How salespeople can best approach their first 100 days in position

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What your new hire does in their first 100 days will determine their future success or failure.

This guide is for sales managers and sales directors to help them steer newly appointed senior sales people through this crucial period.

It is designed to help maximize their chances of success when selling complex, high-value solutions for which sales cycles can take up to nine months.

They must understand they need clear parameters from the start. They will be unable to turn back the clock…

Use this guide together with your new start/s, as a point of reference and a checklist with which to help them create an action plan which should be mapped out within their first week.

NB this white paper has been written specifically in the context of salespeople assuming high value / big ticket sales roles. These being the kind of sales roles we specialise in recruiting into, some of the recommendations made in this white paper may be less applicable to other types of sales role.

Top 10 do's and don'ts

Do clearly discuss and outline what your success criteria are for the 101st day, and then probably divide by 2 and you have something realistic.

The boss and new hire need to be on the same page. If you ask a hirer what is expected of the new hire, and ask the hire the same question – you will quite likely get two differing answers. Determine the three most important actions in order of priority and then the next seven.

Do make sure your hire learns the company elevator pitch and key value proposition topics, not as scripts, and TEST them. With peers, different target roles, and with suspects /prospects where it doesn't matter if your new hire isn't polished yet. He or she needs to become competent as quickly as possible. He or she needs to learn the war stories (customer successes and failed campaigns) and know them well as if they were his or her own.

Do role play with your new hire. Drill down into key customer issues, proposition features, benefits ROI, case studies.... can the salesperson substantiate at a detailed level? How many degree of detail can your salesperson talk about, in key areas before he or she gets to "I don't know"?

Do get them to meet, face-to-face with all the people within your company and partner network with whom you may work on a deal. Strong internal personal relationships are a key differentiator of the successful people.

Don't forget to capture selection process insight. During the interview and reference checking process, did you pick up on any strengths and shortcomings regarding your new hire – which you need to address or build into the plan in order to maximise chances of success.

Don't delay getting in front of prospects because your new hire is not yet at 100%. Don't go too soon, but don't leave it too long either (which is a common fault). All to often, new hires will not have attended customer meetings inside the first 3 months.

Most hiring managers will want the hire in front of customers inside 2 weeks.

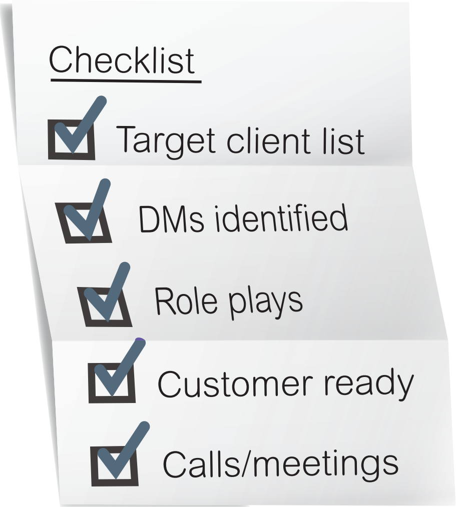
If a sales cycle takes 3-6 months, and your seller does not get out in front of customers for 3 months, then he or she will not sell anything for 6-9 months.

Don't forget to properly update social network profiles and remove any traces of previous employer's messaging. Consider starting a new Twitter account or delete the old messaging.

Do get them to identify how they create a meaningful set of opportunities. Few salespeople fail because of too little opportunity. See that the new hire should stacks the odds in their favour by building a broad pipeline. This is urgent, and the earlier it's done the better. Many companies work on a 5 x 1 coverage.

Do try to give your new hire a live opportunity - this will give you the chance to see what the hire is like in action when engaged into a sales cycle. And gives the employer and employee the opportunity to get a deeper feel for one another.

Don't get distracted by back office process and systems are secondary – customer-facing time is key. Doing your expenses is not going to hit your target.



New start plan checklist

1. Capture selection process insight

During the interview and reference checking process, did you pick up on any strengths and shortcomings regarding your new hire – which you need to address or build into the plan in order to maximise chances of success.

2. Achieve clarity around expectations

Different types of sales jobs will present unique challenges. However, usually there will be a target and a timescale.

Problems will arise if this target is missed, particularly if there has been a change in circumstances.

If a person has performed their job well they will probably be safe even if results have not yet been forthcoming. Otherwise they may be shown the door.

It's always best to map out and agree specific goals with a new hire at the start. Goals and expectations are often open to misinterpretation.

Cadence and Consistency Are Key To Making Any Sales Team Successful

Call rates, numbers of meetings, account coverage up, down and across decision makers and influencers, ROI statements, proposals submitted, demonstrations…

Few salespeople fail because of too little opportunity

See that the new hire stacks the odds in their favour by building a broad pipeline. This is urgent, and the earlier it's done the better. Get them to identify how they create this depth of opportunity. Many companies work on a 5 x 1 coverage.

What do the numbers and ratios look like in order for them to achieve target?

Target, average order values, typical deal cycles, and number of deals required to hit goal. They should consider their coverage or bid to win ratio and numbers of customer touches such as calls, emails or meetings.

$$\text{Target} / \text{AOV} = V \times (W/Y) = X$$

3. Get them to identify what will make or break success

What will be the most challenging aspect of the job, and which will determine success or failure?

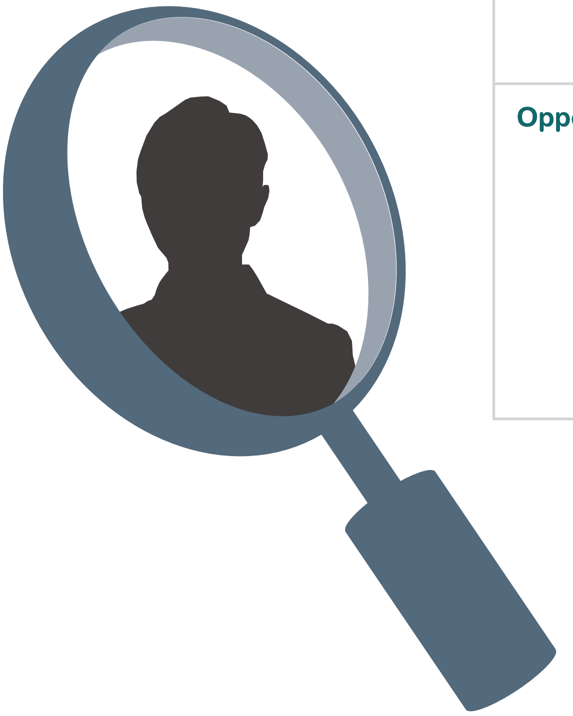
If there is a winning formula they should repeat it. They shouldn't repeat things which have resulted in failure.

If you identify an area where your salesperson needs support, improvement or in which a change or intervention should be made, address this now. When faced with a problem lean in early and solve it before it gets bigger.

Show the new hire how to identify:

- Who are the most successful salespeople in the team and why?
- Which customer types have seen the most value from their solutions?
- What have been the compelling events which have brought about sales?
- What are the reasons customers have not gone ahead?
- If they have not done so already, they should now consider their ratios.

Strengths	**Weaknesses**
Opportunities	**Threats**



4. Customer ready

It's unlikely they will get a second chance to approach a key phone call or meeting.

Customers want added value, transformation and ideally to be ahead of the game. Standards, customer expectations and the competition are subject to constant progression. This means your salesperson needs to continuously update and increase their knowledge and insight.

They have got to keep raising their game and now is the best time to do it.

What worked in the past (even 2 years ago), may not necessarily work now.

They have to get their ducks to line up, role play and rehearse basics to develop best practice for critical events:

Ask the new hire to break these activities into components, prioritise and put them into a timescale. Get them to present back to you or the sales team.

Go back to basics

They should consider the needs and issues of the marketplace they are selling into. What are the driving factors now and downstream?

What's their value proposition?

They should consider the value and benefits they are bringing to the marketplace, and how the magnitude these may be calculated. They need to break these topics into sections and sub sections, and to build knowledge and familiarity with the value proposition from every angle.

What's the business case? What would an ROI look like and why, and what evidence is there to support this?

Annual reports for PLCs should give a high level strategic insight into the issues they face and their objectives.

They need to develop their industry knowledge

- What are the driving factors now and downstream?
- Consider "A day in the life of a customer"
- What pressing issues face the customer?

They should research their particular customers.

They should research their prospects thoroughly before calling and make sure they know what to ask to make their prospect think and to get the information they need.

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Ask them to map out the sales cycle

Sales cycles are unlikely to be exactly the same, but most will have been subject to a number of events. The new hire should to see how this plays out in reality and consult with their boss, peers and people in other departments.

Degrees of detail

When you drill down can the salesperson substantiate at a detailed level? How many degree of detail can your salesperson talk about, in key areas before he or she gets to "I don't know"?

And they should be able to substantiate with facts and figures as appropriate. Without which statements will be worthless. Things such as: percentages, amounts, references, timeframes, how, who, what, why, where, when…..

People in your company, in your customers and business partners will include your new sales hire more if he or she is seen as an expert in your field

If they have depth to their knowledge they are more likely to be brought into selling opportunities as a subject matter expert – this may be industry or product knowledge, or perhaps both.

5. Build their toolkit

It's fundamental they understand the importance of personalizing questions and sales messages to specific customer types. Have them prepare in advance templates for:

- Call scripts, elevator pitches, power messaging
- Email and LinkedIn message templates, and social media activity.
- A question bank. Including high impact, tough thought provoking questions. What case studies and ROI can they offer?
- Demonstrations of the product.
- Price list, proposal / demo templates.

Develop better listing skills

When meeting existing customers, the new hire should listen hard and avoid jumping to conclusions. These customers will probably know more about their line of business than your hire, and may know more than the new hire about your company too. The customer may have historical complaints or remember broken promises. Both represent an opportunity to establish a new relationship.

Understand competitive edges

They will be more successful if they understand who their competition are, and what are their strengths and weaknesses.

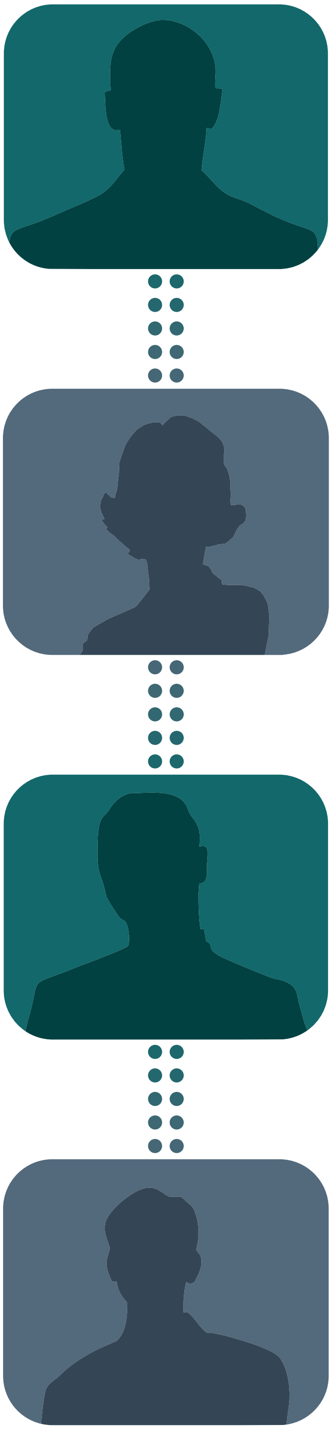
They should ask people who have worked for the competition as well as their colleagues. The answers are not always what they might expect.

Bring the team in on the act

Get others from the sales team to work with them on role plays and dummy presentations which are one of the best ways to learn.

6. Develop and maintain a sense of urgency

This applies to creating/ generating selling opportunities and moving them through the sales cycle. Complex sales involve long selling cycles. The salesperson needs either to be doing the numbers or at minimum must be seen to be taking the right initiatives. This is particularly important for the new hire who needs to be ahead of the game, taking the initiative and acting sooner rather than later.



7. Make networking and personal branding a priority

In a large, complex and heavily matrixed employer company "success is all about building a network". This also applies when selling into large complex organisations.

- Whilst most large firms will have boot-camps and 30/60/90 day plans – they won't tell the new hire how to work in the company.
- Give them an organisation chart and importantly a list of the most relevant contacts. Names, function and what they would "go to" them for.
- Remote workers, in the start-up period, would benefit from going into the office more often.
- Best to align themselves with the in-crowd, and avoid over exposure to the wrong people.
- Go out of your way to show interest in others ~ in sales, pre sales and marketing teams there's lots of egos, stroke them and you'll integrate better.
- No one will ask you if you want help if you do not ask. Be pro-active.
- In a small company the new hire may need to find their own way without an explicit brief.

In a smaller employer company they will need to be seen to be making an impact.

Anyone new to selling into large companies will need to develop networking skills to cover powerbases, influencers, decision makers and cultures so they understand the politics of the customer.

Many sales cycles take upwards of 6-9 months, so in a start-up period the new hire may have sold nothing or very little and be at risk if their immediate manager leaves, or there's a review or re-organization.

Ideally, the new hire should therefore build his or her network upwards, across and downwards in the company – so that in the event of a boss leaving, other stakeholders are aware of them and ideally that they are doing the right things to bring about success.

There are two elements to first 100 days, the company and the new hire, and it's important to join them together. Culture will play an important part in this.

The new hire will need the guidance and support of others to find their way through the intricacies of their new environment. As a salesperson they will need to go from being a "follower" to being a "leader".

Social Selling

- Blog
- Retweet
- Recommend
- Tag
- Like
- Share
- Status Update

8. Socially connected

If the company has specific guidelines, they should get acquainted with them and operate within them.

Does your new hire's online profile present anything which may restrict their success – for example on their Facebook page, what does a google search show up. Most important is their LinkedIn profile – does it represent them and your company properly?

Establish ground rules – what's good behaviour vs unacceptable.

What tools will they use, how will they use them and how familiar are they with them? LinkedIn, Navigator, InsideView, Twitter, Facebook, Instagram…..

Determine when and how to use social media channels for research and to develop a better customer understanding.

Comments their customers make on social media may give you insight as to their issues, psyche, company culture and what they are doing.

Tune into hobbies and interests to help build relationships.

If the company has a marketing dept the new hire may need to do little on social media. A smaller company may require some DIY, in which case, they'll need to pro-up their skills.

Today's customer doesn't buy from a small number of touches – the hire has to build a relationship over time through many touchpoints.

And with few exceptions social media will be a critical part of this.

Leverage it but don't get lost in it

9. Avoid getting drowned by noise

If you work in a mid or large sized company – your new hire, should avoid spending an excessive amount of time on internal emails, process or paperwork – their job is to sell and they should make sure they are progressing on sales led activities.

If they properly record and update their sales activity in your CRM system, you and they will be less subject to intervention i.e. people at the top will have less need to say what's going on, progress has been made, what's happening next etc

10. Reward the journey not just the destination

The road from start up to winning deals and proving themselves will be difficult for even the best salespeople. Reward the journey not just the destination with things like thank you, acknowledgements, recognition and payment based MBOs. If you have no budget for treats, simple recognition that specific progress has been made will be just as good.

SMART Specific I Measurable I Attainable I Relevant I Time bound

Set smart goals.

These could be objectives such as: identifying target customers in a market sector, mapping these out, identifying decision makers, putting in place a mini marketing plan, presenting a case study, customer scenario, undertaking a role play or giving a presentation. And make them time bound.