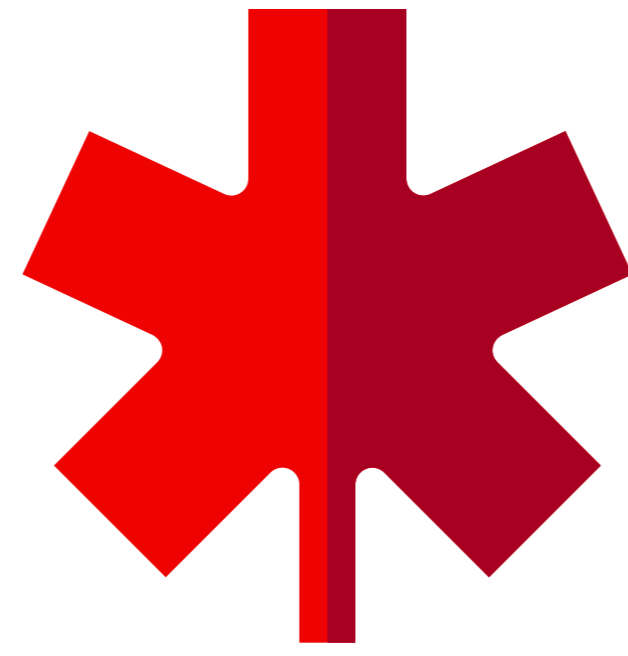


Revving Up Your Sales

A Guide for Entrepreneurs



bodc



Summary

1.

Assess your current sales process

Understanding what is and isn't working is critical to your ability to make fundamental improvements to the sales process. If you want to level up your company's sales performance, it's important to map out your current tactics. Also consider your sales funnel, including how you move customers through each stage. And identify the key performance indicators (KPIs) that will show you where you need to focus.

2.

Optimize your sales process

The world of sales has changed. Buyers have grown up with the Internet; everyone is busy these days and they aren't as interested in doing business on the golf course or over long lunches. They are way less likely to respond to a cold call and they're not looking for a paper-based sales pitch when they can do their own research online. Internally, you can do better than trusting your gut when it comes to forecasting.

3.

Digitize your sales process

The final piece of the puzzle is the digital hub, where all sales data and reporting lives. A customer relationship management (CRM) system is the place where your team can enter and find information that will help them manage prospects, set and achieve actionable goals and know exactly how they are performing in real time, anytime.

Map out your current sales process

The first step to improving sales is to understand what your current sales cycle looks like—from start to finish. Break down each of the steps to reveal how you identify a lead, make a proposal and close the sale.

As you recreate your own sales process, be sure to define specific objectives for each step so that advancing to the next step is clear. Consider:

- What is the average length of this sales cycle?
- Are there any steps you should add or remove?
- Are all sales reps using this process—or does it vary by person/product?
- Have we looked at our process from the customer’s perspective to remove friction?

Steps of a sales process



1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.
Lead generation	Initial contact	Presentation/qualification	Technical evaluation	Proposal presentation	Detailed negotiations	Order, delivery and completion
Attend industry trade shows and networking events. Get people to visit your website. Collect business cards and contact information to add to prospect list.	Speak to decision makers who confirm interest and agree to sponsor a meeting with relevant staff.	Present company/product credentials. Customer confirms that it’s a product, price and competitive fit.	Complete a detailed product and technical specification evaluation.	Present the proposal to prospect who confirms compliance with requirements and/or highlights areas to be discussed later.	Resolve all outstanding issues raised by prospect. Prepare a draft agreement for legal review and/or purchasing department.	Receive purchase order and ship the order. When the order is accepted, invoice according to the agreed-upon terms. Receive final payment.

Measure what matters: KPIs to assess performance

To improve your sales, you first need to measure how you are currently doing, including how you are moving prospects from one step of the sales process to the next.

There are dozens of KPIs to choose from. Which ones you decide to focus on will depend on your business and how your sales team works. The most important thing is to pick at least a few to start so you have a clear picture of where you stand today, create forecasts for future sales and identify realistic goals to get you to the next level.

Number-of-meetings-to-calls ratio

Measure the number of calls a sales rep makes before they garner enough interest from a customer to book a meeting (e.g., one meeting booked for every 10 calls = 10%). This offers insight into how successful they are at qualifying leads and conducting first outreach.

Sales per rep

How many sales each person generates (and at what value). You may even set a target KPI for reps to work toward.



Conversion ratio between stages of the sale

The percentage of opportunities that move from one stage to the next (e.g., one closed deal for every four proposals = 25%). This will help you identify which areas of the sales process are succeeding and which ones are not.

Year-to-date sales

Keep a close eye on sales as they come through the door so you can adjust monthly targets and forecasts, and tweak the sales process for best results.

Tip

A modern CRM solution will have all the KPI measurements you need to assess your current sales process. Simply plug in the data and it will offer a clear picture of where you need to focus.

Forecast your sales

Mapping your sales process and establishing KPIs will help you accurately forecast your company's sales over a quarter or a year.

An accurate sales forecast will help your business:

- estimate costs and revenue
- decide how much to purchase and or produce in the coming months
- manage cash flow
- make informed decisions about hiring, real estate needs and business strategy
- identify potential issues and take action to avoid them

A sales forecast also gives your team a clear goal they can reach for. Rather than working their way through the sales process with nothing but high hopes, they can break down how many leads they'll need to achieve the target. This will help them decide which prospects to approach, as well as identify what success and failure looks like.

If all sales reps are entering their activities in a CRM in real time, they will be able to see progress toward the goals and make adjustments to ensure they can reach them.

The forecast should be reviewed monthly and quarterly to be sure it is a SMART goal (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-bound).

How do you start forecasting sales?

One trick is to think of your sales funnel as a reverse pyramid. If 50% of your leads move on to the quote stage, 20% go on to the negotiations stage and 25% close, you know that you need to talk to 1,000 leads to sell 25 units.



Customers hate cold outreach!

Generate leads through marketing activities

When was the last time you got excited to receive a cold call from a sales rep looking for “two minutes” of your time? To be successful in today’s market, you need to know your prospects and target them with lead generation tactics that speak to them.

What is lead generation?

Lead generation is the process of attracting qualified buyers and increasing their interest by providing them with information and/or resources that are valuable to them.

Providing insightful information in the right place, at the right time can go a long way to gaining the attention of prospects and earning their trust. When they’re in a position to purchase, you may be their first call.

Two ways to acquire leads

1. Demand capture

The prospect is looking for you (or at least what you do). They are actively searching for products/solutions (usually online) and reach out to you. They find you via a Google ad, your website, social media, LinkedIn, etc. For most businesses, demand capture comprises a very low percentage of sales.

2. Demand generation

The prospect isn’t in the market for your solution right now. However, they take note when they come across content (usually online) that shows them you understand their needs, that your products might be a good fit or that your sales rep is worth knowing.

Activities that generate leads will depend on your customers.

- What do they care about?
- What do they already know about your industry/product? What don’t they know?
- Where do they get their information?
- How do they prefer to get information?

Sample demand generation activities

- Posting industry insights on LinkedIn and other social platforms (think about distributing with paid media to increase your audience)
- Attending industry events
- Speaking at conferences and association meetings (and turning those speaking events into video content for YouTube and social media)

Tailored sales approach = Happy customers

The most efficient and effective way to initiate and close a sale is to research the buyer before you reach out to them.

You may have qualified a company as a good prospect, but what else do you know about them?

Do they know they need what you are selling?

What solutions do they currently use and why is yours better?

What are the values of the business and how do they align with yours?

What do their financials look like?

How do they make buying decisions?

Who are the key decision makers within the company?

What does the buyer care about? (Check out their information online for clues and common ground you can use in your approach.)

How do they prefer to be reached? (Referral, email, phone call, text, LinkedIn connection, etc.)

Who do you know that could connect you with the right person in the organization?

Key account targeting

Doing the work to understand your ideal buyer is called key account targeting. Rather than running the customer through your pre-determined sales steps, take what you know about them and put together a custom process just for them. It requires creativity and persistence, but the more work you put into sales preparation, the swifter and more successful your results will be.



Time really is money

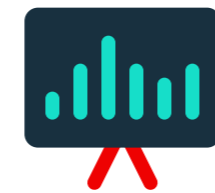
Gartner research suggests that when B2B buyers are considering a purchase, they spend only 17% of that time meeting with potential suppliers. Buyers comparing multiple suppliers will only spend 5% or 6% of their time with any one sales rep. The moral of the story? Be prepared to make that time count.

Virtual sales is the name of the game

We've all become accustomed to the efficiency of remote meetings that eliminate travel time and allow for faster transitions between tasks. The pressure is on for sales reps to make presentations in a virtual environment, often in 30 minutes or less.

This is another area where preparation is critical. Your sales reps need training on virtual presentations. For example, marketing can put together template sales decks or demos that your team can customize for each presentation.

Best practices for virtual sales pitches



Tailor the presentation

Show them you've done your research by including elements and examples that are relevant to their industry and business.



Keep that human touch

Just because you're not sitting in the same room doesn't mean you can't make strong eye contact and use friendly body language. Observe their body language as well and adapt your pitch to what you're seeing.



Stay focused on their needs

It's infinitely easier for a customer to be distracted during virtual meetings. Stay on point and focus on what they want to know, not what you want to tell them.



Make it interactive

Ask questions and invite them to share their thoughts along the way, not just at the conclusion.



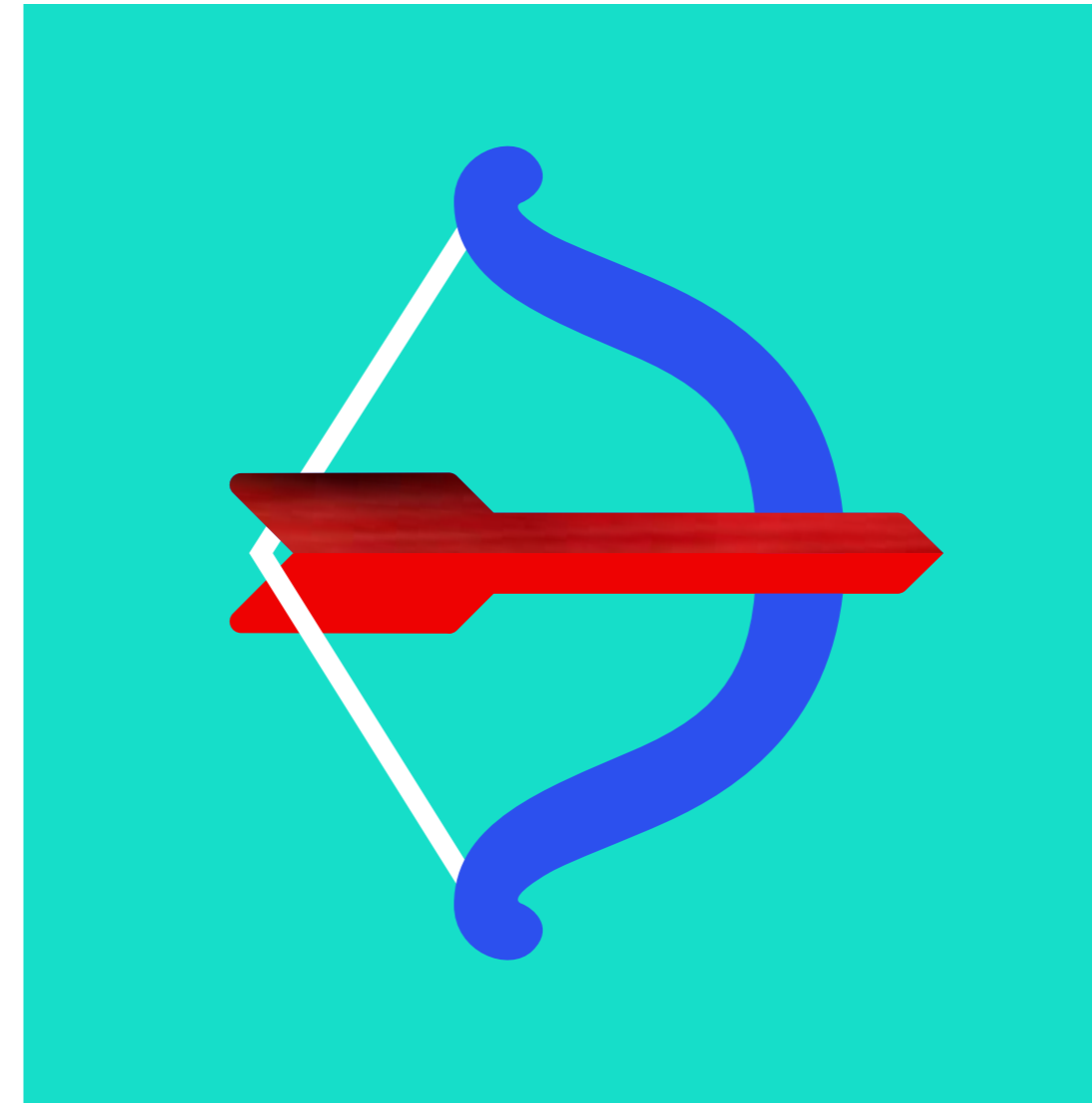
End with a clearly defined next step

Your clients are on remote calls all day. Make sure they know what is next in the sales process.



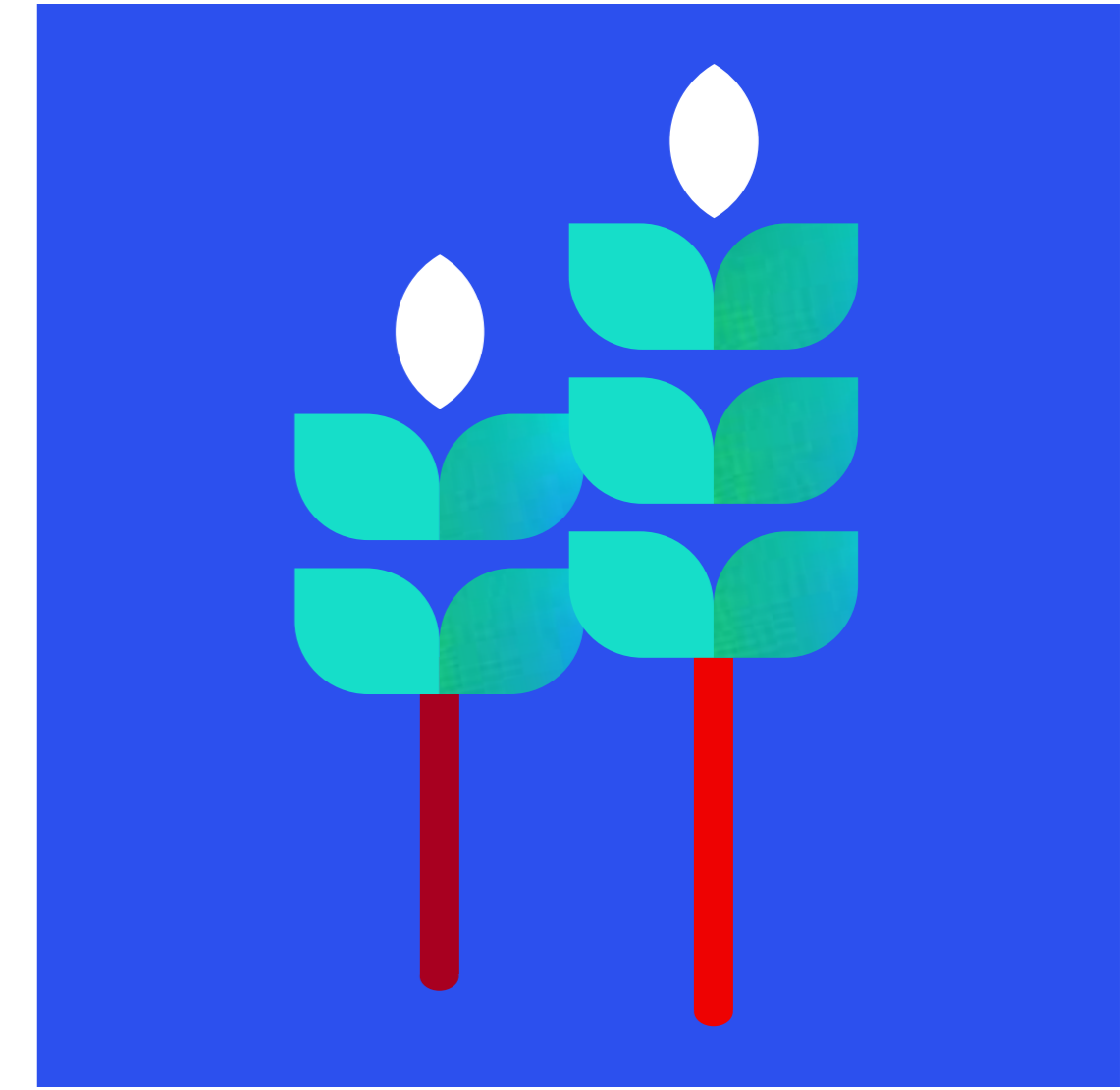
Hunters and farmers

The most efficient way to bring in revenue is with repeat business. You can avoid a revolving door of customers by creating the conditions for loyalty after the first sale. To do this, your sales team should ideally be comprised of two types of professionals.



Hunters

Deploy your hungriest sales reps to root out prospects and doggedly pursue them with customized tactics and irresistible pitches. These business developers love the thrill of the chase and feel fulfilled when they can make a big sale happen. Before the ink on the digital contract is dry, they're already thinking about their next possibility.



Farmers

If you want to keep customers satisfied, you need sales reps who are committed to managing those relationships.

These account managers love to build connections with existing customers and are adept at looking for upselling and cross-selling opportunities, not just at the outset but across the entire span of the relationship with the customer.

Sales control centre: Using a CRM to boost sales

CRM software is critical for a modern sales organization. This digital hub is where sales leaders and individual reps can find all the information they need to manage customer interactions, prioritize actions and see their progress on key metrics.

A CRM system will help you:

- 1.** Track contacts
Sort, analyze and prioritize your sales leads so the team can focus on qualifying and pursuing the right prospects. You can also supplement your data through third-party sources. If a contact moves to a new job, you'll know about it and can continue to maintain and rebuild important connections.
- 2.** Upsell and cross-sell
Keep all data in a central place so your hunters and farmers can offer the right product or service to the right people.
- 3.** Build customer personas
Help sales reps target the right prospects by entering customer data points into a CRM to identify the ideal customer profile.
- 4.** Automate sales activities
Most CRMs have features that allow sales reps to automatically write or send emails, follow-ups, quotes and other customer communications.
- 5.** Align business processes
A CRM allows other parts of the business, including marketing and accounting functions, line of sight into the sales process. This collaboration ensures everyone is on the same page and customers get the information they need more quickly and efficiently.
- 6.** Identify and nurture high-value accounts
When you know exactly the value of each customer, you can provide high-touch service where it's most needed.
- 7.** Forecast sales accurately with real-time reporting
With virtually limitless metrics to measure, you can have a clear picture of every aspect of your sales activities to make data-based big-picture business decisions.

“Isn’t using a CRM time-consuming?”

A common concern for sales organizations looking to implement a CRM is the perception that sales reps will be burdened by entering large amounts of data.

But using a CRM doesn’t have to be a labour-intensive exercise. Yes, your sales team will need to do some data entry, but the time savings that come from this process more than make up for the loss.

The value of the data housed in the CRM allows a business to make forecasts and business decisions based on real-time sales numbers. It also helps individual sales reps see where they stand in relation to their quarterly and annual goals—and even how they compare to other reps.

This is something that can’t be achieved with spreadsheets alone.



Digital quotes, invoices and payments

Digital payment processing improves overall efficiency and cash flow. Modern accounting software can also bring time and cost savings to businesses by reducing their reliance on cheques and paper-based methods, which cost more and take more resources to process.

Buyers are increasingly likely to embrace technology and avoid complicated sales processes. Your accounting and purchasing staff are also made up of digital natives who expect almost instantaneous transactions. If your system requires days or weeks to provide a quote or an invoice, you may be left behind.

Three software solutions to improve your sales process



Accounting software

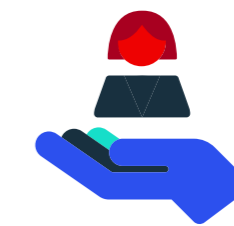
A good, cloud-based [accounting software](#) will allow you to:

- issue invoices
- track payments
- track and categorize expenses
- write project proposals and/or price estimates
- track time spent on projects
- generate financial reports
- view real-time profit and loss and other financial data



CPQ software

If you're constantly sending project proposals or price quotes to potential customers, it's helpful to have a system that empowers you to do more than just create and store them. CPQ (configure, price, quote) software allows you to create professional-looking documents and has features that help you consistently improve the quoting process by inputting information and viewing historical data.



CRM system

Many businesses keep a spreadsheet with a list of current and prospective customers and manually update it from time to time. A [CRM system](#) will help you manage your sales pipeline and all interactions with current and potential customers. These programs usually integrate with accounting software to make it easy to prepare invoices and price quotes.

A well-oiled selling machine

This guide has tried to present strategies and tools you can use to drive up your company's sales.

Start by assessing your current sales process and KPIs. Then, optimize your ways of working to adapt to your customers. Finally, implement digital tools to manage your funnel and reporting in real-time.

But what would all of this actually look like in action?

How a modern sales team operates

Let's imagine a technology company that has two inside salespeople (farmers), whose sole function is to service and cross-sell to the organization's current customer base. They also employ two outside salespeople (hunters), who track down new leads and ultimately bring in new customers.

The company has invested in a CRM that serves as a hub for all of their activities. Their sales leader and CEO often refer to the dashboard, which presents KPIs such as sales in progress, sales per rep, sales targets and conversion ratios. It helps them forecast, do long-term planning and optimize the sales process in real time.

All four sales reps use the CRM to track their activities. The farmers have a clear line of sight to what the hunters are working on and what may come their way; and the hunters know that new customers are being well taken care of.

The CRM also offers a marketing automation tool that makes the sales process more efficient.

For example, the tool is programmed to automatically follow up by email a week after a sales rep presents a demo to a lead. This email is pre-written to include a case study to help them move to the next step of the process. The rep also receives a follow-up reminder to reach out to the prospect.

After sales meetings or product demos, sales reps enter information into the CRM, so leadership can clearly see what the client loved or objected to. A CEO may choose to step in and take a promising client out to lunch based on the insights entered in the CRM. If a deal is lost, the lead goes back into the CRM's marketing funnel where they'll continue to receive the company's quarterly newsletter and a hunter will be prompted to check in with them bi-annually.

When it's time for a sales rep to provide a quote or an invoice, they're able to do it in a few clicks within the CRM's accounting program.

All sales and financial documents are quickly generated and shared digitally.

With easy access to real-time data and automations, this software company has truly harnessed the power of technology to free their team to be efficient, strategic, and profitable.

And you could too. All it takes is leadership and a willingness to create a well-oiled, modern selling organization.

BDC is here to help



We help Canadian entrepreneurs like you gain valuable insights into their sales process and identify areas for improvement, while providing financing options that can help you grow and realize your projects.

- ➔ Discover our [sales and marketing solution](#) for entrepreneurs.
- ➔ Find out how we can [help with financing](#).

For more information, contact us or visit your nearest BDC Business Centre.

1-888-INFO-BDC
info@bdc.ca

bdc.ca

ISBN: 978-1-990813-18-4
EB-REVUPSALES-E2307

Ce document est aussi disponible en version française.