

What is a Sales Process and Why use it?

63% of salespeople I have worked with in both complex, as well as those working in more straight forward sales, cannot define their sales process.

Can you imagine how you would feel if you were to ask a surgeon why an elderly relative had passed away during surgery and their response was *"I am not sure I think their heart stopped?"* It wouldn't inspire confidence to say the least.

Well just like the surgeon there are many salespeople in this same situation when asked why they succeeded or failed to secure a sale? The response to success is usually *"I gave them a greater discount."* The reason may or may not be true. In the latter I often sense frustration and hear excuses such as *"They always buy from....."* or possible slander such as *"The competitor gives them a backhander payment."* These are unacceptable reasons and reflect poorly on the lack of sales competence of the salesperson and sales management leadership.

The surgeon just like the salesperson should be able to identify the real reason why a particular outcome had occurred by reviewing their process and specifically identifying at what point in time change had occurred. In time and with skill evasive action can be taken to avoid the wrong outcome.

The sales process is a structured approach incorporating a set of core skills that when applied in a logical sequence result in a sale. It assists in effective prospecting, qualifying, product/service presentation, overcoming objections, closing and follow-up. The sales process can save time and provide client value. Should the sales outcome not be achieved the sales process can be used to objectively identify why and at what point in time the sales opportunity was lost. In complex sales the sales process has a different structure because the selling/buying cycle can take many months and in some cases years involving multiple client stakeholders.

The management of the sale pipeline in complex sales is generally done poorly. Research from Vantage Point Performance and the Sales Management Association in the US revealed that 44% of executives think their organization is ineffective in managing their sales pipeline. The outcome is lower sales revenues. There can be an 18% difference in revenue growth between companies that defined a formal sales process and companies that didn't.

So what to do?

Formalize your sales process

A well-designed sales process is one that is tailored for your sales environment, is understood by the salespeople and can be easily applied. It needs to have defined stages in-line with your clients buying process. Don't settle for an off the shelf sales process. They rarely provide the outcomes you are looking for.

Develop sales manager's selling skills

A sales manager can have an incredible impact on a salesperson's success and career. If they can demonstrate how to apply the sales process and associated selling skills that result in a confirmed sale and or how the selling cycle was reduced in the sales pipeline the salesperson will believe what they had witnessed and will want to copy the behavior.

Implementing an effective sales process can result in a positive impact and a better connection with clients, assist in keeping on track and project a professional image.

If you would like to know more about sales processes or answers to other sales/sales management issues then contact Kurt Newman direct +61 412 252 236 or email kurt@salesconsultants.com.au



Kurt Newman is a recognised sales expert, successful author and respected coach and mentor who has guided many well-known companies to improved profitability and countless sales professionals to greater success. Following an outstanding, award-winning and record-making career in sales that spanned three decades and covered all major market segments, Kurt is now focussed on passing his expertise on to others through his work with Sales Consultants and community-based initiatives.