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Building A Successful B2B Sales Development Organization *Part III: Tips for hiring, training, and motivating a high-performing Sales Development team*

by Mary Gospe

This is the final part of a three-part series on architecting a highly effective Sales Development (SD) function. To view the first two articles, please visit www.kickstartall.com/resources.html

In part 1 of our series, we discussed the business objectives for building an in-house SD function and 5 steps for setting up a successful SD operation. In part 2, we discussed tips for managing the lead generation funnel including list selection, profiling, the VITO approach, and qualifying techniques. Once you have defined your SD operations and processes, it's time to begin hiring, training and motivating your team.

Hiring

In a B2B sales development role, you need intelligent, educated, and motivated individuals. Minimum skills, personality and experience requirements should include:

- * Bachelor's degree
- * At least 2 year's experience in an outbound B2B SD role with consistent quota achievement
- * Strong communication skills (oral and written) and a professional voice
- * Strong time-management and organizational skills
- * Pro-active, persistent, and goal-oriented
- * Experience partnering with multiple inside or field sales reps

It is easier to train an experienced Sales Development Rep (SDR) on your company and products than it is to take someone from your industry and train them on the SD role. Beware of hiring an inbound, customer-service type of individual. They seldom do well in an outbound, cold-calling environment.

Step 1:

Begin your hiring process by interviewing all candidates over the phone. After all, their job is phone-based so you need to make sure that they can communicate effectively in this medium. They will also be using email extensively, so make sure they can write well and type quickly. A good method to evaluate skills is to have the candidate treat you as if you were a prospect. Candidates who are not serious about joining your company or do not have the experience and skills to complete this task will likely not follow through with this assignment.

Step 2:

Meet face-to-face with candidates who make it through the first phone interview and prospecting assignment successfully. If they look promising, have them interview via

phone or in person with the reps they will be partnering with to get the reps' assessment. They will be working closely together, so a strong personality match is essential.

Step 3:

Perform reference checks to verify quota achievement and discuss work styles. Is your candidate self-motivated, hard-working, and optimistic? Or does he/she complain, point fingers and cause conflict within the team?

Training

Training your SDRs is an ongoing process. Continual monitoring and coaching is imperative if you want a high-performing team. Initial training should include the following areas:

Product Knowledge

- * Focus on the 80% of frequently asked questions and emphasize benefits over features
- * Pricing (SDRs typically do not need detailed pricing, however, they do need to be able to give prospects an estimate)

Sales Skills & Techniques

- * Target market characteristics
- * Elevator pitch
- * Navigating to the decision makers
- * Listening and probing techniques
- * Qualifying criteria
- * Objection-handling tips
- * Closing techniques

Operational Requirements

Phone system, headset, SFA/CRM system

Company-specific Procedures

- * Rules of engagement for interacting with direct sales, channel, marketing
- * Call tracking and reporting
- * Process for "recycling" or nurturing prospects

Company Background and Competitive Environment

- * Customer references
- * Case studies
- * Competitive positioning

It is very useful to create a Sales Guide that encompasses all of the content listed above. It can be used by the entire sales organization including channel partners.

Once your new SDRs have started their training, have them sit in on calls with other SDRs and the inside or field sales reps they will be partnering with. They can begin by first handling inbound calls and following up with warm leads (web hits, tradeshow leads, etc.) before moving on to the more challenging outbound role (cold calling).

Motivating Your Team

Compensation

Begin with a well constructed compensation plan. A good model is 50% base, 50% incentive or 60% base, 40% incentive. The bulk of the incentive should be tied to results that the SDR directly controls: scheduled appointments, completed demos and qualified leads passed to sales. The remaining incentive can be tied to revenue for qualified leads that convert. This insures that SDRs give highly qualified leads to their reps and if appropriate help expand contacts to drive the opportunity to closure. To encourage high initiative and teamwork, double pay on closed deals. SDRs often earn a fixed bonus per closed deal while field reps earn a percentage of revenue.

Reward high performers with quarterly and annual kickers and never cap their incentive. Your goal is to have them consistently over achieve their quota.

Time-based Programs

In addition to a fair and motivating compensation plan, use time-based programs with incentives for achievement of specific, measurable goals. Set both individual and team goals for qualified appointments within a 4-6 week period. Make it fun with a theme and goodies tied to that theme. Track progress on a white board so that the entire team can monitor their performance vs. their fellow SDRs and the entire team. A little competition will get your SDRs fired up and increase productivity. Also, be sure to promote the campaign to the entire sales organization and upper management to increase the visibility of the team.

There is much more, but with these tips on hiring, training and motivating your SDRs, you will have a successful and productive organization.

KickStart offers workshops and tailored SD programs to assist SD teams of all sizes. For more information on these topics, please email info@kickstartall.com.

About the Author:

Mary Gospe is principal and co-founder of KickStart Alliance. For more information, contact Mary at maryg@kickstartall.com or 650.464.7663.