

4 reflections in sales effectiveness

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Last year, key themes among our clients have been:

- The value of reflecting upon capturing and sharing best practices to **drive sales effectiveness**.
- The importance of sales managers **coaching** their teams.
- The importance of sales managers being taught **how** to coach.
- Many of us are standing on ‘acres of diamonds’ and not **seeing the potential**.

It’s been a busy year both in terms of revenues, number of clients and value delivered.

We have supported the development of sales strategy, created and refined value propositions, codified sales processes and enabled sales teams & leaders through training & coaching programmes.

Thank you to all of our amazing clients for making this happen.

As I look back, as every year, we’ve enjoyed successes and we’ve had to work through challenges. The thing that has been the most consistent are the familiar themes that have emerged through the projects, so I thought it would be worth taking the time to capture the following, including some recommendations that may add value.

1. The value of reflecting upon capturing and sharing best practices to drive sales effectiveness - business valuation & integration.

We have developed countless sales playbooks over the years for major names including Google, Expedia, Hotelbeds and emerging businesses across the technology, consultancy and financial services arenas. A playbook captures and codifies sales process & methodology and enables salespeople to engage more effectively with target personas to drive sales volume, value and velocity. A consistent theme when we do this is that it highlights how disjointed and inconsistent organisations are when it comes to their approach to sales and how much insight is locked up in pockets of the team.

Recommendation: Map your sales process against your target buyers process. Identify who should be doing what and how they should be doing it. You won’t be disappointed with the return on investment. As the Chief Commercial Officer of one of our clients put it,

“Our partnership with SBR has helped us to clearly define how we win work. Now all our team recognise how they can maximise the value that our clients gain from the full range of our capabilities. Beyond the internal benefits to the team, we have also seen the value of a clearly defined approach in conversations with our investors.”

2. The importance of sales managers coaching their teams.

A [global study](#) of sales effectiveness concluded,

“The sales manager activity most closely associated with success is coaching. However, of the skills that sales managers possess, an ability to coach individuals is relatively the weakest.”

Our experience of running global sales leadership programmes over the last 15 years with organisations including Sophos, Google, Rackspace, Verifone, Facebook and many others backs this up. Teams that are led by managers who coach consistently outperform those that don't. The number one reason this doesn't happen is the perceived lack of time. Managers allow themselves to get pulled into everything and end up neglecting the investments that are required to hit their numbers consistently.

The key thing that we see that makes a difference is when managers watch their people in a 'live' client setting, as this is when it often becomes clear where the skill gaps are and why key metrics like conversion rates, forecast accuracy or pipeline coverage are below where they need to be.

Recommendation: Check your schedules and check the schedules of your managers. How many have a cadence and rhythm for coaching sessions? How many of these involve time out observing their people?

3. The importance of sales managers being taught how to coach.

Just investing the time will make a difference, but as you'd expect, helping managers build their coaching muscles will magnify the impact. So many sales leaders lapse into the 'tell' and forget that when coaching salespeople we have to remember, just like in sales, that we have to 'seek to understand before attempting to be understood'. Alongside this, it is so often that a conversation is based on opinion and not fact or evidence and as such, the impact is limited.

Recommendation: Ask great questions when coaching focused on: understand their perception of the issue, the options that they see, what they consider to be the pros and cons of each course of action and then, if necessary, add value and drive creative thinking through questions that challenge and drive thinking. Is another option worth thinking about...? Would they respond better to 'x' or possibly 'y'? How could we apply 'x' to this situation?

4. Many of us are standing on ‘acres of diamonds’ and not seeing the potential that sits in our account bases.

The number one thing that we see impact our clients from both a revenue and profit perspective is more effective account development.

The ability to cross and upsell is something that so many of our clients aspire to be able to do better. But so often they haven't defined the structure, process, incentives or sales tools that are necessary to do this. This should start with identifying where there is performance and potential and not thinking simplistically that the account that 'produces the most revenue today' is the most important one to focus on for tomorrow.

Recommendation: If you haven't already prioritised your accounts based on performance and potential, identify potential with demographic indicators (industry, revenue, profit, etc.) and psychographic (culture, relationships, etc).

A great tool to help is White Space Analysis. Simply put what your clients are buying against what they could be buying. On the basis of this, ensure that you have the conversations needed to educate the clients so that you have this capability.

As one of our clients put it, "We are one of the pioneers in cloud and a client was surprised the other day that we could help them develop their cloud strategy and capability."

In an effort to support our network this year, we will be running [complimentary workshops](#) on some of these topics and other areas that are frequently identified by our clients.

To discover more about sales effectiveness, [let's talk growth](#).