

Is Your Pipeline Review a Knockout?

4 Steps to Come Out Swinging

4-min read



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30 minutes in the ring

Ding, ding, ding. Professional boxers are expected to last 36 minutes in a 1-2-1 showdown and leave the ring with their heads up. So why can a 30-minute pipeline review leave salespeople feeling like they've spent 12 rounds having their ear chewed off?

A monthly or even weekly pipeline review is one tool among many that we sales leaders use to guide, motivate, upskill, and ultimately enable our sales teams. They are 101 in any sales organisation. But despite the time and effort put in, forecast performance often remains lousy.

Is your pipeline review getting the best of you?

Research from CSO Insights shows that *fewer than half* of forecast deals end up as closed won. So there is huge scope for pipeline reviews to help

1. Qualify opportunities and improve forecast accuracy;
2. Identify the sales actions needed to increase the successful close rate;

Too often, however, when we talk to salespeople, they tell us that their pipeline reviews feel something like this:

“My boss...”

1. Forgets to ask me how I am and have a brief catchup before launching into destructive criticism of my pipeline cover.
2. Misses the opportunity to praise me on my weekly results and the fact I have landed the 10th best deal in the company's 20-year history.
3. Focuses on their agenda rather than on my agenda, and sometimes doesn't even have an agenda at all.
4. Nit-picks at the slowly moving opportunities.
5. Rather than asking me 'how' questions, focuses solely on a condescending monologue explaining how, when they were in sales (emphasis on WERE), they would have done it like this, and I should 'definitely' do it their way.
6. Forgets that they have two ears and one mouth, and decides to talk at me more than listen to me.
7. Finally, gives me 15 things to do, some that I get, some that I don't, and says, “Sorry mate, need to hop to the next meeting, good luck.”

If that's how we come across as sales leaders, then it's no wonder our pipeline reviews are ineffective.

4 steps to come out swinging

But of course there are plenty of things we can do to improve the way this process works. Here's one simple outline that can make a difference.

The PIPE structure breaks down the pipeline review into four parts:

1. Preparation

- Research your salesperson's KPIs and progress against target, taking the time to understand the impact of their pipeline value, sales cycle length and forecast accuracy, and picking out their top 3 to 5 opportunities.
- Prepare your questions rather than a speech you're going to deliver.
- Set yourself objectives on how the receiver is going to feel at the end – Motivated, Supported, Focused.

2. Investigation

- Ask 'How' questions rather than 'Why' to unearth the real deal.
- Understand the qualification criteria required to move an opportunity to the next stage.
- Analyse bottlenecks in the conversion and provide support to deal with these.

3. Planning

- Identify a specific action plan with clear next steps to qualify/progress the key deals.
- Document and plan a collaborative way forwards.

4. Execution

- Send a follow-up note that captures the action plan or, even better, get your salesperson to do this to solidify their learning.
- Support your team in executing the next step to move the opportunity through the pipeline.
- Make sure that following up on the actions forms part of preparing for your next Pipeline Review.

If **you** were to shift the percentage of deals won by only 5%, what would be the value and impact to your business?

To discover more about how you can improve the effectiveness of your reviews process, [let's talk growth](#).