

4 Ways to Simplify Sales

By Janet Gregory

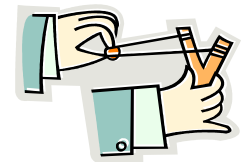
Have your sales plans or sales operations become overly complicated? Ask yourself these questions:

- ☐ Do sales people need advanced degrees to understand the comp plan?
- ☐ Do customers avoid talking with your sales people?
- ☐ Is your sales team whining and unhappy?
- ☐ Are customers confused about who to call for answers to questions?
- ☐ Do sales people keep a low profile, not sharing new ideas?

If you checked YES to any of the above questions, maybe it is time for some sales simplification.

Years of analytics and specialization have made us smarter and yielded elegant sales plans. This wealth of intelligence can be channeled into a powerfully simple sales approach. Maybe it is time to uncomplicate your sales operations and take your business to the next level. Below are four simple ways to simplify sales. Pick one and give it a try. We do live in an all-or-nothing or go-for-broke type of world, but don't go overboard, just pick one and pursue it. The results may surprise you.

1 Sling-Shot Comp. Simplify the compensation plan. Your comp plan should read like instructions to build a sling-shot, not a nuclear power plant.



Simplify the focus. An effective sales compensation plan will have only three moving parts: target, cycle and achievement.

- **Target** is all about what sales people are paid on. The target should be singular and specific: bookings, revenue or margin. One number that is both challenging and realistic.
- **Cycle** is based on the business cycles of you and your customers. Cycle emphasis in a comp plan promotes consistency that should parallel the customer's buying cycle and your business cycles. These cycles vary by business. Retail, CPA's and schools have a "busy season" cycle such that buying decisions are made for implementation prior to busy season. Government and some large enterprises have a budget cycle where timing for budgeting, decisions and spending follow a predictable fiscal year schedule.
- **Achievement** should be handsomely rewarded. Make sales people accountable for meeting and exceeding their target. Reserve a significant portion of variable compensation for making the number.

Simplify the terms and conditions. Do the pages of terms and conditions resemble a small telephone book? This usually represents a "trail of tears" where someone with a long enough memory remembers each incident that created some new rule, term, regulation or guide. Thank the lawyers for their attention to detail and ask them to distill the legalese down to the essential few. One page at best to three pages at most. Guidelines from the "trail of tears" can be separated into a manager's interpretation guide. They do not inspire sales people and often have the opposite effect

where the spirit of the plan is not respected. Opt for simple sling-shot rules: don't shoot at people, animals or personal property and have fun with targets, trees and toy trucks.

Ditch the complex matrix and moving parts. The instructions should be simple: put sales skill in the sling, point it at the right target, cycle that sling-shot at the right time and hit your mark for handsome rewards. Cover all three fundamental motivations in one page of instructions.

② Action Heroes. Successful people are motivated by achievement. Recognize achievement. Create everyday heroes and action heroes. Recognition can replace many product-specific goals, spiffs or gates that may have been added over the years to emphasize sales in specific areas.



Recognition is priceless (and cheap). It does not cost a lot of money but is priceless to the achiever and over-achiever. Achievers like to be recognized for their achievements. Recognition from management and executive staff is valuable, but the real power of recognition comes from the peer acknowledgement and that is priceless.

Through recognition, you create heroes as a way to share best practices; create a go-to guy for information and to highlight new success methods. Sales innovations can bring order of magnitude changes that WOW sales operations or, incrementally, that delight stakeholders, process and approach. Look for innovations from your sales team and recognize them. Recognition can be simple, like a personal "thank you" or "job well done" or can be more formal and broadly communicated. No matter what the recognition be sure to tweet, text, blog or post recognition so everyone will benefit. Remember, achievers especially like recognition among their peers. Beneath the cape and super powers, Superman and Spider Man are just normal everyday people doing extraordinary things. Find your sales super heroes.

③ Happy People. Create a happy sales team. Okay, don't laugh but you do need to work on this; it doesn't just happen by itself. The results will speak for themselves. Happy people work harder. If it's fun and people enjoy what they are doing, they want to have more fun and so the top spins ever faster. Happy people are more fun to be around. Happiness is contagious. It's easier to attract and keep happy people on a happy team. It is a simple concept; but not so simple to implement.



If you want a happy sales team, hire happy people. Look for positive outlook in candidate aptitude when you are hiring. Add questions about positive outlook to reference checks. Use scenario-based questions as a great way to determine outlook. It's the cup-half-full people that you want on your sales team. Happy people on the team will make hiring other happy people easier.

Keep the happy people on the team and get the unhappy ones off. It may sound harsh but move the cup-half-empty people, the complainers, whiners and critics off the team. If they are skilled, put them into another role in the company. If they slow down progress and idea sharing, move them out of the company. Happy people keep your customers happy. They will go the extra distance and add the personal touch. Customers know when they are working with happy people and happy teams, and they know when they are not.

4 Customer Match-dot-Com. The pairing of customers and sales is an art. It's a lot like dating. Apply the science and analysis behind the scenes but make sure the chemistry works in the real world. You have collected and analyzed a lot of customer data that's very important; now add the relationship perspective.



The art of pairing customers and sales people is bringing in the relationship perspective which considers some of the “soft” attributes like approach, style, type of relationship and buyer behavior. If you can align customer science and relationship art you will have a winning combination that will result in long term business relationships, customer loyalty and a happy sales team.

There are lots of interesting approaches and styles analysis, from matrix to Myer Briggs. The type of methodology you use isn't as important as just doing it. As an example, a matrix methodology might take into consideration whether your customer is a thinker, driver, expressive or amiable and pair them with a complementary style on your sales team. If you like the Myers Briggs approach (I am an ENTJ) there are 16 styles that can be aligned for maximum working success.

Sales is not about selling it is about your customer buying. That sounds like a simple set of words but there is a lot to it. Sales is NOT about you, it's about the customer. Align your sales team with how your customer buys and the type of buying relationship the customer wants to build and sustain. Rethink customer choices. Complement the customer with the right expertise, level and experience to facilitate their buying process. What would the customer have on *their* “dating profile”? Is it vertical market expertise or broad industry knowledge? Do they prefer product specialists or solution architects? Do they want always-available inside sales or personal-touch field sales? Mix it up; this is not a one-size-fits-all world. It's all about what is right for the customer, if you want that “date” to turn into a long term relationship.

Sales is the world's best profession. It is ever changing and forever interesting. Simplify your sales to maximize your success. Pick one simplification strategy this year and make it work for you. It will surprise you how simplification can have a big impact from sling-shots to super heroes to happy teams and dating.

Wishing you great sales success.

Janet Gregory is a veteran sales executive and co-founder of KickStart Alliance. For assistance with sales strategy, sales planning, training, sales enablement, compensation or any aspect of sales operations, contact [Janet](#). Janet leads the sales readiness practice at KickStart Alliance. For help in aligning sales & marketing for results contact any member of the [KickStart Alliance team](#).

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