

Mainstream sales

In this guide, you'll learn about sales basics and all the stages in the sales process. Afterwards you should understand how sales works, the terminology used, and what's the most important aspects of the sales.

Sales began when people started exchanging goods like weapons, tools, and food. In early civilizations like Egypt and Greece, local markets were places where sellers were meeting the customers. The evolution of selling has evolved in parallel with developing of global trade. During the 20th century, Corporations developed a direct selling as a professional job. Currently, the internet has resulted in more well-informed customers and stronger competition, making sales more challenging and requiring new approaches.

Sales Process

Selling is a step by step process. Depending on your approach it may vary from business to business. However certain stages in the process are common for most of the businesses. That's why you'll see that sales process is usually presented in the seven steps, similar to the following.



Terminology: A lead is any potential customer or client that is considered as an unqualified contact. A prospect is a qualified lead that has become a potential customer that meets certain criteria. So, first, you have to gather the leads and then qualify them into prospects. The process of finding leads and making them the prospects is called prospecting.

Gathering the Leads

When gathering the leads, your main goal is to find the leads that can become the prospects. To do this first you need to have defined targeting groups. For example, if you're selling solar panels for houses in Spain and Portugal, then the house owners from these two countries are the good leads for you. *Great, but how to find them?* Traditionally, you can advertise on TV, on the streets, or even at the real estate companies but all that is a part of surpassed outbound marketing. The real question is how the leads find you. The answer is content marketing.



Create content that is valuable for your target group and use content marketing techniques to promote your content and you'll get your leads.

There is no doubt that, content marketing is the most efficient way to gather the leads, but thing is that you'll need some time to build the list of unqualified contacts. There are many different ways to collect your leads, and you'll choose how to find them depending on how you plan to make an initial contact.

Qualifying

It usually works in a way that marketing gathers the leads and pass it to the sales team. Some research shows that claim that 80% of leads are ignored and only 27% leads get qualified. You have to qualify your leads. If you chase the wrong leads which is a big waste of time and energy. To qualify your leads, you need to analyze them. This should involve both marketing and sales team. Together they should define the lead by setting one or more criteria. Qualifying is a lot about asking the questions in order to extract the information from your prospect. The questions are unique for every business, but the answers should provide you info about the following.

- Customer profile
- Customers needs
- Making decisions
- Your competition

The thing is that to you can fail both by not asking enough questions or asking too many questions. So you need to find a sweet spot. The best thing is to communicate with your leads regularly. Send them a valuable piece of content. This is called nurturing your leads. Leads that meet the criteria, get's qualified. They become prospects and ready for the sale team. Probably, at the beginning, you'll be collecting emails and doing email marketing campaigns. However, at some point, the time will come to pick up the phone and start calling the prospects.

Cold Calling

Cold calling may seem like an old selling technique, but it's still as efficient as ever. Naturally, like all aspects of business, the cold calling is evolving and some rules from a 10 or 20 years ago, may not apply to modern cold calling. As I already said, customers have changed, so the art of selling had to adapt, including cold calling. Having that in mind, a salesperson must understand how to make cold calling matter. First of all, you need to have your opening statement prepared. You should include greeting, introduction, something about the prospect, benefits from your product/service and transition to dialogue. Here is the example:

"Good afternoon, Ms. Marshall. This is Ken Brown with Green Works. I read in the local paper that you recently broke ground for a new office complex. We specialize in commercial landscape services that allow you to reduce in-house maintenance costs and comply with the city's new environmental regulations. I'd like to ask a few questions to determine whether one of our programs might meet your needs."

The opening statement is a really critical point in a conversation. Based on it, the prospect will decide whether to continue the conversation. Studies that have documented the capacity of the human brain, show that the brain is really good at being able to hold onto 4-6 chunks of information or 20-30 seconds worth of information at a given time.

That's why you need to highlight the benefits of your product/service because the first few sentences are what stays in mind. Here are more tips to avoid typical beginner's mistakes.

- The goal of the cold call is to set the meeting, not to make a sale.
- Do your homework and find out as much as you can about your lead.
- Prepare detailed answers for objections and for all questions about your product or service you can think of.
- Be patient and keep in mind that all sorts of rejections are part of the sales.

Sales Presentation

All the previous talk was about making a pitch for your presentation. The next task is present your product or service, with a goal to push the prospects further down the pipeline. You can increase your chances by following these tips.

- Don't start presentation immediately. At the beginning of the meeting, start conversation comfortably with a goal to understand your prospect's challenges.
- When you figure that out, go smoothly into the presentation like it's natural part of the discussion.
- Highlight how your prospect will benefit. Your prospects will decide to buy only if they can recognize the benefits he/she gets from your product or service. Always keep in mind this.
- Don't make a monologue. Make the presentation short and effective and it's a great thing if you get interrupted during your presentation. Listen what they say, it's probably more important than what you say.
- Practice your performance. Start with your voice modulations and record it. You want your audience to feel your energy and enthusiasm in your talks. Also, put that in your body language.

Things to include in your sales presentation.

- Title slide: *Company name, topic, tagline.*
- The “Before” picture: *No more than three slides with relevant statistics and graphics.*
- The “After” picture: *How life looks with your product. Use happy faces.*
- Company introduction: *Who you are and what you do (as it applies to them).*
- The “Bridge” slide: *Short outcome statements with icons in circles.*
- Social proof slides: *Customer logos with the mission statement on one slide. Pull quote on another.*
- “We’re here for you” slide: *Include a call-to-action and contact information.*

Eventually, you’ll figure out what really works for you and how to make the best presentation. Just keep in mind that you’re telling a story, so be imaginative and creative. Everyone loves that.

Making a Proposal

When you have a presentation, that’s where a prospect will go through emotional moments, and the final decision will be made based on the price you offer. However, sometimes you’ll send proposals to the prospects without having a meeting first. In that case, all the elements, that I’ve said to include in the presentation, you need to put in your proposal. Still, keep it short and simple. The sales proposal has three main objectives.

1. Educating prospect about the full nature of his need.
2. Convincing the prospect that you are the best option to get what he needs.
3. Making clear that prospect investment is justified by all means.

No matter the fact that you already pointed out benefits for prospects, probably more than once during the process, in the proposal you should do it again. At the beginning of your proposal, address the prospect issues and state that you will solve it. That’s the benefit for the prospect and your strongest argument. One of the questions that prospect will ask you, or himself, is why to choose you instead of your competitors. You said it on the initial contact, on presentation and now repeat it on the proposal. The length of proposal varies from business to business, but it shouldn’t be longer than two pages in any case. Finally, here is the format of typical sales proposal.

- About us
- Benefits to customer (“what our product can do for you...”)
- Product sales contract
- Product purchased
- Payment

- Default
- No warranty
- Clauses/regulations
- Witnesses

Negotiation and Closing the Deal

No matter how good your presentation or proposal have been, never get surprised by this: *We would like to discuss some details before signing a contract.* We would like to discuss some details before signing a contract. It's simply what's coming after a proposal. Now let's see how to deal with this. Before you get yourself into a negotiation, you need to define the worst terms you're willing to accept. I'm referring to things like discounts, alternative payments, additional services and more. When you start the negotiation, let the prospect speak first, because you don't know what they will require. It can be above the lowest level you're willing to go. Also, avoid giving range offers and splitting the difference. Before you accept prospect demands, ask for something in return. Remember, it's the negotiation. If you fail to find a mutual ground with your prospect, walk away from the deal. There is nothing wrong with that. When you finish the talk about the price, continue the conversation in a good mood. You and your prospect can do the business again, so the bad blood is the last thing you need. In the end, there are several effective phrases to finalize the deal.

"Unless you have any more questions or concerns, I think we're ready to get started." *"If you're ready to finalize this, I'd send you the contract right now"* *"Now, is there any reason why you wouldn't do business with our company?"* *"Would you like my help?"* *"Why don't you give it a try"* *"Will you commit to doing business with us today?"*

These are all common closing phrases. Over the time, you'll learn how to be more spontaneous, and use your own words to seal the sale. Hopefully, you can understand more about sales. Each stage of the process requires certain skills and preparations, however tips from this guide can help you get started.