



The business improvement people

The SalesPulse™

*The Good, the Bad and the
Ugly Uses of Sales People's
Time*

A Call to Action Paper from The SalesPulse™

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The objective of this paper is to cause the reader to examine the ways in which their sales people work, with a view to reducing work that does not directly add value to the process of winning business. It identifies the tasks that sales people undertake and we have used our extensive experience to give Koru's view on each of them. We know that you will not necessarily agree with all of them, and would welcome your [comments](#). Additionally we would not expect anyone to implement all of them. However, we would ask you to carefully consider the benefits of increasing your sales capacity by anything up to 50% at little or no additional cost.

Key to reading this guide:

- Activities identified in red are bad uses of time
- Activities identified in green are good uses of time
- Activities identified in brown should be good uses of time but implementation often means they are in fact bad uses of time

Activity	Koru Comment
Account planning	Understanding how you are going to develop your most important customers and the contribution they are going to make can only be a good use of time.
Customer research	Knowing your customers' business is a fundamental part of the account planning process. You can't serve or partner with them if you don't understand what they do.
Forecast reviews	A sales manager who understands that their job is to achieve their budget with the resources at their disposal, will adopt the right behaviours and actions and will not need forecast reviews. Internally focused sales managers with numbers myopia will always hold (many) forecast reviews.
Campaign/sales planning	A good sales plan serves many purposes. It identifies what a sales person needs to do to win a qualified sale's opportunity. It serves as a communications vehicle

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	and task register to anyone involved in a particular campaign, and it is the authoritative voice on progress.
Customer meetings	Every customer meeting is an opportunity to move a business case forward. However, lack of call planning by sales people often results in little or no progress being made. This extends timescales and results in poor use of time. To make the most of customer meetings everyone should adopt the 5 Ps of selling: "Perfect Planning Prevents Poor Performance". The customer's time is valuable to them; don't waste it.
Customer support	Every sales person has a responsibility for customer satisfaction. This does not mean that they have to do day to day support; this is the responsibility of the services organisation which must have customer focused objectives, as opposed to or as well as internally focused ones.
Call planning and reporting	For the planning side see customer meetings above. Call reporting is a call to action for the sales person and anyone else who needs to do something as a result of the call. The call report can also act as a communications tool informing all who need to know the status of a sales campaign.
Bid/Risk/Ad hoc reviews	When business is tough the amount of reviews increase. This is particularly the case in larger companies. These really do waste huge amounts of time; they are generally vehicles of mistrust as they often cover the same ground and undermine the motivation of all concerned. If you don't trust your sales teams then change them.
Lead follow up	"Dear Sales Manager, here are the 357 leads we collected at the trade show last week". Has anyone qualified these at even the most basic level? Generally the

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	answer is no. The impact is tons of unproductive time. On the other hand if which ever department could provide the sales manager with sales ready leads then he or she would be eternally grateful.
Rigorous opportunity qualification	Chasing crocks of gold at the end of rainbows is the most often self-inflicted waste of sales time. Qualification is part of an investment process that should help a sales person decide whether they should invest theirs and their company's resources in a sales campaign. If they looked at it from a personal perspective would they knowingly waste their time and money on an investment that showed no return?
Order processing and management	The average all inclusive cost of a sales person is about £50,000. What is the cost of an administrator? Probably a half of that. It is more cost and sales effective to have an administrator do this job.
Customer Relationship Management (CRM) System management	If you have one, what is the objective of your CRM system? If it is there to help people sell more, sell better and sell faster, keeping it up to date will be a good use of sales time. If it's primary function is to monitor the sales pipeline it will not get the attention that management desire. If the real basics of selling i.e. account, campaign and call planning and reporting are embedded in the business then your CRM system will have a sound foundation for everyone concerned with customers.
Training courses	Sales training is a critical element in the development of professional sellers. However much of the investment in sales training is wasted because there is little or no reinforcement through coaching. If you are investing in training ensure that

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	your sales managers are present so that they can embed the learning. This approach will deliver a good return on your sales training investment.
Coaching/being coached	See above. The only real resource a sales manager has is their people. If they are not developed the business won't be developed.
Writing proposals	Writing proposals for well qualified prospects is obviously a good use of sales time. For poorly qualified prospects it just adds to the waste.
Writing sales collateral	This is not a sales function! It belongs in marketing or development. The main reason sales people have to write collateral is because the people who write the originals are too far removed from their target customers. Customers are not interested in facilities or features they are interested in benefits and value.
Chasing outcomes of customer meetings attended by other people	Managers, consultants, service deliverers, support staff and project managers all make customer visits. Like sales people they too should plan their calls and report on them. Your system, be it CRM or a just a local database is much devalued if this information is missing and your sales people exposed if they are in the dark.
Progress chasing	We understand that sales people have a key role in delivering customer satisfaction. Customer focused organisations ensure that the customer gets what they have ordered when they need it. Sales people should not have to chase goods and services deliveries but things do go wrong. A sales person needs to know before the event if there's a problem, they can manage it then. Five minutes after the customer has told them is too late.

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Chasing price authorisations	Even the best people need to sometimes need to drop their prices, or have their proposed pricing validated, and particularly in larger companies this can be very time consuming for sales people. This is the case as sales people are generally seen as being untrustworthy. This is demotivating for professional sales people who should be given some degree of empowerment and save time for them and all the people who are involved in pricing decisions.
Sales Meetings	These are a great opportunity for sales teams to celebrate, to learn, to hear customers views on their business but so often end up as another forecast review. The <u>SalesPulse™ Issue 64</u> describes how you can make these that events people want to attend.
Customer presentations	Presentations are used, among other things for updating customers and prospects on your offerings and in closing orders. The former is normal good sales practice and is a good use of sales time. The latter is, if the prospect is well qualified, if not it is a waste.
Building customer relationships	Business relationships are a fundamental part of the sales process. However, it is vital to build and maintain the right relationships. Each target should be the subject of a contact plan and should have assigned objectives from both an account management and specific sales opportunity perspective.
Receivables chasing	Organisations do not pay their bills for a number of reasons and it is the accounts receivable department who should chase payment. If the reason is because of a customer satisfaction issue the sales person must lead the resolution process.
Travelling	There is no doubt that travelling is a waste of time and incurs a degree of

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	danger, but you have got to see the customer some time. Or do you? We know of one company that has a truly global customer base to which they sell a non-trivial business solution over the internet. The sales people have not met at least 70% of their customers face to face. This is not to say that all businesses can operate this way, rather it is to provoke debate on how travelling can be reduced.
Collecting competitor information	When developing a new product or service or enhancing an existing one it's competitive poisoning has to be established. This means that the developer/marketer has to understand the competitors and their offerings. Sure the sales people can help but it is not their role to have to collect the information. Their role is to use the information to sell your offerings with as little competitive interference as possible.

If you would like to discuss this further or understand how Koru can help you improve your sales performance please [contact us](#).

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