



# Increasing sales to grow your business



10 steps to help you sharpen your sales skills & grow your business

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## Welcome to our small business growth sales guide.

When it comes to business, it's hard to overstate the importance of sales, so it's vital to start out with a solid plan, have ample financing and loads of potential, so sales earn a profit and steadily increase over time so your business will grow.

This guide will help you develop a sales plan based on a highly targeted approach to selling, increasing your profits over a short time period.

We're committed to helping small businesses succeed. We encourage you to start using online accounting software early in your business in order to be able to better manage your businesses finances. Accounting software makes it much easier to find out what is happening in your business.

### Here's what's inside:

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## Part A: Create your 90-day plan

The first step in increasing your sales is to write a plan that sets out the sales you want to achieve and how you'll meet those targets.

If you're trying to increase your sales quickly, a 90-day plan enables you to quickly implement targeted sales strategies and take regular stock of how close you are to reaching your goals. It also allows you to identify problems or opportunities and take steps to address them.

### Step 1: Identify your goals

Decide what specific outcomes you want from your growth plan. Some examples include:

- Increased revenue
- Higher margins
- More new customers
- Greater number of returning customers.

Whatever you focus on, make your goals SMART (specific, measurable, attainable, realistic and time-bound) so rather than an outcome being 'make more money', say specifically how much you want to make.

Be specific with your deadlines, too. Don't just say you want to achieve your goals 'soon' or even 'in three months,' because that's difficult to assess. Put a date on your calendar that you want to achieve your goals by. If your goal is three months, make the deadline exactly 90 days out from when you implement your plan and put it on your calendar.

Before you set any goals, check your sales figures. Knowing your average sales per quarter will help you set your 90-day sales goal. The next step will be to decide on some measurable objectives to achieve it.

- Examples of specific sales goals:
- Acquire 50 new customers
- Have 10 of those 50 new customers make a second purchase
- Get 1,000 website hits a week with 5 percent of visitors buying; or,
- Generate \$200,000 in new revenue by increasing sales to existing customers.

Once you've identified your goals, discuss them with your team and get their feedback. It's easier to get their buy-in on your plans if they've had a chance to share their thoughts and feelings, and take some ownership over the plan. After all, your team is vital to your success.

Your sales team also knows a lot about your customers and what does and doesn't work when selling to them.

## Step 2: Define your key performance indicators

Your key performance indicators (KPIs) are quantifiable measurements of how your business is doing related to a specific objective.

This means your KPIs must be related to your strategic goals. It doesn't help to have KPIs related to transportation costs if your goal is to increase sales.

KPIs related to sales include metrics can be related to:

- Sales by region
- Sales over time
- Increases in new customers
- Number of online sales.

Make sure your team knows your KPIs and has the ability to act on them. Have regular meetings to discuss the KPIs and ask for their feedback regarding any progress, successes or challenges.

Share what worked well in the past. If your team has difficulty meeting your KPIs, it might be a sign that you need to re-evaluate your goals.

This means setting out milestones so you can review your progress and compare it to your goals. If your plan is only 90 days, you don't want to wait until day 80 to review how you're doing. Set aside regular times--such as the same time every week--to review your progress, track your KPIs and make any necessary adjustments.

You can also set individual milestones for employees, especially those involved in sales. These individual milestones don't have to be the same metric for everyone. For example, you might encourage one person to increase the number of new prospects they reach out to weekly while another might have milestones linked to how many sales calls they close.

Consider each team member's strengths and challenges when setting out their milestones.

## Step 3: Describe your ideal customer

The first rule of marketing is to know who your business serves. The more you know about who you're selling to, the easier it will be to attract qualified buyers and convince them to try your products and services.

Remember too that it's best to target those customers that have the best potential, so then any advertising should lead to more conversions, your return on investment will be higher and you'll attract ideal clients who won't be confused about what you do or who you help.

Targeting your marketing and sales efforts pays results.

### Examine your customer data

Any information you have on the people who regularly buy from you is extremely valuable to increasing sales.

Who are your top customers? Where do they live? How do they spend their time? What influences their buying decisions? What state of mind are they in when they decide to purchase from you?

By finding out as much as you can about your customers, you can create a profile—a picture of the kinds of people who are your best customers. You can find other customer data within your Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system, paper invoices or other types of sales records.

When compiling your research, take note of customer clues such as:

- Any common characteristics (e.g.) age, gender, education, interests, and income as well as psychological traits
- The biggest problem they want to solve and any barriers—real or perceived
- How and where they spend their time
- How they prefer to communicate with you—in person, by phone, email or online; or,
- For business to business customers, their buying cycles.

Now capture your ideal customer in one sentence. Be as detailed as you can

be in one-sentence, to give yourself a more thorough understanding of your customers. For example, "Our customers are busy, health-conscious new moms with a family income exceeding \$180,000 a year living within 5 kilometres of our business."

Fine tune your profile by surveying your customers to find out more about their media habits, shopping habits, and how much they spend at competing businesses. You can do this via an email survey, an online survey of people who visit your online shop or even by asking customers who visit your location if they're willing to answer some questions.

Profiling your customers will help you attract qualified new leads and tap your customer base more effectively. Qualified leads enable you to more efficiently move prospects through your sales funnel.

## Step 4: Map out your customer journey

The customer journey is the path people take from being a prospect to being a loyal customer. In addition to knowing who you want to target, you need to know how they interact with your business, including what does and doesn't work for them.

Here are some questions to ask:

- When was the last time you bought something similar to our service or product?
- What was the problem you needed that service or product to solve?
- What factors encouraged you to make that purchasing decision?
- Was it a positive experience or a negative experience?
- What features in our product or service are important to you?
- If you're looking to solve a problem, how have you previously solved this issue?
- How do you evaluate whether a solution works for you?
- What steps do you expect a company to take after a sale to ensure you feel confident in the decision?

Understanding the customer journey means also understanding why people choose not to become customers.



To get insight into your clients' minds, you need to know why people choose to buy from you and why they choose not to. Are they choosing to go to your competitors instead? If so, what makes your competitors different? Are prospects choosing not to buy at all—that is, they don't buy from you or your competitors? If they aren't buying, why aren't they buying? What could you do to be more successful in the future?

Before you go any further

If your business involves live contact with prospects, it may be beneficial to pay attention to your own selling skills and the skills of your salespeople.

Who are your top salespeople? What qualities make them exceptional at what they do? It's good to know who is bringing in the most business—but it's likely everyone on your team could develop their skills to improve their sales performance.

If training or professional development is required for your salespeople, include that in your sales plan. Identify what training is required and develop a plan for ensuring you follow through on it.

## Step 5: Choose targeted strategies

If your goal is to double your sales in 90 days, your best bet may be to connect with your current customers. After all, guiding a "warm" prospect through the sales process is easier than convincing a new customer to buy because you haven't yet established trust.

It's also often easier to sell something additional to an existing customer—such as a related product or an upgraded service—than it is to convince someone new to buy anything from you. If your upgraded products or services are relevant to your clients, it might be simple for you to reach out to them to let them know about what you're offering and invite them to make use of it.

If you have clients who are loyal to your business, you can also ask for referrals. Referrals are often easier to sell to because they come with some implied trust. Goodwill is generated when someone whose opinion they value endorses you. You don't have to work as hard to build up a relationship with them.

If your plan involves attracting new customers, you'll want to draw upon your

customer profile to identify where you can find more customers just like your existing ones.

This background information will help to plan an effective promotional campaign. Likely you will choose to:

- Find new customers to approach
- Sell more to existing customers or,
- Re-engage dormant customers.

## Step 6: Shorten your sales cycle

Depending on the type of business you run, your sales cycle might be incredibly short or very long. Longer sales cycles tend to occur in businesses where the products or services are costly, long-term, or highly sensitive, or where your business is selling to another business, requiring more time for the customer to make a purchasing decision or receive purchasing approval.

If you're looking to increase your sales in 90 days, you don't have a lot of time for longer sales cycles, so you'll need to find ways to decrease the time it takes prospects to make a buying decision, without them feeling rushed or pressured.

Some steps you can take to shorten the sales cycle:

- Automate repetitive tasks, such as emails, scheduling meetings, data entry and company research
- Focus on qualified leads
- Make sure you're talking to the people in the organisation that have authority to make purchasing decisions
- Listen to prospect objections and respond to them (see below for more information on prospect objections)
- Make it easy for prospects to make purchases or sign necessary documents from any of their devices
- Focus your efforts on the channels that bring you the best results, rather than trying to improve lower-performing channels
- Be someone people want to talk to, not just a salesperson
- Invite prospects to an event where current customers can talk about their experiences with your business
- Ask for the close at the end of the sale



- Email prospects your case studies, rather than waiting for prospects to ask for them
- Eliminate cold or disinterested contacts from your CRM
- Build relationships by sending out personal emails and relevant content.

## Now it's time to write down your plan

Get your 90-day sales plan down in a tidy document that assigns tasks and defines deadlines. Your master plan doesn't have to be fancy—it just needs to be useful to your team, so it's easy to stay on track.

Depending on your 90-day objective, your plan may include things like:

- Attending a trade show to generate new customer leads
- Placing an ad in a local online trade magazine
- Calling all of your customers to announce a new product or service
- Offering a free download on your website to obtain email addresses or,
- Sending a mailer to potential customers.

Be sure to align your promotional plan to your customer profile so you choose activities that you know will resonate with your preferred target market.

With your plan all mapped out, it's time to talk about selling, so your team can carry out their mission with the best chance of success.

## Part B: Sharpen your sales skills

Once you've got your sales plan written out, it's time to evaluate and improve your selling skills, especially if your selling process involves direct contact with customers. Review your sales team and ask for their feedback:

- What is working well?
- What could use improving?
- What do they feel comfortable doing?
- What is less comfortable for them?
- Are they meeting their KPIs?
- Are there skills gaps that could be met with training or by hiring someone new?

- Are some of your customers more comfortable with certain members of your team?
- Are there other factors that could improve your success rate (such as team members who are fluent in other languages)?

This information will help you ensure you have a solid team with the strength and capacity to sell, and it will help your customers feel more comfortable.

## Step 7: Improve your conversion rate

There's an acronym in sales known as AIDA, which stands for awareness, interest, desire and action. These are the steps in your sales funnel that customers go through, although they do so at varying speeds, depending on their needs, their familiarity with your business, and how urgently they feel they need to solve their pain point.

The top of the funnel—the part that prospects go through first—is awareness, followed by interest, desire and action.

- Awareness: they have become aware of your brand
- Interest: they have an interest in your product or service and would like to learn more
- Desire: they have moved from liking your product or service and wanting to learn more into wanting it
- Action: they have taken the next step, such as reaching out to you, subscribing to your newsletter or purchasing your product or service.

If your customers are already familiar with your offerings, you'll focus most of your selling time on the interest and desire phase—the middle part of the sales funnel.

As prospects move through the funnel, the job of your sales team is to convert as many leads into buyers as quickly as possible without pressuring them, by asking information-gathering questions and providing the answers and information your customers need to get to "yes."

Do you know where most of your customers tend to fall out of the funnel? Talk with your sales team about their experiences and look at your customer data. Some insight into where they've gotten stuck or lost customers in the past can help know where they can improve their selling skills.

Remember, the more you know about your customer behaviour, the better you'll be able to gauge the right time to close—and the best opportunities to increase sales with upselling and cross selling.

Spend some time now reviewing your sales data, so you can get customers through your pipeline faster.

## Working with scripts

Scripts can be a great tool to help gain confidence when talking to prospective customers. With practice and experience, many salespeople find scripts unnecessary, but they are initially helpful to guide a prospect toward a sale. They can also set up a repeatable system that makes the sales process more efficient.

Use your script until you (or your salesperson) is comfortable enough with the selling process and talking points to set the script aside.

Your script should guide the conversation to a specific objective for the sales call. Your objective might be to get the name of a key decision maker, to find out if the customer needs more information—or, if you're sure you've addressed every objection, asking for the sale.

## Step 8: Anticipate objections

It's a challenge every salesperson is familiar with: how to help a prospective customer overcome their objections.

It's helpful to ask open-ended questions that dig down into the real reason a customer isn't ready to buy. So is knowing the many benefits and features of your products and services, so you can offer the right solution at the right time—no matter what your customer says is holding them back.

Often what makes the difference to making or losing a sale is re-framing the way your buyer sees your products and services, so they understand it's the solution they need right now. Try these techniques for responding to common purchase objections. Framing it in terms of the benefits to them will help them better understand how their life will be improved by purchasing your product or service.

For example, pointing out that your product allows for templates that enable them to fill in necessary forms online might not mean much to them. But saying that they save time and money by not having to print out the forms, fill them out by hand, redo them in case of an error, and then scan them back into their computer system highlights how their life will be improved.

## Common objections

Here are some common objections sales people hear. They are often general objections, as well, which may require more digging to get at the real reason they aren't making a decision.

**Objection:** We don't have the budget

**Solution:** Offer incredible value

Price is often a sticking point but resist the urge to offer a reduction too soon. This strategy runs counter to your goal of maximising profits with every sale—and can raise doubts about the value of your offering. When your price comes up, be ready to demonstrate the value of your solutions. If it will tip the scale in your favour, throw in some enticing add-ons that won't greatly impact your bottom line but will increase perceived value.

As mentioned before, focus on the benefits, not just the features. It's difficult to highlight the true value of a feature, but a benefit—like saving hours a day by not printing out forms and filling them out by hand thanks to your online platform—showcases your value.

**Objection:** It's not a good time

**Solution:** Create urgency

This objection can point to a number of issues including a cash flow crunch, a seasonal rush, or simply an inconvenient time to speak. Seek clarification so you can address the problem and take positive action, pointing out how your solution can relieve an issue that is weighing them down. Motivate them with a special time-limited offer they won't want to miss.

**Objection:** I need to consult with my manager

**Solution:** Ask for the right contact

If you've asked for the sale but your contact lacks the authority to make a decision, don't let the opportunity fizzle out. Instead, ask your contact if you both can speak with the decision maker. Speaking to the right person may be all you need to move a sale forward.

In this case, it's better for you to talk to the decision maker than waiting for someone else to do it. They'll likely forget some—or even most—of what you said, and your opportunity will get lost.

If possible, find out ahead of time if the decision maker will be at the sales meeting. If not, suggest postponing until they are available. If you can't postpone, ask at the meeting for a contact name or number.

**Objection:** I need more time

**Solution:** Offer a test drive

From time to time you'll hear "Let me think about it," a stall tactic that could stem from a lack of familiarity with the benefits of your offering or, if it's a new customer, a lack of trust. Offering a demo or free sample can help build credibility and alleviate doubt about the value of your product or service. Follow up promptly, within three days at most, to get feedback and maintain momentum.

## Step 9: Make use of closing strategies

Closing can be tricky, even for experienced salespeople. Ask for the sale too early and you may come off as pushy; wait too long and you may miss your chance.

There are steps you can take throughout the selling process to make the closing point more effective. Ask open-ended questions rather than leading questions. "How does that sound?" is more effective than "Are you ready to buy?" Listen to the response and either move to close or offer more information.

Once you've listened carefully to your customer, suggested appropriate products and services that address their needs, and have countered every objection, move forward with one of these three closing strategies.

### **The Time-sensitive close: Make an attractive offer that will expire shortly**

"I know you'd like this done by the 15th. If you sign up today, I can fast track your order."

Why it's effective: This technique works best on a customer who has expressed that they need to make a decision by a certain date. A reminder of their own timeline may be all they need to move forward. It also shows you've listened to them when they've talked about their needs and are willing to take some steps to make their experience successful.

### **The Question close: Sum up your conversations, then ask to proceed**

"It sounds like we've covered all your questions now. Is there any reason we can't move forward with the order?"

Why it's effective: Throughout the selling process, you'll use questions to check in with your customers. Through questioning, you've shown interest and won trust, developed desire, and countered objections. When you ask for the sale, the game isn't over if you hear "no." You can ask why and offer another more appealing solution.

### **The Summary Close: Recap the benefits of your product or service**

"As we've discussed, all our products come with a full money-back guarantee so there's no risk, as well as a 5-year warranty on parts and free installation. What would be the best date for delivery?"

Why it's effective: Reminding your customer of the benefits of your offerings, laying them out in an attractive high-value package, covers all the important points, and can give them that final nudge they need to sign on the dotted line.

If you sense resistance, you can save the sale by delaying the close. Simply say, "To help us move forward, I'd like to suggest..." then propose whatever it is you think they still need to come to a positive decision.



## Approaching B2B and B2C sales

It takes a different mindset to effectively sell to businesses (B2B) than it does to sell to consumers (B2C) because buying criteria and processes are very different.

These tips will help you adapt your sales strategies for the correct audience so you're always prepared to get the sale.

### Selling to businesses

For business-to-business selling, it's important to do some background research on the company before making contact.

Do some online research into the particular challenges a company in their industry might face. This will help you evaluate whether an account would be profitable and is worthwhile to pursue as well as any potential issues that might impact the sale.

Check the company's website to learn more about their objectives—as well as any information that can help you match your offerings with what the business needs now, or down the line. See if you can find out anything about their business processes, info that might help your salesperson adjust their approach.

Last but not least, before you make a sales call, confirm you're connecting with the right person, someone who understands the needs of the organisation and has the authority to make buying decisions. You can learn more about the person by visiting his or her LinkedIn profile and reviewing social media posts.

### Selling to consumers

Unlike B2B selling, B2C sales typically have a much shorter cycle, as consumers tend to make buying decisions quickly.

Keeping your unique value proposition (UVP) top of mind will help you connect with more buyers on and offline and ideally, convince them to buy. Your UVP encapsulates what makes your offering better than others. For example, a home renovator might promote experience as their UVP. A grocery store might highlight their local produce as their UVP.

Getting this right is vital because it will come into play whenever you talk about your products and services in face to face interactions with prospects, at networking events, on your website, and throughout your marketing collateral.

## Step 10: Measure your results

### Monitor what's working

As you make efforts to improve your sales figures, you need to track customer sales and the performance of your team members. That way, you can find out what's working and which strategies or processes need improvement.

Remember your Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to watch over your 90-day sales challenge can include:

- Sales cycle metrics (i.e.) how long each phase took to complete in the pipeline
- Time spent on each sale
- Closing rate
- Average purchase value.

Depending on your marketing strategy, you may also want to look at online metrics like:

- Number of downloads/sign ups for a free offer
- Conversion rate
- Lead to close ratio
- Customer value
- Projected return on investment.

Keep an eye on your Google Analytics, social media activity, and newsletter sign ups too—all methods that can tell you whether you're reaching more leads.

### Congratulations!

You've set some ambitious goals, executed a promotional strategy, improved your selling skills, and should dramatically increase your conversion rate to increase sales figures and profits.

It's time for some reflection. What went well? What could you have done better? What do you wish you'd done differently?

Fortunately, the sales process will get much easier going forward as your team continues to master the art of selling and your business gets better at marketing to the right prospects. You'll close sales faster and see profits increase.

Why not use what you've learned to plan another 90-day sales challenge—this time targeting a different consumer niche or business category?

Consider implementing a new three-month sales plan a few times a year, to try out new ways to connect with your customers and continually increase company revenue.

Of course, you'll also want to think about customer retention, so you can keep new and loyal customers happy and more inclined to respond favourably to your next promotion.

### Next steps

- Debrief with your sales team to share what you've collectively achieved and learned—your successes, and any discoveries that can help tighten up your sales process.
- Invest in an accounting solution that will help your business to properly manage financial information so you can make better decisions.

### Chat to us

If you need a hand working out a plan on how to increase your sales to grow your business, please get in touch with us today.