp plan changes or pep talks. I'm talking about organic, intrinsic motivation to sell more and make more money.

For many sales professionals, this isn't an issue. They have bills to pay, families to support, retirement accounts to fund. They're motivated to earn as much commission each sales period as possible.

For others, especially younger reps, the motivation may be different. I've seen brilliant but young inside sales reps have a fantastic month, earn a ton of money, and then mail it in for the next two months. It's not because they couldn't find and close prospects in those subsequent 60 days. It's because they didn't need the money.

They had what they needed to pay their rent, fund their lifestyle and do what they wanted beyond that first month of spending their commission. Only when the money started to run out did they get serious and start killing their quota again.

Whether you're working with a younger inside sales team or a more diverse group, outside motivation, goals and dreams are important. The more you help your team envision the life they could lead, the toys they could buy, the more hungry they'll be to earn the dollars to get it.

Even those young reps might not be thinking (yet) about buying a house. Or a boat. Or a newer car. But maybe they should. What if you helped them think bigger, and put photos of those investments in their office or cube as they work?

Whether those investments are serious or superficial, it doesn't really matter. Motivation takes a whole lotta shapes.

# Five Focus Areas For Inside Sales Improvement This Year

The folks at Focus wondered what inside sales managers will do this year to improve sales and revenue results from their organizations. Here's my quick take on five specific areas inside sales managers should focus on this year:

### 1. Qualification

How well and how quickly can you determine if your prospect is qualified and ready to buy? Inside sales teams this year need to become far smarter about asking the right questions up front, understanding the priorities and organizational dynamics of their prospects, to quickly separate those who represent near-term sales opportunities from those who need further nurturing.

### 2. Operational Efficiency

Inside sales managers need to help their teams eliminate distractions, reduce manual steps that take time away from the phone, and automate tasks that take up too much of the rep's day today. This includes everything from CRM updates to email/communication templates to how the phone is dialed.

### 3. Diagnostic Selling

Inside sales should be asking questions that the prospect hasn't thought to ask, hasn't been able to answer, and hasn't yet quantified—questions that increase the quantifiable understanding of the problem and increase the urgency with which the customer wants a solution to deliver their desired outcome.

### 4. Marketing Automation

Inside sales managers need to mandate that their marketing teams actively and dynamically manage the bulk of their qualified-but-not-ready-to-buy pipeline of leads. This means understanding exactly where in the decision and buying cycle each prospect is, and providing them with content and calls to action appropriate to that stage.

### 5. Metrics

Know what to measure, narrow the list of metrics you manage daily to a small number, and prioritize those measures based on proximity to a revenue event. Every step of the lead creation, development and conversion process needs to be understood, reviewed and optimized more dynamically.

# How To Get "Lost" Prospects To Re-Engage

Jill Konrath, in addition to writing highly-recommended books, publishes a regular newsletter that's become one of my favorites. Recently, she featured an article by Eric Slife with best practices on getting dormant prospects to re-engage.

With permission, here's Eric's piece from Jill's newsletter:

*Getting Prospects Re-Engaged*
By Eric Slife

You finish your presentation, and your prospect states, "Everything looks great. I'll call you in a couple of days to move forward." Several days pass, a week, then a month. They don't return you calls, and you have no idea why. Sound familiar?

I'm not sure what's more frustrating; not getting the business, or not knowing why. Here are some easy tips to reconnect with your prospect.

### 1. Establish Guidelines

At the very outset, establish guidelines for the relationship you are about to enter.

"Mr. or Miss Prospect, thanks for agreeing to meet with me today. I have some questions I'd like to ask you today, and I'm sure you probably have some questions you want to ask me. Before we get started, I just want you to know, it's okay to tell me "No."

Sometimes, a client chooses to go a different direction, but they feel uncomfortable telling me. If at any point while working together, you determine my product or service isn't the right fit, will you please let me know?

### 2. Voicemail with Email

I don't expect people to return my voicemail. However, within my voicemail, I'll inform them I'm sending an email, because for many busy individuals it's easier to respond. In my email I will write,

"Mr. or Miss Prospect, upon our last discussion, you requested I follow up with you at this date and time regarding… I've tried several times to call you, but unfortunately, we haven't been able to connect. I'm beginning to feel like I'm becoming a pest. Please let me know if your situation has changed, so I know how and when to best follow up."

Because many people aren't comfortable telling you "no" over the phone or in person, this approach gives the prospect a way out of the situation, and you can move on. Often, you find they have been slammed or you get some additional information as to why the delay.

### 3. Disengage Caller ID

Call your phone company and ask how to disengage your caller ID. This way your prospect can no longer screen your calls.

### 4. Did I Do Something Wrong?

You might leave a message for your prospect that says,

"Mr. or Miss Prospect you asked me to follow up on… I've tried to reach out several times, but I never heard back from you. Did I do something that offended or upset you?"

### 5. Copy Referrer On Email

If another individual referred you, copy them on your email. This is especially useful if a superior referred you. Don't throw your contact under the bus, but apply a little pressure.

### 6. Discard Proposals

Finally, always be willing to walk away. I want to do business with adults, not children. If someone requests to call them back, but then never returns my calls or email when I'm following their directions, those aren't the customers I'm looking for. However, I'll provide one final opportunity.

"Mr. or Miss Prospect, you requested I contact you on… I've tried several times, but I never heard back from you. The price (or proposal) was good for 30 days, so unfortunately I have to discard your file."

Put a time limit on all your proposals. This creates a sense of urgency, and it doesn't lock you into a price for an extended period of time.

### About The Author

Eric Slife is President of Sales Training Central. From cold calling to closing, they provide comprehensive, affordable online sales training and sales management programs that can be customized for both individuals and sales teams.

# Six Priorities To Remember As Your Sales Team Grows

*Guest post by Juli Bacon, president, JB Consulting Systems*

If your organization is heavily reliant on your sales department, then here are a few things to keep in mind as you grow your sales staff.

## Your Sales Team Needs Training Just Like Anyone Else

Bring in an outside sales and marketing specialist to provide new and innovative ways to generate and close leads. When you roll out a new product or service, have your experts give a presentation to the sales staff during your weekly sales meeting to educate them about the new product. Provide one-page handouts with key information, statistics or selling points for them to review and take with them.

## Your Top Sales Representative Is Likely Not Going To Be A Good Sales Manager

As your sales staff grows, you may be tempted to take your top sales rep and promote them to sales manager. This is often a huge mistake. 1) Because you are going to lose your top sales rep and 2) Because sales reps and sales managers are motivated by different things and have different skills. A good sales manager must be able to manage others, provide constructive performance feedback and monitor the overall sales. They are motivated by how well the department does which means they are more likely to encourage and inspire their team to sell more.

## Hire A Good Sales Assistant

If you have more than one or two sales reps, you should look at hiring an assistant to process paperwork, follow up loose ends and help the sales reps stay organized. This person does not run for coffee or do personal errands for your sales reps; this person makes sure that once the sale is closed, the paperwork is in order so your company can deliver as promised.

## Be Prepared For More Sales

The worst thing you can do to your sales staff is send them out to sell and then not deliver on the back end. Be sure that your systems are in place so you can respond when the sales reps do their job. If you can’t deliver as promised, you will quickly erode trust with your customers and lose market share. Good sales reps will not stay with a company that cannot respond to the sales they bring in.

## Put A Lot Of Thought And Planning Into Your Compensation Plan

As you grow you might be tempted to tweak the commission structure or go from base plus commission to draw plus commission. The more changes you make after you hire your sales reps the more distrust there will be between you and them. I have seen owners change the compensation structure because they think their sales reps are making too much money. You need your sales reps to stay motivated to sell. Clearly outline the expectations for selling and the compensation structure. Are you requiring a certain number of contacts per week, month or quarter, do you require a certain sales amount before the commission percent kicks in, are you going to provide a base salary plus commission or a draw against the commission? What happens if the sales rep quits or is fired? Do they need to sign a Non-Disclosure/Solicitation Agreement? These things need to be determined. It helps if you bring in an outside party or coordinate with your Human Resources department if you have one.

## Make Sure Your Sales Reps Know How To Qualify Their Prospects

This goes back to the sales training. Not every lead is going to be a sale. Your sales reps need to know how to quickly figure out if the lead is a sale or a contact that wants general information. There is a place for both in your organization, but qualifying the lead and moving it to the right department will keep your sales reps selling. Once they qualify the lead, you might want to have a person or department designated as the follow up for leads that are not ready to buy now. If they aren’t ready to buy now, perhaps they want to stay informed about your company; maybe you need to follow up at a later date. You need a system to track and stay in contact with those who aren’t ready to buy now. A good sales and marketing specialist can help you figure out the best strategy to use.

# More Information About Us

Heinz
MARKETING
*Passion. Focus. Results.*

8201 164th Ave. NE, Suite 200
Redmond WA 98052
Ph. 877.291.0006
www.heinzmarketing.com

## About Matt Heinz

Matt Heinz is the Founder and President of Heinz Marketing Inc. Matt brings more than 12 years of marketing, business development and sales experience from a variety of organizations, vertical industries and company sizes. His career has focused on delivering measurable results for his employers and clients in the way of greater sales, revenue growth, product success and customer loyalty.

## About Heinz Marketing

Heinz Marketing is a Seattle marketing agency focused on sales acceleration. Heinz Marketing helps clients achieve sustained sales success by growing revenue from existing customers and cost effectively identifying and winning new customers.

## Contact Heinz Marketing

Heinz Marketing Inc.
8201 164th Ave NE, Suite 200
Redmond, WA 98052
877.291.0006
www.heinzmarketing.com
acceleration@heinzmarketing.com

## Learn More About Heinz Marketing

**Interested in learning more creative ways to make the most of your marketing?:**
Request your FREE 10-minute brainstorm at www.10minutebrainstorm.com

**Join our newsletter:**
www.heinzmarketinginsights.com

**Check out our blog:** www.mattonmarketingblog.com

**Follow Matt on Twitter:** www.twitter.com/heinzmarketing