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E-BOOK

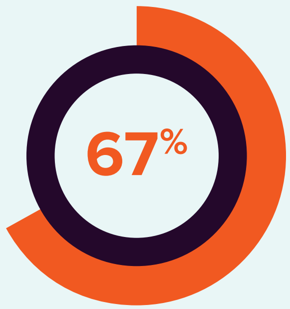
The CRO Playbook

Win More, Win Bigger, and Win Faster

The buying process has changed, and revenue leaders must adapt.

The chief revenue officer (CRO) is a pivotal role in an organization, responsible for aligning all revenuegenerating teams, uncovering new revenue streams and driving longterm growth. Standing in the way of a CRO's success? Changing buyer behavior.

According to Forrester, today's buyers have more control over the sales cycle than ever before: 67% of B2B buyers prefer not to interact with a sales rep as the primary source of information; 68% prefer to research online on their own; and 62% say they can now develop selection criteria or finalize a vendor list based solely on digital content.[1]



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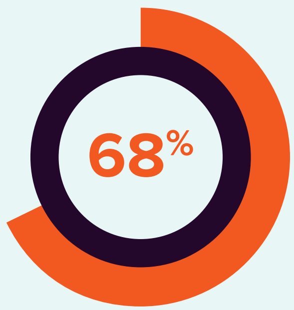

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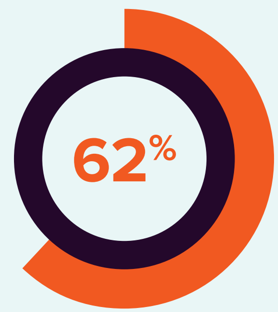

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[1] "The Ways And Means Of B2B Buyer Journey Maps: We're Going Deep at Forrester's B2B Forum," Forrester Research, Inc., August 21, 2017.

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Add to that larger buying teams and longer buying cycles, and revenue teams now have the challenging task of identifying and meeting buyer needs as quickly as possible in order to beat the competition and meet their growing quotas.

We asked 17 of today's top CROs, sales & marketing leaders and industry experts for advice on how chief revenue officers can win more, win bigger and win faster.

The advice shared addresses three priorities that have been known to keep CROs up at night:

- Driving revenue growth
- Meeting and exceeding targets
- Accelerating time to close

We hope that these insights provide you with ideas for developing and executing a go-to-market strategy that drives predictable and sustainable revenue growth for your organization.

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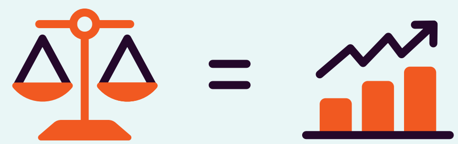
PART I

Win More: Driving Revenue Growth



“Businesses with the greatest degree of sales and marketing alignment grow faster, close 38% more deals and lose 36% fewer customers than their non-aligned counterparts.”

– MATHMARKETING

Decrease Time to Revenue

Most B2B software sales cycles are highly complex and require appealing to the business case of multiple stakeholders. A few years ago it was said that there are approximately seven decision makers involved in a B2B sales deal. I think today it can easily exceed 10, causing a sales cycle to go on for months or even years.

To have any shot at shortening that sales cycle and meeting revenue goals, a good salesperson knows how to seamlessly marry experience and intuition with technology that simply makes them faster and smarter. Soft skills, including active listening and suppressing the urge to do all of the talking, asking the right questions to help truly understand pain points, and being situationally-aware with the ability to read a room, help a salesperson tap into the emotional aspects of each person's buying decision. Meanwhile, sales enablement tools like Seismic empower salespeople to be subject matter experts while in the field, reduce elapsed time between follow-ups, and understand the messaging that makes an individual feel compelled to take action.

Sales leaders hire people that know how to do all of the above. They appeal to a prospect as a person, and can use technology to aide in their efforts and accelerate the sales cycle in the most efficient way possible.

"… a good salesperson knows how to seamlessly marry experience and intuition with technology that simply makes them faster and smarter."

ED CALNAN
Advisor
Seismic

Make Sure the Buyer Experience Slays

Buyers are not robots. They weren't sent from outer space to listen to your salespeople drone on about your products and your company. They are humans with a job to do.

Whether or not your products and services help them do their job is what matters and they'll use every bit of the buying experience to pass judgement on that decision.

Witness for yourself what every buyer goes through and look for ways to improve. See how quickly sales people respond to prospect inquiries. Hear what takes place in conversations. Know what they send to prospects at each stage of the buying process. Is it relevant? Is it interesting? Is it reassuring?

Be sure to go beyond content on your product and offer value-add tools like buyer checklists, buying-process advice, and implementation bestpractices. If you make the buying process easy, guess what...the sales process gets a lot easier at the same time.

"Witness for yourself what every buyer goes through and look for ways to improve."

NANCY NARDIN
Founder
Smart Selling Tools

Getting from Data to Knowledge: Timing is Everything

“If you don’t take the time to figure out the right process, tech only helps you fail faster.”

STEVEN WRIGHT
Analyst
Vendor Neutral

I once asked a quite successful actor, “What are the most important things needed to succeed in Hollywood?” “Timing and lighting,” she replied.

The same could apply to any CRO – with timing standing in for how fast you can get it done and the perception of your actions as a stand-in for lighting. But, of the two, timing is key – lighting can always be adjusted.

There are three key factors in using timing to help ensure success:

- **The first is time to evaluate and select the right tools**. That starts with understanding what’s working now, but also understanding that every tool can only automate an existing process. If you don’t take the time to figure out the right process, tech only helps you fail faster.
- **The second is time to get the data**. Many solutions can gather a lot of data but looking backward is difficult if you haven’t been collecting the data for very long. So, you need to allow time, based on sales cycles and volume of deals, to collect data that can be meaningful.
- **The third is time to understand the data**. I’ve worked with over 100 sales tech vendors across a wide range of categories, and they all talk a lot about the data. And I’ve worked with lots of practitioners, and most are lousy at taking the time needed to translate that data into knowledge. Every tool has a lens that focuses on a few types of data, but it takes a team to combine the data from many tools into a coherent view of what’s going on.

Enable Your Channel Partners

Using channel sales and value-added services to accelerate sales growth and drive sustainable revenue sounds like a lofty proposition, but today's sales motion has shifted and selling with and through partners is more important than ever.

To support this strategy, a comprehensive enablement program that provides formal onboarding for new partner recruits, role-based training and accreditation, and easy access to your sales collateral and tools is critical. Channel teams need to be treated as a trusted extension of your internal sales team, with the same access to information and resources.

Engaging the channel, and including them as a part of your comprehensive enablement plan, gives your internal teams the opportunity to grow their own business, creating another path for revenue generation.

"Channel teams need to be treated as a trusted extension of your internal sales, with the same access to information and resources"

CATHY ROWELL
Vice President, Enablement
Nectar Services Corp

ERIN REILLY
Manager, Sales & Partner Enablement
Nectar Services Corp

Build Your Stable of Partners

“The more opportunities delegated to trusted business partners, the more territory coverage, and the more budget attainment.”

GUY A. KURTZ
IBM Cloud Ecosystem - North America
IBM

Customers buy outcomes...not products. Further, outcomes requiring implementation or customization are best delivered with subject matter experts. Your channel or ecosystem of business partners is ready to help.

Business partners can:

- Expand your reach into the market. Build pipeline.
- Develop trust with subject matter expertise leading to closed business. Pipeline progression.
- Provide expertise in implementation services required to drive outcomes. Customer satisfaction.

How do you approach building your stable of business partners?

Assess your territory. Determine the subject matter expertise in industry and technical skills required and select the set of business partners fitting those requirements.

How many partners should you have in your stable?

The more opportunities delegated to trusted business partners, the more territory coverage, and the more budget attainment. When working with my sales teams, the number of partners I suggest is five. And, a seller can manage a trusted stable of five business partners where each of the business partner’s reps can manage five concurrent campaigns.

Scale in a seller’s income comes from leading multiples of sales campaigns by unlocking the use of ecosystem in a sales territory.

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PART II

Win Bigger: Meeting and Exceeding Targets

“Only 53% of sales reps are meeting or exceeding their quota.”

– CSO INSIGHTS

Prepare Reps for Success

"The foundation for your success as a CRO is to remind yourself every day that customers aren't interest in your revenue"

TAMARA SCHENK
Research Director
CSO Insights

The foundation for your success as a CRO is to remind yourself every day that customers aren't interested in your revenue. Customers are only interested in getting their problems solved as fast as possible.

Here are four steps you can take to make sure you are solving and diagnosing your buyers' problems much better than your competitors:

STEP 1:

Focus on the customer's path. Map out your relevant customer paths and align your internal processes from marketing to sales to customer success and customer service dynamically. Only one-fifth of organizations do that, but they set themselves up for improved quota attainment by 8.9%.

STEP 2:

Develop customer-centric value messages that are tailored to a) your relevant buyer roles and b) the different phases of the customer's path. These practices can lead up to 11.8% improved win rates, but only one-quarter does them.

STEP 3:

Engage and equip your customer facing pros. Focusing on diagnosing and solving your buyers' problem requires practice, practice, and even more practice. Perfect practice to be precise. Regular role-plays and simulations are essential to get fluent in these conversations. And only fluency builds the necessary confidence.

STEP 4:

Ensure that your managers coach accordingly. Providing the right messages and equipping your team to act accordingly only creates sustainable results if your managers drive adoption and reinforcement with ongoing, regular, excellent coaching sessions.

“It does no good, and wastes precious company capital, to hire a ton of promising new reps and then not invest in the resources, frameworks, training, and development for them to succeed.”

SAM JACOBS
Founder
Revenue Collective

Scale Sales Rep Onboarding

I’ve led go-to-market teams at a number of different high-growth companies over the last 17 years. One thing becomes clear time and time again: effective onboarding and enablement is absolutely critical to a team’s success.

It does no good, and wastes precious company capital, to hire a ton of promising new reps and then not invest in the resources, frameworks, training, and development for them to succeed. Enablement is simply a must-have. What that means in practice is not just an emphasis on the company itself.

In fact, there are three pillars all new reps need to understand to be effective:

- The company and the product
- The industry and customers
- The specific sales process and selling motion

Too many companies focus only on the first but all three are critical to building a high performing scalable sales organization.

Rely on Your Enablement Team

In partnership with chief sales officers, visionary sales enablement leaders will reallocate a portion of sales headcount to fund new tools to help their companies accelerate growth while bending the cost curve downward.

By weaving together best-in-class sales tools and improving inefficient processes, sales enablement professionals will relieve sellers from the day-to-day minutiae, giving them more time to build and deepen relationships, deliver meaningful insights, and negotiate and close deals.

"By weaving together best-in-class sales tools and improving inefficient proceses, sales enablement professionals will relieve sellers from the day-to-day minutiae."

The Future Of Sales Enablement Is The C-Suite, April 2019, Forrester,
by Principal Analyst
MARY SHEA

> **"The often-recognized truth is, our sellers are selling as much as time allows."**

CHRISTOPHER KINGMAN
Director of International Enablement
TransUnion

Give Reps More Time to Sell

Being a CRO can't be an easy job. Responsible for all revenue? Probably not a walk in the park. So when a CRO faces challenges in recognizing their goals, it may not be obvious where to turn to help solve those problems. Enter sales enablement.

When chasing revenue, it's easy to give the sweeping direction of "sell more." But frequently that is interpreted as "find more business." The oftenrecognized truth is, our sellers are selling as much as time allows.

Often process, admin, and other nonsales generating activities diminish our seller's capacity to actually sell. **By implementing a proper sales enablement function, you could begin to identify gaps in the process, realign roles and process to reduce administrative burden on sellers, and streamline the CRM to not only be less of a distraction for sellers, but align other functions to drive the process.** As I like to say, enablement can help focus on the two key themes every CRO should be concerned with, the "ease of selling" and the "ease of buying".

A CRO doesn't need to invest in a massive platform and hire a team of 5 to do this work justice. Sales enablement is about the outcome, driving and enabling sales. This means that although it may report to a sales leader, this role is agnostic to whom it interacts with and what challenges they seek to solve.

Prioritize Team Focus to Increase Wins

"Sellers want to crush quota. It's how the're wired. Therefore it's about keeping individuals motivated to go further and leveling-up the team."

TONY BENVENUTO
VP West, Enterprise & Commercial Sales
Seismic

I think about two key factors around empowering my sellers and ensuring they are focused on the right things to hit and exceed targets: **prioritization and competitive culture!** We will always go through ups and downs in sales, however, ensuring sellers are focused on and invested in the greater team goal helps drive the right collaborative and competitive juices.

I want my team pulling together in the same direction, having each other's back and covering one another where one might be light. I have a reputation for creating a very competitive but FUN team environment — an empowered team within a "win for each other" culture.

Sellers want to crush quota. It's how they're wired. Therefore it's about keeping individuals motivated to go further and leveling-up the team to previously unattained goals. And if one of my reps is battling for the top company spot (as usual) the collaborative and competitive approach keeps them locked in. High tide raises all boats.

From a customer and deal perspective, always having a "host-based mentality" when engaging with your customers and continuously driving a sense of urgency aligned to your close plans are key. These are and always should be top priorities that will help drive the actions to get deals across the line.

Drive Seller Capability

"...no two salespeople go through training the same way nor do two customers engage with the same content alike."

GOPKIRAN RAO
Chief Strategy and Marketing Officer
Mindtickle

Being a salesperson for a living is one of the most fulfilling, yet most challenging professions in the world. Now take 'selling' and multiply it by a factor of 4 - selling to engage (aka the first transaction), selling to retain (aka keeping the customer), selling expanded value (aka upsell or crosssell), and finally selling internally (aka rallying the support teams) to provide the service that a customer expects and deserves.

How does a CRO go from asking, "How much have you sold?" and "How much are you going to sell to meet quota?" to, "Are you capable of selling?". We believe the first thing to do is to frame the outcome.

While sales productivity and quota achievement are necessary measurements, it's just as important to consider the leading indicators of sales capability:

- **How knowledgeable are my reps around our products and solutions?**
- **Have they practiced their pitch? Are they certified on the skills and content?**
- **How consistently are they able to exhibit the winning behaviors in the field?**

All too often, companies and executives assume that standardization and process are enough to drive enablement at scale. The problem is that no two salespeople go through training the same way nor do two customers engage with the same content alike. With answers to these questions and others, you can start to assess seller capability and blueprint an approach that is part change management and part technology automation to improve sales enablement and readiness.

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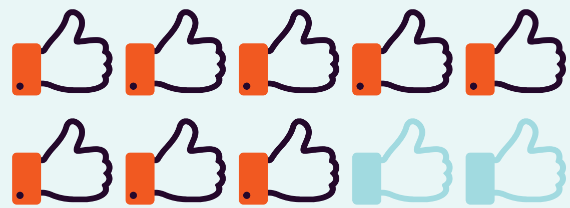
PART III

Win Faster: Accelerating Time to Close



“85% of B2B decision-makers agree that buyers are more likely to dismiss a seller if they don’t receive relevant and tailored information in the first interaction.”

– FORRESTER
The State of Enterprise Sales Enablement, 2019

Create an Actionable Buyer Journey

"The reality is the buyer journey for a given product or service is made up of hundreds, if not thousands of touch points online, offline and in-between."

JOSH WAGNER
Enterprise Account Executive
LeadMD

The landscape of sales and marketing is shifting. Intense focus on the buyer and customer centricity are positive trends that require a deliberate plan in order to execute, a plan focused on the buyer journey.

The reality is the buyer journey for a given product or service is made up of hundreds, if not thousands of touch points online, offline and in-between.

Many of them not related to a specific product or service initially. The fundamentals of creating an actionable buyer journey are predicated on three key areas:

- **What problem(s) do you solve?** Clear definitions here allow you to put yourself in your customer's shoes providing you with the ability to help them articulate and validate their problem in early stages and identify triggers in later stages to move them along.
- **Your Total Addressable Market (TAM) & Ideal Customer Profile (ICP).** Drawing these clear lines create focus and is a foundational building block for all sales and marketing efforts.
- **Your Buyer Personas.** Who are the people who have these problems? How do they think, where do they look for answers and how can we meet them on their terms throughout the process?

These fundamental elements of a go-to-market strategy are critical to defining a buyer journey and in turning a seemingly random scatter plot of events into a deliberate movement of the right people down the right path based on the identification of key behaviors and triggers.

Personalize the Journey for Better Results

"Getting your prospect to a commitment to change is the most important part and the hardest part of the buying journey."

MATT HEINZ
President
Heinz Marketing

It's been said that you can't change when your prospect is ready to buy. The conditions required both internally and externally for them to commit to change (and subsequently commit to your solution) are beyond your control.

Mostly true. One thing you can impact is how well your prospect understands the problem, understands the cost and opportunity cost of not changing, and therefore feels urgency to make a change towards a different, better outcome.

This understanding, rooted in a reframe of a problem they did or didn't know existed, is a part of the buying journey we too often forget. If your buying journey begins with a pre-existing understanding of the problem, you need to go back further. Getting your prospect to a commitment to change is the most important part and the hardest part of the buying journey.

Understanding your prospect's full buying journey works only if you do it in macro and micro. **Build a buying journey for your target personas, but don't forget to personalize that story for each individual prospect.** Each company is unique – their market opportunity, their competition, their internal culture, etc.

A generalized buying journey will only get you so far. Personalize the story with a focus on creating understanding and urgency. That's how you can increase velocity and conversion, at scale.

Maximize Buyer Interactions

If you wait to personalize a prospect's experience until they have interacted with sales, you've waited too long.

Today's customers expect personalized interactions starting the moment they engage with your brand. In fact, **Salesforce reports that 70% of customers say connected processes—such as seamless handoffs or contextualized engagement—are imperative to winning their business.**

So it's no surprise that the everelusive dream of sales and marketing alignment has grown more pressing than ever. After all, to facilitate exceptional buyer enablement downstream, sales must be able to effectively continue and deepen the conversation initiated by marketing.

This means a rep must understand the full digital footprint of every prospect—where they've been, what they've interacted with, and the conclusions we can draw from their behavior—and also have the power to act on it.

How? With an arsenal of content—the building blocks of digital interaction— that is on-message, on-brand, and contextualized across key personas, buying stages, geographies, and more.

Armed with compelling, consistent content, reps can build trust, further meaningful engagement, and clearly differentiate their solution from the competition.

"If you wait to personalize a prospect's experience until they interact with sales, you've waited too long."

RICHARD SCHEIG
CRO
Kapost

"Effective competitive intelligence should live in your entire go-to-market strategy and throughout the buyer journey."

RYAN MACDONALD
Competitive Intelligence Manager
Seismic

Leverage Competitive Intelligence

One of the most common, and often not discussed causes of a prolonged sales cycle is the presence of competition. Effectively handling competitive pressure is paramount to increasing sales velocity.

Where do most organizations fall short? **Most organizations are in a reactive, rather than proactive state of addressing competitive pressure.** Usually, competitive intel is actively collected and regularly made available to both sales and marketing (if you're not doing this, you should be), but rarely acted upon until the 11th hour.

The result? Buyers struggle to discern the difference between you and your competitors, and the deal not only gets delayed, but you end up in a pricing war and have to offer discounts in an attempt to win the deal.

Effective competitive intelligence should live in your entire go-to-market strategy and throughout the buyer journey. Positioning your offering in a way that calls out your competitors' weaknesses, as well as negates their strengths, **from the moment your buyers begin educating themselves on your offering**, will allow you to continuously lead with strength rather than react with defensiveness.

Future-Proof Your Organization

“Sales technology offers a great opportunity to actively disrupt your competition and potentially future-proof your company.”

DAN CILLEY
Co-Founder
Vendor Neutral

In today’s ever-evolving economy, CROs are faced with the consistent barrage of information stressing a duel focus on innovation and execution in an attempt to future proof their organization’s ability to manage existing customers and compete effectively. Retaining a competitive advantage is not an easy task. You must constantly monitor, evaluate, and modify your strategies, all of which are dependent on access to timely and accurate business data.

Sales technology offers a great opportunity to actively disrupt your competition and potentially futureproof your company. According to KPMG, **“eighty-nine percent (89%) of senior leadership feels personally responsible for leading technology strategies within their organization”.**

The technologies showing the greatest promise include automation, artificial intelligence, and machine learning. It has been my experience that automation or RPA (Robotic Process Automation) provides quality, consistency, and an ability to save time by ensuring the highest levels of accuracy.

More and more, **artificial intelligence is impacting the decision-making process at all levels within an organization, especially within senior leadership.** CROs now have the knowledge and feel more confident surrounding the decisions being driven by AI, allowing for an increased willingness to adopt resources leveraging this technology.

Focus on Delivering Insights

"[Modern buyers] want relevant business insights to help them make the best decisions about resolving their business issue."

JEFF DAVIS
Founder & CEO
JD2 Consulting Group

CROs can help their sales and marketing teams shorten sales cycles by empowering them to become strategic business advisors to their target buyers.

Modern buyers want sellers to help them accomplish four key objectives:

- Clarify their true business issue
- Identify potential solutions to address the problems
- Select the best criteria to fit their unique business
- Empower stakeholders to reach a final consensus to purchase

This can only be done when both the sales and marketing teams intimately understand the buyer's needs and can provide them with a personalized experience that speaks to these unique needs. Modern buyers no longer want to hear about the features and benefits of your product/service – they can find all that on the web. They want relevant business insights to help them make the best decisions about resolving their business issue.

CROs can assist their teams in being able to deliver these types of insights and personalized experiences by ensuring that their teams are consistently targeting the "best" accounts. "Best" accounts can be defined as those target accounts that have shown (through historical sales data and qualitative feedback) to produce the highest ROI with the least amount of effort from sales or marketing. This laser focused approach allows sales and marketing to really learn the explicit and implicit needs of the buyer.

A CRO's Job Is Never Complete.

There will always be existing revenue streams to optimize, new revenue opportunities to explore and quotas to exceed. Now that you've read through our Playbook, ask yourself the following questions:

- **How are your revenue teams getting the upper hand in changing sales cycles?**
- **What strategies do your teams currently have in place to ensure that sales content and conversations are relevant to buyers' needs?**
- **What tactics are you using today to increase sales performance? Have you thought about how seller inefficiency could impact growth?**

In the age of the modern buyer, a sales enablement solution is an essential tool for successful business selling. According to Forrester, there is a direct correlation between an organization's sales enablement maturity and their ability to meet and exceed revenue goals.[2]

The most successful CROs will not only realize that the key to maximizing revenue growth is driving better alignment between all revenue-related functions, but also understand the importance of sales enablement, specifically a sales enablement solution in helping bridge alignment gaps and increase team efficiency.

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About Seismic

Seismic is the global leader in enablement, helping organizations engage customers, enable teams, and ignite revenue growth. The Seismic Enablement Cloud™ is the most powerful, unified enablement platform that equips customer-facing teams with the right skills, content, tools, and insights to grow and win. From the world's largest enterprises to startups and small businesses, more than 2,000 organizations around the globe trust Seismic for their enablement needs. Seismic is headquartered in San Diego with offices across North America, Europe, and Australia.

To learn more, visit **Seismic.com** and follow us on **LinkedIn**, **Twitter** and **Instagram**.

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