

# Quick Start to Advanced Sales Techniques



While crafting a sales strategy is unique for each company, there are best practices and strategies you can use to guide your efforts. For a sales strategy to be effective, establishing a core team, partnerships and consistent and mandated processes for lead generation and sales activities are key.

## Modern Sales Skills for Success

Below are 4 key competency areas for the next generation IT, Telecom, and SaaS sales person.

**Sales Athlete:** has a keen understanding of the sales process, effective qualification and discovery, delivers the right value proposition to decision makers, closing and maintaining the business. Focus on the long-term partnership with your customer in a recurring revenue model. They understand marketing, online influence and brand effect and how that impacts the sales process.

**Trusted Advisor Collaboration Acumen:** successfully demonstrate trust internally and externally throughout the sales cycle. They possess essential fundamental skills like follow through, effective questioning, listening and collaboration with partners, suppliers, and customers for successful business outcomes.

**Business Acumen:** understand your customers' business, their strategic plans, their challenges and opportunities and their profit models. Examples of business acumen include:

- Customer and internal operation value chains
- Developing, delivering, and defending business cases – internally and with customers and partners
- Executive level interaction, value proposition creation and messaging
- Understanding, articulating, and enabling a client to manage multiple elements of risk in decision making
- People leadership – both identifying and articulating qualities of effective leaders as well as developing those leaders
- Successful strategic and operational implementation and execution of initiatives and programs

**Industry Expertise:** understand the solutions you offer, how those solutions fit into the big picture of IT and the overall organization's goals. They communicate the business benefits of your solutions, have a solid understanding of technology and how it impacts business. They mitigate risks with proper IT solutions and envision realistic business and profits because of it.

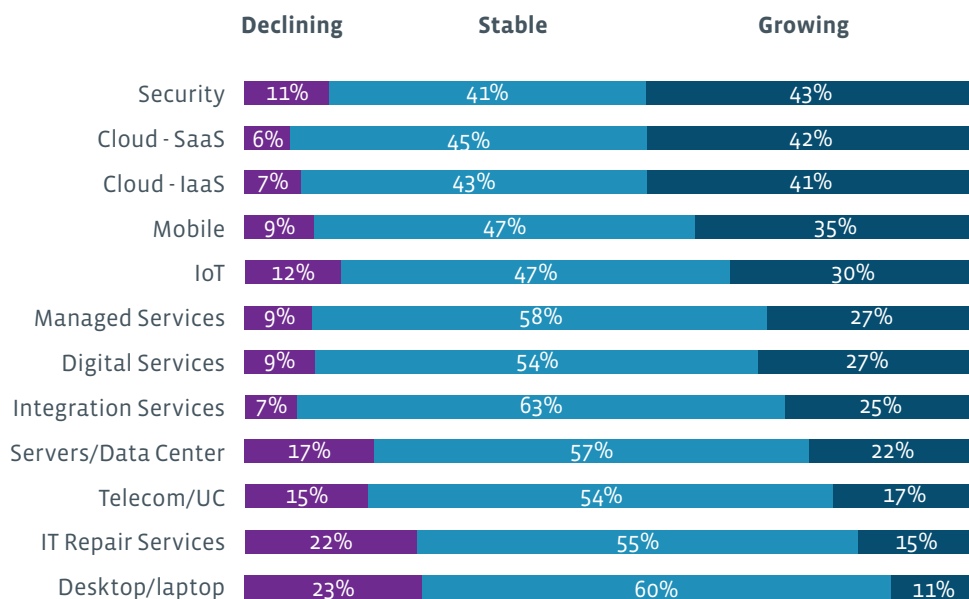
Developing and maintaining technology expertise in key growth areas is a great practice for achieving deeper value to the client, and

selling solutions that are part of growth markets. Below is a chart from the CompTIA 2017 Growth Trends in Technology that give a clear view in to the IT Industry's perception of decline, stability, or growth of IT service categories.

Identify a critical set of specific sales competencies so teams can continue to benchmark themselves and increase acumen either from learning what is available inside the company or general sales skills information offered on the open market.

## 2017 GROWTH PERCEPTIONS

U.S. Perspective



Source: CompTIA IT Industry Outlook | n=280 U.S. IT industry executives

## Define Your Strategy

Once you have clearly identified the skills required for success, it's important to effectively set the sales strategy. Your strategy needs to include the sales model, the sales process, skills, compensation plans, and unified company expectations for success.

Your sales strategy should include the defined overall territory, geography, vertical or sales model you have adopted; it involves the compensation plan, and the roles of the sales team.

- **The team.** Define who will cover inside sales and outside sales and what the standard protocol is between the two roles. Are they in competition or support of one another? What role does marketing play into the sales cycle? Clarity on functions and roles is essential for long term business success in an organization.
- **Sales processes.** Identifying what and how every person in the company touches and influences or is accountable for the sales process is imperative. Determine the proper mix of tools your team will use to capture lead generation, sales activity, etc. Once a tool has been decided on, processes and procedures

should be established and mandated. For example, compensation is paid only when CRM tools are used; versus what is optional or a value-add to the sales team. Some of the most important considerations in standardizing tool usage include:

- **Sales process map:** the specific sales process for your company, either an internal process or one of the sales models in industry.
- **Opportunity management process & percentage to close:** this is the opportunity management process you adopt, which includes your CRM, your funnel management discipline and process, and your percent to close definitions
- **Common vernacular:** definitions that all sales individuals use when discussing the company sales process

# Sales Playbooks

Sales Playbooks are a great way to unify all of this into one program for your sales teams and organization. Playbooks lay out clear objectives, identify metrics for measurement, and provide a common value proposition and framework for closing deals for your company. Playbooks are unique to companies; and can even be unique for an individual.

**Effective sales playbooks include the following:**

1. Introduction to the company and its mission and values
2. Roles of the sales team and other employees in the sales process
3. Buyer Personas and Buyer Journeys. What is the profile of the buyer, and what steps do they take in their research to decision making in the sales process
4. Priorities and Time Management Guidelines. Define how much time should be spent prospecting versus existing clients.
5. Products and Pricing
6. Sales processes. Include a flow chart, sales call methodology, elevator pitch and value proposition messaging, discovery call best practices, pre-call planning guidelines, and sales call and email scripts, objection handling best practices and 'sound bytes' they can use during the sales process to build credibility
7. The CRM or account/opportunity management tracking tool: what must be used for forecasting, how do you track and codify lead status, sales status, and opportunity stages
8. Commissions and Incentives. Provide standards and a reward plan that people know and can rely on. When programs change too often, it frustrates teams and increases likelihood of turnover.
9. Selling Model. It's important to articulate which one you are using and why.
10. Sales Metrics and Success Criteria. What exact metrics are they accountable for? For example, a sales person may have multiple metrics they are measured against (i.e. leads identified, lead to close ratios, close dollars, and customer loyalty). Each of these metrics tracks a different part of the sales cycle.

## Identifying Prospects

It's critical to know who you're selling to. A quick LinkedIn search will not consume much time or money and yet yield many prospects for you to target. Research who they are and who else might be involved in the decision-making process. Many people can be involved in the decision; it's important to know who these people are and what they need so when you get on a call with the team, you can address all their concerns.

### PROSPECT PAINS

In any sales process, the different types of “pain” your prospect is experiencing will typically fall into one of these three categories:

**Technical.** Network is too slow; security issues. Many salespeople get stuck here and immediately launch into their sales pitch: “You have a problem; here's how I solve it”. But if you stop here, you might not get the full picture. You want to ask questions like, “Could you be more specific about the issue?” and “What do you think is causing the problem?” You will get to a deeper level of pain you can solve; the more pain points you solve, the more likely you will sell your solution.

**Business/Financial.** How are these technical challenges impacting the bottom line? Start inching toward a budget discussion. If the business' bottom line is being impacted by the challenge, then they will be more likely to want it solved and you can create value for the prospect.

**Personal interest.** Many times, people do things for their own personal interest instead of their company's interests. If a potential buyer has a personal investment in the problem being resolved, they will be far more likely to want to work together with you to solve it.

### EFFECTIVE PROSPECTING TECHNIQUES

When was the last time you took a cold call? When you go to buy anything, where do you start your research? Online! And so do your prospects.

Analysts differ on the number but there are reports of as much as 80% of the decision-making process is done before prospects even engage with a solution provider. You need to be engaging with your prospects where they are—online—through social and content marketing and selling strategies.

International Data Corporation (IDC) conducted a study which found that **75% of B2B buyers and 84% of C-level or vice-president level executives use social media to make purchasing decisions.**

In the study, IDC describes the three stages of a typical B2B purchase:

- The **early stage** includes researching how the business can be improved, determining whether it's worth investing in a solution and searching for possible alternatives.
- The **middle stage** consists of creating a shortlist of vendors and products. Recommendations from third-party experts are heavily valued at this stage.

Traditional Selling	Social Selling
Buy leads	Create and leverage professional networks
Limited insight on prospects	Ability to target key decision makers
Rely on cold calling	Use social to get warm introductions
Sales scripts – push strategies	Have relevant conversations – pull strategies
Persistence	Trusted advisor and partner

- The **final stage** of the buying process includes finding answers to questions before they make a decision. **This is the stage where buyers find social networks to be most valuable.**

If your prospects are using social networks during the buying process, then it's important for you to use social media to fill your sales pipeline.

### USING SOCIAL NETWORKS TO FILL THE SALES PIPELINE

Less than 30% of companies are employing social selling strategies, so there is huge opportunity for you to use social selling as part of your sales strategy.

**The major difference between traditional and social selling is traditional selling is a numbers game, social selling is a relationship game.**

The first thing you need to do when embarking on a social selling strategy is to get to know your clients and where they exist online. Create "personas." Profiling your target, their pain points, their likes and dislikes and where you are most likely to meet them online.

When you find an ideal prospect, send them a connection request. Do not send a request

without some kind of personal message. The message should not be a sales pitch. Instead explain to them why you value their connection.

Here are a few examples:

Hi (first name) I've just joined (group) and noticed you are also a member. I'd be pleased to connect with you directly. Warm regards, (your name)

Hi (first name), I noticed you're connected through (mutual friend). I've worked with him/her for years and would be pleased to connect with you directly Warm regards, (your name)

Hi (first name) it was great to see you at (event name) It would be great if you could keep in touch and I could learn more about you and your work. Warm regards, (your name)

Connect with people without pitching them. Once your request has been accepted, you need to stay on their radar. Watch what they post, what they are liking and commenting on. Examples of follow messages include:

"(first name), I noticed you liked that post from (company) about cyber security and its importance, our team just produced a resource (list resource and link) that might be interesting for you."

“Our company is holding a live event or webinar to discuss that very topic and we would like to extend an invitation. Or, I see you are headed to (event) I’m going to be there as well, it would be great to meet.”

Another way to get on your prospects radar is to become a “thought leader” in your particular industry. The best way to do that is create and curate good content that speaks directly to your buyer’s pain points. According to a study by Demand Gen;

- More than half (51%) of B2B buyers rely on content to research their buying decisions
- Decision makers consume at least 5 pieces of content before engaging with a sales rep.

With social selling, the sales and marketing teams need to be aligned. Marketing needs to understand the personas, their pain points and the types of content they consume and create it. The sales team needs to research and find articles and content from relevant sites that will bolster their reputation as a trusted advisor. Sharing opinions, wins, solutions, and case studies will consistently keep your team and company top of mind.

It’s important to know prospecting laws and regulations in the geography in which you are operating. For example, know specific geography requirements for prospecting. The new GDPR (General Data Protection Regulation) in the U.K. has massive ramifications for all companies, and will mean that digital marketing and prospecting cannot be done as they have in the past. Companies are going to have to get their prospects and customers to opt-in to receive marketing materials like newsletters. The current opt-out method will be illegal.



# The Value Proposition

Customer value proposition is a combination of the value that each vendor and partner bring to a unified solution. Customer value proposition is comprised of why the customer buys and the unique value the solution offers, which is a combination of features, benefits and value from all parties who build the solution together.

A company value proposition clearly demonstrates how that company improves business in a tangible way for a particular buyer persona. Cloud Value Propositions could include elements such as: reduced costs, controlled expenses, increased data reliability, and reduced business risk.

Use the headline in LinkedIn to communicate your value proposition instead of listing your title. For example, instead of Jack Jones, CEO of IT Powerhouse Inc., try Jack Jones, Helping SMBs secure their networks for over 10 years.

Once you decide on your unique proposition, use that as your base when creating (or curating) content. Before you create another eBook, white paper, hold an event or webinar, ask yourself if the topic is directly related to your unique proposition and how.

## Customer Retention

Acquiring new business is a key element to success. Retaining those customers can reap large long-term gains in revenue. Gains not only in the revenue they generate, but if they refer new clients, you can rapidly fill your pipeline with little effort.

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Communicate and establish relationships with as many of the decision-making contacts you can in a company that is already producing for you. If someone that is key to your account leaves, you may not have to start all over again, saving time and money.

**“Studies from the U.S. Small Business Administration and U.S. Chamber of Commerce have found that acquiring new customers can cost as much as five to seven times more than simply retaining existing customers.”**

# Analyze

Review and document your success and failures. Ask yourself the tough questions. Who are your top producing clients? How did you attain them? What do they like most about your product/services/employees? What were missed opportunities? Did customers leave, why?

Building on successes and solving issues will only strengthen your position to succeed. Implementing a sales strategy that incorporates a solid team, consistent processes and procedures, and provides an environment where sales teams can thrive and continue to learn, will make your

sales process succeed. A sales strategy takes time to prepare, and consistency in execution. The long term pay-off is worth it in the return of boosted revenue and differentiating yourself from the competition.



#### Who We Are

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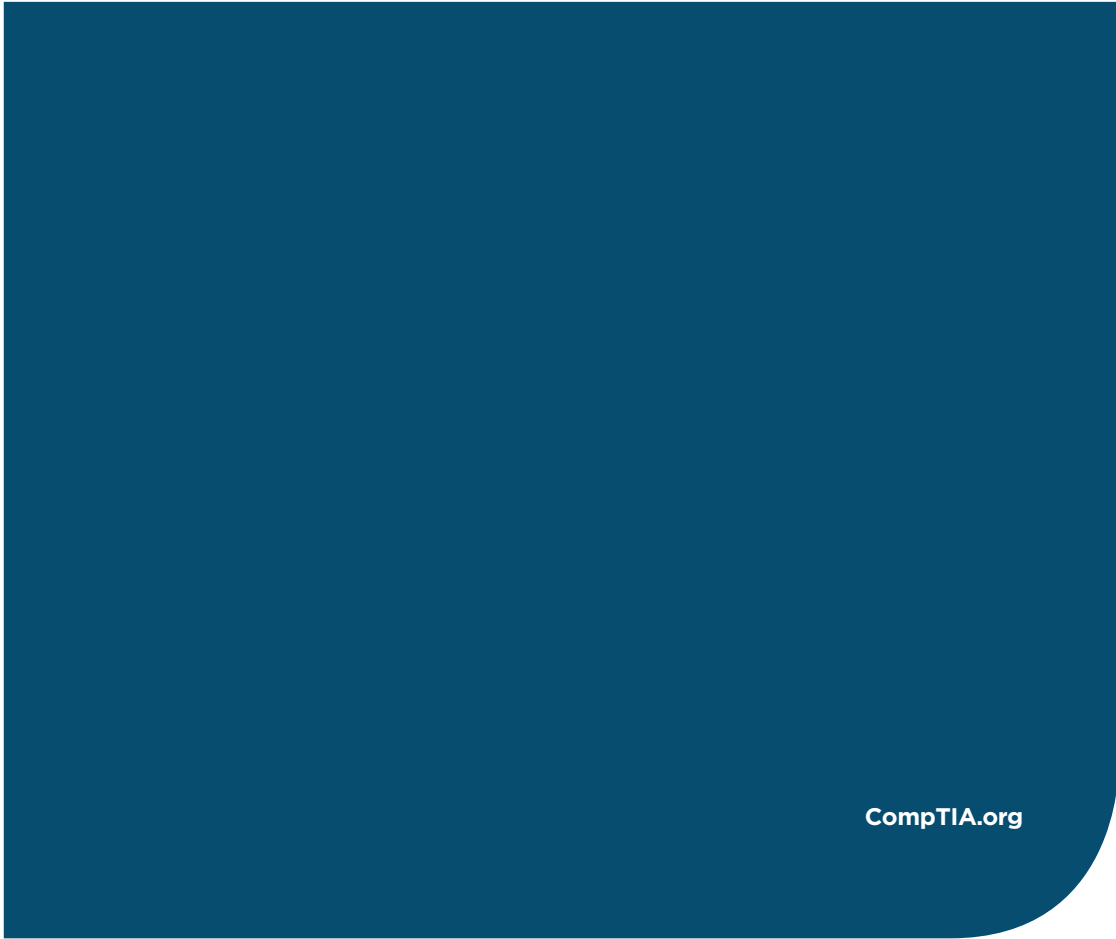
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Advance the Tech Industry

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