UWEBC
BEST PRACTICE REPORT

How to Implement a Sales Process and Make It Stick

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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Why a sales process?

In almost every sales organization there are top performers. These are the people who consistently meet quotas, rack up wins, and pull in revenue. Unfortunately, despite their managers' best efforts, not all sellers are like this. What's needed is a way to replicate how these top performers achieve. A defined, systematic, repeatable, and measureable way to sell that turns the often perceived "art of selling" into more of a "selling science." The answer? A sales process!

Most top performers follow a relatively consistent methodology—whether or not it's expressly formalized. Adopting a defined sales process in your organization helps your sellers know what to do, how to do it, and when to do it. A good sales process helps guide sellers through the most effective path of a sales cycle, showing them the tools and steps needed to maximize the chance of a successful close.

What's more, the benefits of a sales process are not limited to the sales force; sales managers benefit as well. A sales process enables performance monitoring and progress tracking. A summary of these benefits and more is outlined below.

THE BENEFITS OF A SALES PROCESS

To sellers

- Increase productivity.
- Achieve higher percentage of met quotas.
- Increase wins.
- Obtain more leads.
- Standardize customer interactions.
- Shorten sales cycle length.

To management

- Improve visibility to the sales pipeline.
- Obtain measureable sales metrics.
- Forecast revenue more accurately.
- Improve alignment with marketing.
- Enable scaling of successful revenue generation practices.
- Increase deals in the sales pipeline.
- Increase the size of wins.
- Shorten sales-cycle length.

When describing their sales processes, companies are all over the map.

According to a 2008 survey by CSO Insights, corporate sales processes range from random, ad hoc practices entirely dependent on individual abilities to highly sophisticated, dynamic sales methodologies that wed individual experience and skill with up-to-date communications and planning technologies. Unfortunately, the random side of the range is more densely populated. 60% of companies report that they have not implemented any kind of formal sales process *(figure 1)*.

This despite the fact that 82% of companies report improved performance when they implement a formal sales process—one-third say significantly improved *(figure 2)*. Plus, critical metrics—such as wins, percent of reps achieving quota, forecast accuracy, and salesforce turnover— show improvement as a company's sales process becomes more systematic *(figure 3)*.

Not *why,* but *how*

Professional sales organizations without a formal approach to their sales efforts report that the question isn't *why* as much as *how*. Wanting to implement an effective sales process is one thing. Knowing how to get started and "making it stick" is another.
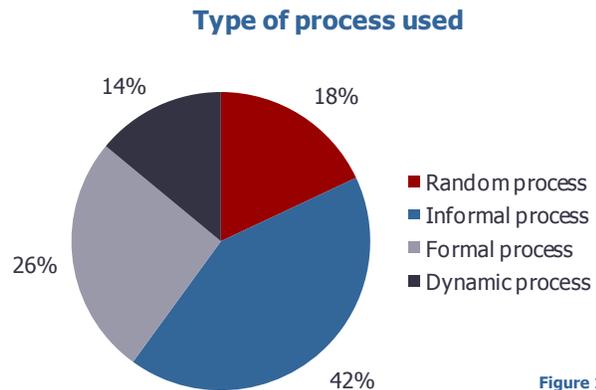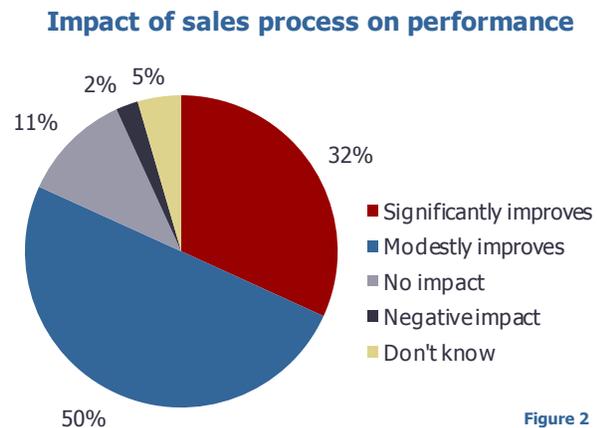
Type of process used

- Random process
- Informal process
- Formal process
- Dynamic process

18%
42%
26%
14%

Figure 1

Impact of sales process on performance

- Significantly improves
- Modestly improves
- No impact
- Negative impact
- Don't know

32%
50%
11%
2%
5%

Figure 2

Comparing process-type effectiveness
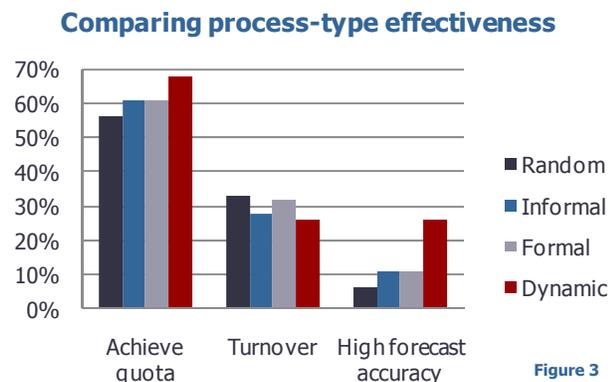

- Random
- Informal
- Formal
- Dynamic

Figure 3

Source for all charts: 2008 CSO INSIGHTS survey