How to Build an
Activity-Based Sales Strategy

16 Strategic Steps
for more ROI from your
sales team & technology

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About LevelEleven

LevelEleven is a sales activity management system that accelerates the return on your investment in Salesforce and your sales team. Personalized scorecards allow VP's of Sales to engage salespeople in the behaviors that matter and build a culture of performance. Through a metrics-driven approach, modern sales leaders unlock maximum revenue potential for immediate ROI.

learn more here

The old school sales manager is extinct.

Or he will be soon...

WHY? Because that guy only managed his team around results - revenue, wins, deals closed, new logos, whichever term your sales team prefers. Research tells us that business results like these can't be managed. They are out of your control. And trying to manage a sales team around something you can't control is not only illogical; it's a fast track to failure.

That's not to say that revenue isn't important. Revenue is the main measure for a company's overall well-being. Or, as Jason Jordan writes in "Cracking the Sales Management Code":

> *Public companies are measured by it, CEOs' egos are fueled by it, chief sales officers are fired because of it, field salespeople are motivated by it and incentive compensation is driven by it.*

But revenue is a result of sales activities, and the modern sales leader understands the cause-and-effect relationship between the two. To achieve specific business results, you must perform certain activities.

This understanding has led to the rise of activity-based selling: managing sales reps around the activities that lead to sales.

This sales management strategy is effective for a number of reasons: Salespeople make better decisions on what activities to spend their time on; sales managers know what to manage; and you can actually manage sales performance.

Sales organizations are seeing tangible ROI with activity-based selling: Paycor saw a 45 percent increase in appointments per sales rep; Veritas experienced a 105 percent increase in proposals sent; and Ryerson increased monthly reactivated accounts by 60 percent.

But switching to an activity-based selling approach requires a few procedures, which we'll outline in this guide. The first is to define the key metrics for your organization.

PART 1:
Define Your Key Sales Metrics

1. Define your sales organization structure.

The activities you manage are specific to sales roles, so you'll need to define how and where each rep fits into the sales process.

Start by examining the makeup of your sales organization. Do you have multiple sales teams? How are they grouped? Some companies have sales development reps, account executives and customer success managers. Others have SMB, mid-market and enterprise sales reps. If your team is national, reps are probably divided by region. Map out how your sales organization looks from the front-line sales rep to the VP of sales.

2. Develop your own hypothesis.

What are the most important sales activities for your team? These will be specific actions that move prospects through the sales process.

Sales development leaders might consider calls, emails and meetings scheduled the most important behaviors for their teams. But key selling activities for account executives could be demos completed, ROI discussions and proposals sent.

Come up with a hypothesis of what you consider to be the critical activities for your reps.

3. Interview salespeople and managers.

Select a few top-performing sales reps and ask them what activities they think are most important to closing deals. Take notes. Often, the most successful sales reps don't even know what behaviors make them so successful; they just do them.

Talk with a few **middle- and bottom-performing reps**, too. Ask them the same question, but also which sales activities they see

top performers doing that they think make those top performers successful. Again, take notes.

Finally, interview your **sales managers**. Find out which activities they see successful reps performing and which activities they think the rest of the sales team should perform. And – you guessed it – take notes.

Compare the data from your interviews to your hypothesis. Do you notice alignment between what you, your managers and your reps think are the most important activities? If so, great. If not, don't panic - this just means you'll have to spend a little more time explaining why you feel those activities are most important.

Here are some examples of KPIs for different types of sales teams:

INSIDE SALES	LEAD GEN/ SALES DEV REPS	SMB OR MID- MARKET SALES	FIELD SALES
Prospect Conversations	Prospecting Email Responses	Calls / Dials	VP-Level Meetings
Discovery Calls	Talk time or Conversations	Prospect Conversations	New Biz Opp's Created
Proposals Sent	Lead Conversions	Opp's Moved to "Commit" Stage	Pitching Key Product Line(s)
Closed Deals	Qualified Sales Opp Created	Closed Deals	Sales Stage Advancement

Taking all the information you've collected into account, select 3-4 key performance indicators (KPIs) for each sales team. Many sales leaders opt for three leading indicators and one lagging indicator.

4. Assess CRM readiness.

The final step in defining your key sales metrics is to determine how you will track them. If you have a CRM system like Salesforce, make sure reps can easily log the activities you've selected to measure.

You'll need to track individual sales rep activity, as well as overall team performance, to make sure you stay on pace to hit sales goals. Sales dashboards alone won't work for this. The information needs to be in real time so you can monitor and course-correct. Consider **sales activity management software** to automate this.

Defining key sales metrics is only the first step in your journey to an activity-based selling strategy. Next up, you need to align your sales organization.

Metrics themselves don't automatically drive revenue.

When establishing your activity-based selling strategy, bring the metrics to life. Reps and sales managers need to understand that these metrics are a recipe to drive revenue and that following these instructions will lead them to success. Otherwise, metrics will simply be numbers on a wall.

That's why sales team alignment around metrics is critical. Here are four steps to create it.

PART 2:
Align Your Sales Organization

1. Get metric-buy-in from sales managers.

Frontline managers are your platoon sergeants. They lead your troops, so start by getting buy-in from them. Explain how you developed the metrics, and why managing sales reps around activities generates more ROI.

Demonstrate how the metrics are tracked in your CRM system and how to use them in weekly one-on-one sessions. Teach your sales managers how to coach around each of the activity metrics. Run role-playing exercises.

The key is to help your leaders understand how and why the metrics work. If they don't buy in, then neither will your reps.

2. Review metrics with salespeople.

Pull your team together. Ask them why they think metrics are important for a sales organization. If this is your team's first experience with leading indicators, they may only look at metrics as a way to arbitrate from the top down.

Explain the direct cause-and-effect relationship between

sales activities and revenue generated (i.e., to achieve specific results, reps must perform specific activities). This takes the mystery out of the sales process and shows that you are providing a clear path to success.

Present your metrics to the sales team. Ask for feedback. Even if they don't agree that these are the best ones to measure, they'll understand that you value their point of view.

3. Develop personalized scorecards for team members.

Provide each team member with a sales performance scorecard. Explain that their individual sales quota is the result you expect, these metrics are the way they will get there, and now you're trusting them to go execute.

The scorecard should measure how much of each key selling activity the rep has performed against their assigned goal. Here's an example of a simple scorecard setup:

Activity	Completed This Week	Total This Quarter	Goal	% to Goal	On Pace (Y/N)
Calls	35	81	80	101%	Y
Conversations	14	42	40	105%	Y
Opportunities Created	3	8	10	80%	N
Wins	2	3	4	75%	N

Click here or go to **page 14** for a printable scorecard to use every month.

Consider a sales activity management system, which automates logging, tracking and pacing in real time, so reps know exactly how they're performing at any given moment. Reinforce the idea that real-time activity metrics let you proactively manage reps so they can reach their maximum potential.

4. Display metrics, and review progress daily.

Broadcast each team's performance everywhere. Talk about your metrics in daily standups, weekly sales meetings and monthly win/loss analyses of closed deals. Display staff rankings or leaderboards to inspire motivation and sharing of best practices.

Remember that these metrics create a common language everyone can recognize. Your reps and managers understand the ultimate goal, the path to get there and how to communicate both. That's how you create sales team alignment.

Inevitably, there will be days when one sales rep performs too much of one activity and not enough of another - or even your entire team lets a metric fall behind - it's Murphy's Law.

But this is where a good sales leader can shine. If you utilize an activity-based selling strategy for your team, then there are four specific ways to course-correct.

Monitor And Course-Correct

1. Monitor metrics data daily.

Live and breathe your sales metrics. Treat them like the pulse of your pipeline – if the rhythm slows, so will revenue. **Review metrics at the beginning, middle and end of each day.** Ensure that all activity levels stay on (or ahead of) pace to hit quota. This isn't micromanaging your sales reps; it's proactively managing them.

> **THIS ISN'T MICROMANAGING YOUR SALES REPS; IT'S PROACTIVELY MANAGING THEM.**

Again, dashboards and reports won't be enough. You need to track and retrieve metric data in real time. A sales activity management system automates those processes for you. When metrics fall behind, you'll know immediately.

2. Inspire collaboration with team and peer rankings.

Don't keep sales metrics to yourself. Motivate sales reps with visibility into how they're performing individually and as a team. Transparency enables reps to perform corrective actions themselves.

When a rep sees a specific activity one or more of their peers is struggling with, she can share best practices to elevate the team as a whole. Conversely, another rep who's struggling with a metric might reach out to his top-performing peers for advice. Some sales organizations engineer team-based compensation for this very reason.

3. Use contests or incentives to rally the team when needed.

When a metric does fall behind, focus sales rep efforts on it. Host a team meeting to communicate that getting the metric back on pace is a priority.

Run a contest or quick spiff to unite the team around the metric. Offer an inexpensive incentive to the rep who contributes the most. Recognition, alone, can be a great motivator.

4. Run precision coaching sessions with objective data.

Use a targeted approach. Identify which reps need help. Dig into the data to see who hasn't completed enough of their activities.

Address the activity deficit in your weekly one-on-ones with reps. Are they not holding enough discovery meetings? It could be because they aren't qualifying enough leads.

Distinguish which sales activity the rep is struggling with and **coach them around that specific skill**. Continue to monitor their performance afterward to ensure the coaching was effective.

Course correction in real time doesn't just manage sales performance – it ensures you stick to your sales forecasts. These four strategies for activity-based selling will help.

Are you ready to scale sales? You must have the following:

- **DEFINED KEY SELLING ACTIVITIES AND METRICS.**
- **A SALES ORGANIZATION ALIGNED AROUND KEY METRICS.**
- **SALES MANAGERS WHO COURSE-CORRECT PERFORMANCE WITH METRICS.**

When you understand the cascading chain of activities that leads to sales for your team, scale sales by making them happen more often. More activities means more results.

Here's how to do just that with your activity-based selling strategy.

PART 4:
Grow From A Strong Foundation

1. Use performance data to uncover best practices.

Use your activity data to identify top performers for each activity in your sales process. Observe their specific behaviors for each and make notes. What are they doing better than the rest of your reps? Here are a few questions to ask about specific activities:

CALLS

- *Are they targeting ideal buyer personas?*
- *Are they using personalized outreach?*
- *Are they educating prospects about the market?*

MEETINGS / DEMOS

- *Are they identifying the key players in the buying process?*
- *Are they confirming alignment between the prospect's objectives and your company's offering?*
- *Do they focus on features and functionality or problems and solutions?*

CLOSE RATE

- *Are they sending relevant thought leadership content throughout the process?*
- *Do they review each proposal with sales managers before sending them to opportunities?*
- *Are they creating a timeline of success for prospects when they become customers?*

These questions build the foundation for a coaching strategy. Take the best practices from your top performers and turn them into repeatable processes for the rest of your team. You'll create a sales team of high performers.

2. Invest in sales stack technology.

Technology can also increase the activities that lead to sales. Decide which activities can be more efficient and find technology to enable that.

If calls are a critical activity in your sales process, consider a dialer solution like Intelliverse or Velocify. Want to have better demos? Clearslide and join.me are great solutions. Looking to make your proposal process more efficient? Try PandaDoc, Octiv or DocuSign.

Don't purchase software because it's the new shiny thing. There is no silver bullet for your sales process. Carefully evaluate each vendor, and run pilot programs to determine the ROI of each solution before you buy.

3. Hire sales managers who can lead modern sales organizations.

As Vantage Point Performance partners Jason Jordan and Michelle Vazzana state in "Cracking the Sales Management Code": **Sales managers are the most powerful point of leverage in any sales team.**

Hire sales managers who understand activity-based selling. They will reinforce it to your sales reps daily. They'll monitor your metrics, course-correct sales performance and coach your reps. Be picky. Again using the words of Jason and Michelle, choose modern sales leaders to be the platoon leaders carrying out your marching orders.
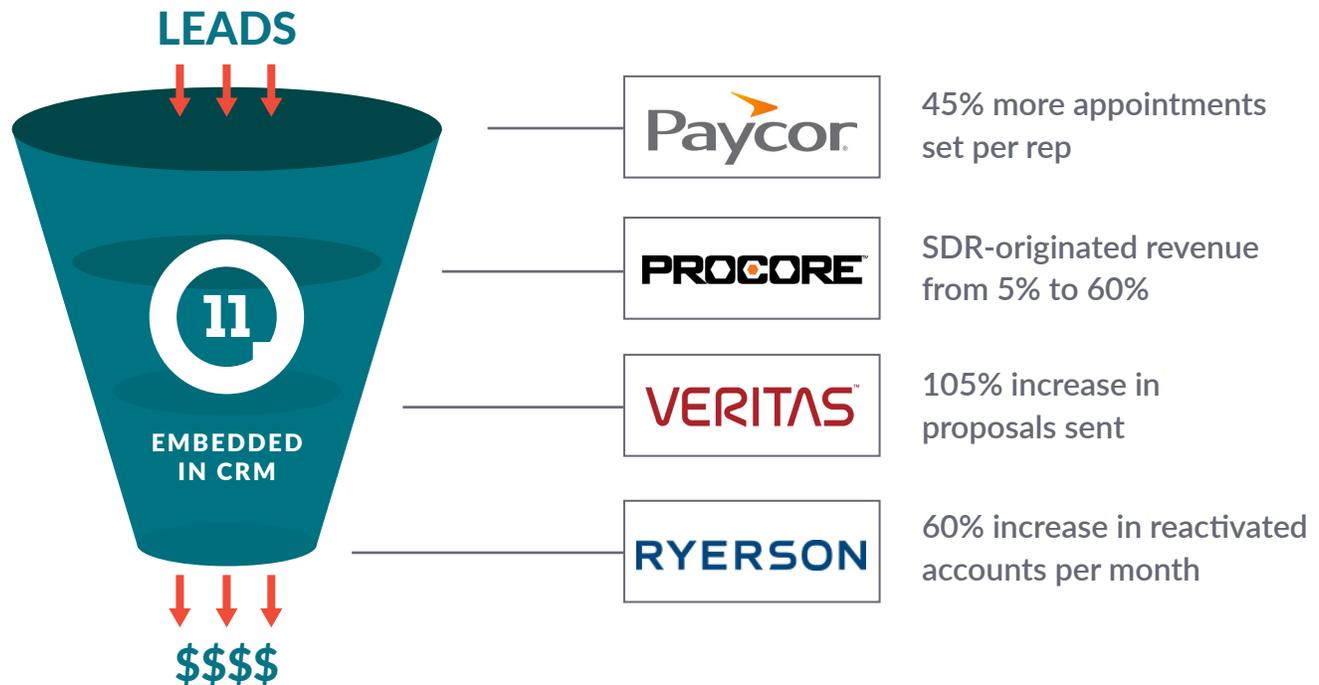
4. Hire and onboard salespeople against established metrics.

When you reach the full capacity of your sales team and technology, **hire more reps**. Then use your established metrics to get new sales reps ramped quickly.

Even talented sales reps need to understand your company's specific process. Introduce them to your key operating metrics. Explain what their quota will be in three months, as well as the activities it will take to get there. Provide them with an activity scorecard, and coach them around the best practices. You're already on your way to a strong activity-based selling approach.

Ready to Step Up Your Sales Activity Management Strategy?

With LevelEleven....

LEADS

11

EMBEDDED IN CRM

$$$$

Paycor	45% more appointments set per rep
PROCORE	SDR-originated revenue from 5% to 60%
VERITAS	105% increase in proposals sent
RYERSON	60% increase in reactivated accounts per month

"We've seen a massive spike in activity and focus ... we're on pace to have more activity in 2016 than we did in 2015, with a smaller team."

DOUG MANTELLI, SVP of National Sales Development, Jackson National Life

"I used to look at my dashboard 10 times a day. Now, I just go to my LevelEleven homepage and flip through Scorecard. As a sales leader, it is amazing to me how now I rely on that quick little snapshot of key metrics."`

JANET JANSEN, Director of High-Velocity Sales, Paycor

Special Offer for Readers of this Study

Free KPI Discovery Call
Talk to one of our sales performance experts for a free 1-hour session on identifying your team's main KPIs. Just click here, and write "Free KPI Discovery" in the comments.

Already know what your team's critical KPIs are and ready to talk about managing and motivating them? **Request a demo.**

Sales Activity Scorecard

level eleven

WEEK 1

Activity	Completed This Week	Total this quarter	Goal	% to Goal	On Pace (Y/N)

WEEK 2

Activity	Completed This Week	Total this quarter	Goal	% to Goal	On Pace (Y/N)

WEEK 3

Activity	Completed This Week	Total this quarter	Goal	% to Goal	On Pace (Y/N)

WEEK 4

Activity	Completed This Week	Total this quarter	Goal	% to Goal	On Pace (Y/N)