



## **Writing a Killer Sales Playbook**

By Laura Patterson

### **The Sales Playbook, Defined**

A sales playbook is a collection of tactics or methods that characterizes the roles and responsibilities for you (and your sales team), lays out clear objectives, identifies metrics for measurement, and provides a common framework and approach for closing sales.

The playbook helps you implement a common sales methodology that leverages the processes used by high performers. The outcome? You can sell more effectively and handle different selling situations, position against a particular competitor, or communicate the value proposition to each person in the buying process.

### **The 30,000 Foot View...**

In the big picture, a good playbook needs to do several things:

- \* Define your sales process and methodology — not only what you need to do but how to make it happen
- \* Identify how your process maps to your customer's buying process
- \* Tell you how to engage with a prospective customer
- \* Diagram the engagement experience

- \* Accelerate sales effectiveness and accuracy.

## The Components of the Sales Playbook, Explained

In the sports world, a “play” is an action designed to achieve a specific purpose in specific conditions. When you design a playbook you need to define the conditions. Therefore, at a minimum, the following knowledge needs to be integrated into the playbook:

1. **Customer analysis** – Identifies the market, key trends, key buyers and influencers, a profile of the ideal customer, the customers’ pain points and preferences and the critical business issues customers are trying to solve.

2. **Buying process** - Identifies conditions or events that trigger consideration, evaluation, and purchase. What are the behaviors of a qualified lead?

3. **Company offer and value proposition** – Describes and clarifies what your company offers and the ways in which your products and services address the customer’s pain points and business issues.

This is the place to explain why your company exists and how your company makes a difference to the customer and in the market. This section of the playbook is not complete until it clearly answers two questions. First, “Why should people buy this product from you?” Second, “What is the value they receive buying this product from you?” Part of this section should be dedicated to giving examples of questions that draw out the customer’s business needs and pain points. This section is also a good place to include use case scenarios.

4. **Competitive analysis** – Details how competitors position themselves in the market, their selling process, typical moves by each competitor, and recommendations on how to counter these moves.

5. **Sales methodology** - Maps the customer buying process, and outlines your sales process, that is, the standard set of critical steps that move the customer to buy.

While this section should outline the sales cycle stages and responsibilities, it should go beyond just describing the steps in the sales cycle. It should provide instructions on what information needs to be collected at each stage in the process, identify the players in each step, and how to assess the opportunity.

The opportunity assessment information should recommend standard methods and tools that help determine where customers are in the buying process, enable them to analyze the situation, and anticipate what they might do next. This section of the playbook should also provide the guidelines for entering and exiting opportunities and a list of the resources, skills, knowledge, and tools needed for each stage in the process.

6. **Countering objections** – Gives specific instruction on how to address each common objection sales might encounter.

7. **Best practices** - Lists proven tips, techniques — and under what circumstances to use them. This section should also capture what hasn't worked in the past and associated lessons learned.

8. **Your Buyer Personae** — A section (perhaps an appendix) that answers the question, “Who is my ideal prospect?”

## A Worthwhile Investment

While developing a sales playbook is an extensive investment of your time, it has a big payoff in that it surfaces customer pains and preferences, improves sales effectiveness and productivity, and exposes and corrects weaknesses in the way you currently operate.

When completed, your playbook becomes a living document of your sales methodology and provides tactical guidelines and instructions that enable you to discover important ways to address the vulnerabilities of both your company and competitors. With a practical sales playbook, you can leverage strengths, differentiate offers, prove business value, and ultimately improve your win/loss ratio.

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