



FIVE REASONS WHY  
YOU NEED A DEFINED  
**SALES PROCESS**  
FOR YOUR ORGANIZATION



Hyper competition and the need to fuel revenue and profit growth are top priorities for sales leaders today. Changes in customer behavior and the implementation of new CRM systems are driving disruptive shifts in the sales process. As customers become cautious and meticulous in assessing investments, the need for salespeople to have a repeatable and consistent sales process is increasing. In fact, customers are expecting their sales reps to help them ensure they make the right buying decisions, and some top sellers have cracked the code on how to best help their customers.

Sales leadership either increases the number of their sellers to increase revenue, or turns to technology and automation to increase and track the productivity of the current team to respond to these radical shifts. In many organizations, adding headcount is not always feasible and may prove too costly. Automation and technology are important in driving sales performance improvement; however, it is only effective when a well-defined, repeatable sales process supports it. Successful companies take a systematic approach to developing a consistent sales process. A robust sales process can help drive revenue growth by increasing the amount of time reps focus on high impact activities that drive a sales opportunity through the sales process. Too often, sales reps are not focused on the critical sales activities – the strategic milestones – that help drive their customers' decision processes. Instead, sales reps are too-often solely focused on “creating value”, expecting their customers to “see the light” and make the switch to their solutions. As stated earlier, customers are less willing to take risks, and sellers must find ways to help them feel comfortable with the decisions they make. In a report published by CSO Insights (“Optimizing Sales Performance for the High-Tech Market”), **sales organizations that implement a well-defined sales process, and hold their sales reps accountable for managing to the strategic milestones of that process, enjoy a win rate of 55.2%, compared to 40% to those that don't.**

Re-configuring and effectively defining your sales process, then, could create a sustainable competitive advantage. Ignite Selling's years of research working with the Fortune 500 companies with large sales teams has helped us identify five components of improving the sales process.



# IMPROVING THE SALES PROCESS - FIVE COMPONENTS



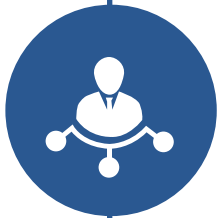
## 1. Create a custom-made sales process that fits the need of your company

Don't let a consulting company throw out what has already been working. Let's face it: your sales team has been producing revenue for your company for a long time. Sure, you probably want the revenue to be higher, or you want to see a broader base of solutions sold. But there are positive things happening in the field, and they need to be captured. Sales processes should be custom designed to drive the business results your company is striving to achieve. Work to identify and extract what is currently working and what's not. In most cases, it's not about starting over; it's about refining and better communicating what must be done. Be sure your sales process drives *your* expected business outcomes in the timeliest manner.



## 2. Define a sales process

Unlike other processes that drive an organization, your sales process should be designed to underscore your key differentiators and distinguish you from the competition. Products are becoming more commoditized every day. So, customers aren't just buying you for WHAT you are selling. They are also buying you for HOW you're selling it. A successful sales process is not just about agreeing upon the right stages and milestones. It is about orchestrating the right sequence of strategic milestones that move a customer from initial contact to contract. More importantly, they should help your sellers align to your customers' buying processes. Doing this effectively can help a customer make a more effective decision in a more efficient manner.



## 3. Aligning your sales process to your CRM

An efficient sale process needs to combine simplicity with effectiveness. It must not only be easy to master; it must also be robust enough to effectively fit within the CRM system your company has implemented. In the absence of having proper alignment between your sales process and your CRM system, it becomes impossible to effectively manage the impact and accuracy of your sales process. Proper alignment begins with being willing to customize your CRM system. Most CRM systems today come with a generic sales process defined in a one-size-fits-all manner. This language must be replaced with the strategic milestones you've developed to define each stage. In addition, regular and frequent evaluation of the sales process is required for success. By building accountability to leverage the custom sales process and by putting a focus on milestone-based management, your company can quickly improve the productivity of your sales team.

# IMPROVING THE SALES PROCESS - FIVE COMPONENTS



## 4. The Sales Process – a Key Coaching Tool

Everyone understands that coaching is critical to success, and most companies invest time and money to improve the effectiveness of their managers' ability to coach. Unfortunately, many organizations don't teach managers how to use the sales process as a key coaching tool. Think about it. A key role of the sales manager is to help sales reps be more effective in closing sales on their own. Sales managers that know how to coach to the sales process will often begin their dialog with a rep by asking; "In what stage of the sales process is this opportunity?" Armed with the knowledge of where an opportunity is in the process, the manager can begin to ask questions to assess their reps ability to effectively execute the other strategic milestones, such as "How do you plan on leveraging your strongest advocates to help you win this business?". This allows the manager to ensure that strategic milestones have been achieved, which will ultimately help to ensure that opportunities don't get stuck in the sales process for months on end. Helping your Sales Managers to see value in the sales process can ensure opportunities move through the sales process in an effective and efficient manner. **Our research has shown that when sales managers effectively coach to their sales process, they can move opportunities through the sales process at a rate of 52% faster!**



## 5. Accountability drives accurate sales forecast

In the absence of accountability, the impact of any critical initiative, process, or tool will be lost. Don't invest the time or money in developing a new sales process unless you have proper accountability in place. Accountability starts at the top, but those at the top must see value in what's being implemented. A new sales process can bring tremendous value to the Chief Sales Officer. Our research has shown that sales forecasting accuracy **prior** to establishing and holding people accountable to a new sales process is approximately 45%. Did you know that the Las Vegas odds of winning at Craps is 49.4%? This means most sales leaders have a better chance at winning in Craps than they do at winning the business in their sales pipeline! However, when a tailored, well-defined sales process is implemented, and sales managers and sales reps are held accountable to achieving the strategic milestones in the sales process, predictability increases to 82%. These are the kind of odds Wall Street wants companies to share with their stockholders.

**Companies that invest in building a custom sales process and are willing to coach and hold their teams accountable for using the sales process are often rewarded with greater revenue in a more productive manner.**

## MEET THE AUTHORS



**Steve Gielda** is the principal partner at Ignite Selling, Inc., a global sales training and consulting company and co-author of *Premeditated Selling: Tools for Developing the Right Strategy for Every Opportunity*. Steve has spent more than 20 years helping Fortune 1000 companies in the healthcare, manufacturing, distribution, and IT industries to improve their sales performance. His emphasis on building and maintaining strong relationships and his focus on driving business results is what sets him apart with his clients. Steve began his career in sales with Lanier Worldwide, a document management solutions company, eventually becoming a regional manager. He was also vice president of sales and channel management at CTN, an office equipment manufacturing and distribution company. After CTN, Steve worked as a senior sales consultant for Huthwaite, helping to create unique sales training solutions for his clients. Most recently, he was a franchise owner with the Advantage Performance Group consulting and learning firm, and an active partner in building the business of Sales Momentum, a customized sales training organization.



**Kevin Jones** is the principal partner at Ignite Selling, Inc., a global sales training and consulting company and co-author of *Premeditated Selling: Tools for Developing the Right Strategy for Every Opportunity*. Kevin has been designing and delivering training solutions that impact people's lives for last 15 years. Kevin's goal is to create a learning environment where participants can thrive and where lessons learned can be translated to the field. Kevin has worked in finance, sales, and sales training. It was in sales training that Kevin found his true passion—developing people. Kevin received a B.A. in Business from North Carolina State University, and an M.B.A. from the Kenan-Flagler Business School at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Kevin uses his academic exposure and real-world experience to develop training solutions that drive business results. Kevin's work has enabled him to influence hundreds of companies in more than 30 countries worldwide.

## About Ignite Selling, Inc.

Ignite Selling is a sales performance improvement company with over eight decades of combined experience in sales, sales coaching, and sales training. With our strategic sales consulting and learning alignment approach, we design custom programs that are unique to our customers' needs and enable them to achieve their specific business goals. Our programs use Interactive Learning Maps™ and Competitive Sales Simulations to give learners an engaging and relevant learning experience and prepare them for their real-world challenges. We focus on igniting and inspiring teams to take their sales to the next level.



*For more information:*

Visit  [www.igniteselling.com](http://www.igniteselling.com) Or Call  (703) 234-5275

### ■ Sources

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Sales Simulations that Inspire