the revenue journal

Formerly **ThinkSales**

2022-2023 ANNUAL • ISSUE 36

FUTURE-FIT

FAST-CYCLE PLANNING

The strategies and action plan to navigate uncertainty and thrive in B2B selling today

THE 8 TRAPS TO AVOID

How to Unlock Exponential Revenue Growth

Shifting from customer service to customer success

STRATEGY

Entrenched advantage is a thing of the past

ENABLEMENT

Getting B2B omnichannel sales right

MASTER THE STEPS FOR CHANGE MANAGEMENT SUCCESS

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CONTENTS

MAIN FEATURE

SECTIONS

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CHAIRMAN'S NOTE

Adapting to adversity to thrive

In 1978 a young graduate student from the University of Pennsylvania named David Reznick, packed his bags and set off to the Caribbean Island of Trinidad. His mission? To examine Charles Darwin's concept of the struggle for existence – specifically, how predator-prey interactions impact the evolution of new species.

Armed with a topographical map traced onto a sheet of notepaper, Reznick collected 1 600 guppies, the prolific fish species whose females can produce dozens of babies every three to four weeks. Reznick was interested to see if the addition or removal of predators could affect genetic adaptation in guppies over a short period of time.

The premise of the experiment was not considered promising. At that time scientists had studied evolution in controlled laboratory environments, but watching it happen in a natural setting - in a human lifetime - was assumed to be impossible.

Reznick's exploits earned him notoriety with a headline in the National Enquirer, an American tabloid, that read: "Uncle Sam wastes $97 000 to learn how old guppies are when they die." But Reznick's work resulted in more than just trash talk in the press - it led to a major paradigm shift in scientists' thinking about evolution.

Until that point, the scientific community had held to Darwin's assertions dating back to the 1800s – that evolutionary biology unfolded over hundreds of thousands of generations, a path so slow it was essentially invisible.

In 1981 Reznick returned to Trinidad and the results he found were astonishing. I will spare you the details, but within three years, and a mere six to eight generations, male guppies had significantly changed their reproductive patterns and physiology in adaptation to the new sites they had been transplanted into and the absence, or presence, of predators in those sites.

Studies of other species have since validated these findings. Where researchers once assumed that evolution required millennia, we now know that species are adapting in near real-time. In some cases, in less than a decade. Today this phenomenon is known as 'rapid evolution' - the fast drive towards adaptation.

The fast drive towards adaptation: A business imperative

I'm quite sure you get the significance of this story.

The mechanics of business have always been hard-wired to the survival of the fittest. That's nothing new, but the current global climate is serving up novel crises and shocks at a pace that was previously unimaginable.

Today, the fittest companies and teams are those that embrace 'the fast drive towards adaptation' to both survive and thrive.

This issue is devoted to the new approaches to competitive strategy, process design, skills development, and mental resilience required for revenue growth by B2B companies in today's low growth, highly contested markets. In particular, our cover story on page 8.

The article illustrates how fast-cycle planning facilitates the design of a Revenue Growth Strategy to support and enhance the Corporate Strategy to deliver results that outperform the market.

Is Your Company Revenue Growth Ready?

It's now a Board-level and C-Suite priority

To accelerate the journey to 20%+ sustainable revenue growth and to gain a long-term strategic advantage, a Revenue Growth Strategy must be elevated across functions and beyond Sales and Marketing as a Board-level and C-Suite design priority. It then cascades down to the Sales Organisation. This is how exponential revenue growth happens.

Introducing RevenuePartners

Finally, in continuation of the theme of evolution, long-time readers of this publication will have noticed a change. This issue celebrates our rebranding of ThinkSales to RevenuePartners and the heralding of *The Revenue Journal.*

The name change is reflective of our steady evolution in business focus and offering over the past 12 years since the launch of ThinkSales in 2010.

We believe RevenuePartners speaks to our reason for being and our commitment to partnering with our customers to co-create and deliver Revenue Growth Strategy, Customer Engagement Process Design and Execution Support necessary to help them outperform their markets.

How we've constructed this journal

The publication comprises five sections, each aligned with the 5-Pillars of a high-performing Company and Sales Organisation.

At the end of each section there is a planning and execution scorecard, mirroring each of the themes covered in the section that enables you to **score your current Revenue Growth Readiness.**

These scorecards will illuminate where to focus budget and resources to design and execute a revenue growth strategy.

What's next?

Turn to the back of the magazine for more details on the challenges we solve and the impact we have made.

As always, thank you for reading this publication.

Regards,

Andrew Honey
Chairman: RevenuePartners

How do you score?

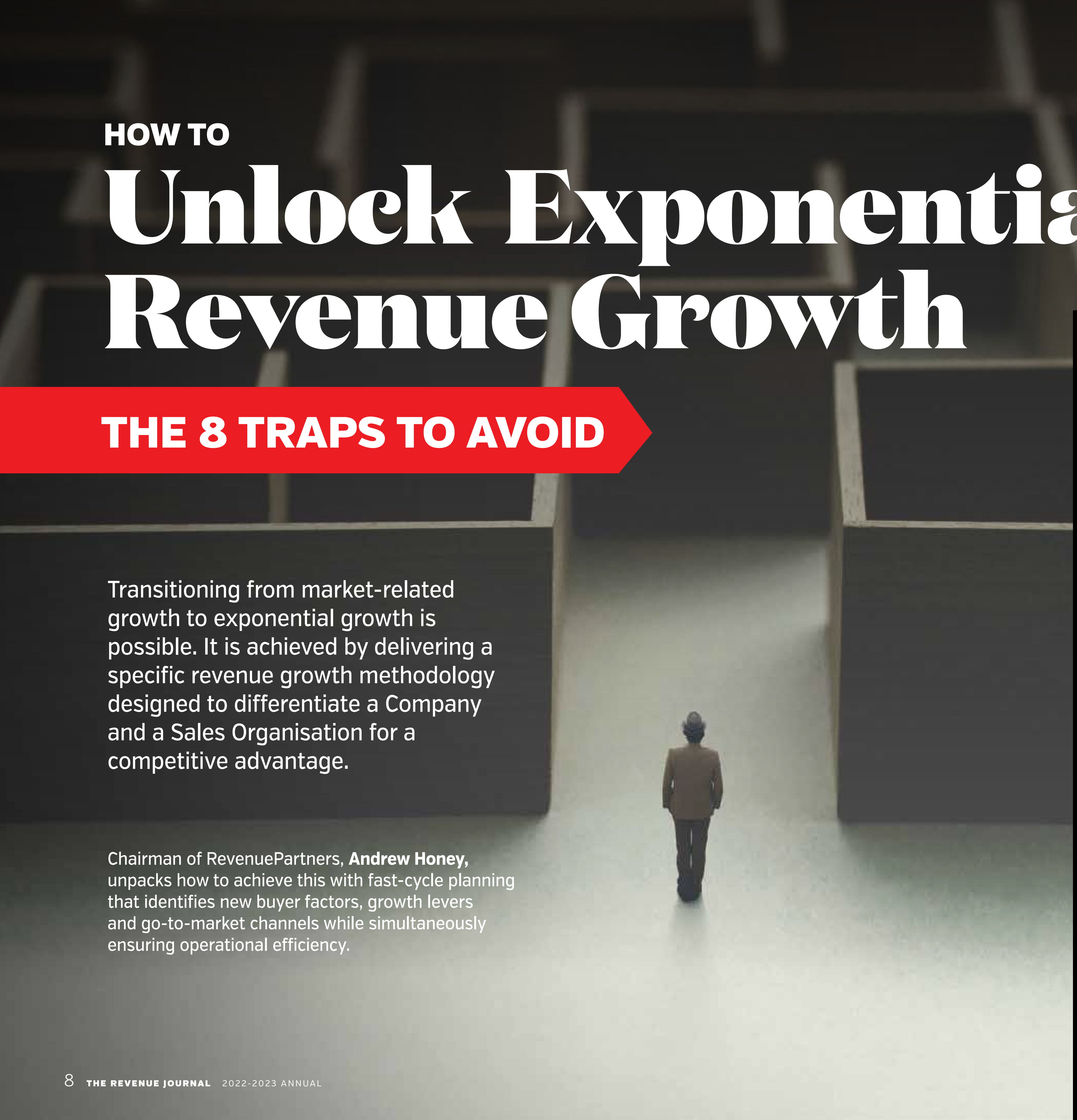
Once you've read this section, turn to **page 32** to rate how you score on revenue growth readiness in **Pillar 1**

PILLAR 1

Competitive Strategy

Revenue Growth Engineering™

1



HOW TO

Unlock Exponential Revenue Growth

THE 8 TRAPS TO AVOID

Transitioning from market-related growth to exponential growth is possible. It is achieved by delivering a specific revenue growth methodology designed to differentiate a Company and a Sales Organisation for a competitive advantage.

Chairman of RevenuePartners, **Andrew Honey,** unpacks how to achieve this with fast-cycle planning that identifies new buyer factors, growth levers and go-to-market channels while simultaneously ensuring operational efficiency.

ARTICLE IN BRIEF

THE PROBLEM

In today's operating conditions, achieving above-market revenue growth can be a challenge for even the most seasoned and experienced CEOs of mid-size to enterprise level companies.

THE FACTORS

External and internal forces, cognitive bias, opinions instead of data, noise, and one or more of 8 common traps hinder revenue growth.

THE SOLUTION

A Revenue Growth Methodology (enabled by fast-cycle planning) with specific revenue growth lever projects to drive exponential top-line growth.

Amancio Ortega is not a name that is widely recognised. The name of the empire he built is.

Zara is a fashion behemoth, raking in revenues of $24,8 billion in 2021. Its earnings have made Ortega a staple on the Forbes Rich List – and notably, for a brief period in 2015, he overtook Bill Gates as the world's richest man when his personal net worth peaked at $80 billion.

Founded in 1975, in an unremarkable city in Spain – far from the glitzy European fashion capitals of Paris and Milan – Zara pioneered what is known today as 'fast-fashion' – driven by a production cycle where the latest catwalk and celebrity trends are delivered to store at affordable prices and a blistering pace.

Where traditional fashion manufacturers can take up to 6 months to get a design from concept to store, Zara revolutionised the rapid fashion product lifecycle – enabling it to compress design, production, and distribution into just 30 days. And again, where many traditional counterparts plan their season's line, up to 6 months in advance, Zara limits advanced planning, opting instead to create the majority of its season's collections at the beginning – and in the middle of the season – enabling it to deliver the latest trends to shoppers every 2 weeks. This quick delivery cycle also enables it to pull non-performers from its shelves fast, replacing them with new designs.

The strategy has paid off. Where customers visit other high-street stores in Spain on average only 3 times a year, that figure skyrockets to 17 times for Zara stores.

Other fast-fashion brands like Asos, Fashion-Nova, Revolve and Shein (recently valued at $100 billion) have followed in Zara's rapid-cycle footsteps, and have capitalised on social media and e-commerce to make their founders billions.

Global fast-fashion is not without its criticism (questionable labour practices, allegations of copyright infringement and sustainability concerns) – but the success of its rapid planning and production approach is undeniable and warrants the consideration of any company seeking competitive advantage today.

FAST-CYCLE PLANNING & EXECUTION

In the foreword to this issue, I outlined what has come to be known in the scientific community as 'rapid evolution' – the fast drive towards adaptation through near real-time evolution of species.

In business today, it's essential that we too adopt a real-time approach to strategy and execution to ensure we evolve rapidly and appropriately to changing conditions to both survive and thrive.

Three- and five-year plans are a thing of the past. To ensure ongoing competitive advantage today, companies need to constantly re-evaluate their customers' changing needs, their environments, competitors, the value they offer and how they show up.

Leaders of B2B organisations today need a proven framework for fast-cycle planning and execution to shape and deliver on their Revenue Growth Strategy.

WHAT IS A REVENUE GROWTH STRATEGY?

A Revenue Growth Strategy is a specifically sequenced methodology for achieving or surpassing board budget numbers and is designed to grow revenue at a sustainable 20%+ per annum.

- It is designed at a C-Suite Level
- It is resolutely focused on Outside-In design thinking
- It is based on specific revenue growth levers an organisation can influence
- Go-to-market channels are reviewed, and new options considered
- It must be designed for Operational Efficiency
- Wherever possible internal and external activities must be digitised
- It must be designed with precision and speed using strategy planning frameworks
- It must identify what to focus on for the next 12 months for a competitive advantage
- It is accompanied by a Sales Strategy that includes Process Design and Execution Support for the Sales Organisation to drive results on-the-ground
- The Sales Organisation must have clear steps and KPIs to build long-term capacity and scalability, achieved through mapping against a Sales Organisation Maturity Framework
- The outcomes of all strategic plans are specific projects with nominated project leaders
- It must be revisited annually to review goals and to plan the up-coming 12-months.

This is a service we offer our customers at RevenuePartners.

Read on to learn more.

BUT FIRST, AVOID THE TRAPS...

It's not to say that companies are unable to formulate Revenue Growth plans without external intervention. However, over the past 10 years, we've observed several traps that many companies succumb to – traps that inhibit or prevent them from realising sustainable 20%+ Revenue Growth potential. These are the most prevalent:

TRAP 1

We've got a Revenue Growth Strategy covered in our Corporate Strategy

This may be true – but let's dive deeper into exactly what we mean by Revenue Growth Strategy (by our definition) to test that assumption.

A Revenue Growth Strategy is a detailed but simple roadmap – with clearly marked destinations and directions for how to achieve or surpass board budget numbers and outperform the market – as outlined in the Corporate Strategy. It is designed by the CEO and EXCO and execution is achieved through projects, assigned to Project Leaders.

It's important to note that a Revenue Growth Strategy is a component within strategy, it is not a company's Corporate Strategy. However, the two go together. Without a Revenue Growth Strategy, the key strategic objectives of the Corporate Strategy might not be achieved.

Most importantly (and this is where the trap comes in), the hidden potential for exponential revenue growth remains unidentified and unrealised in a number of company strategies.

Companies have the potential to unlock revenue growth opportunities – but fail to do so because they run into this first trap and the others outlined below.

TRAP 2

In this environment it's unrealistic to target any goal beyond inflationary-related growth numbers

Not true. Since the onset of the pandemic, we've worked with companies that have benefitted from trends driven

Revenue Growth Results

Over the past two years, arguably the toughest operating conditions in our lifetimes thus far, we have assisted a number of our customers with Revenue Growth Strategies delivered through fast-cycle planning and execution schedules to unlock exponential revenue growth opportunities.

The strategies were designed using a specifically sequenced methodology with unique planning frameworks which guided in-depth decision-making and strategic choice selection. This was enhanced by our cross-section of sector and revenue growth insights. The outcome was clear projects and execution roadmaps for competitive advantage over the upcoming 12-months.

These results are testament to the work we do in our Revenue Growth Programmes. This is fast-cycle planning in action.

BPW AXLES

- **The Challenge:** Acquiring new markets, new customers and enhancing Sales Force efficiency
- **Strategy Workshop:** Established improved customer-centric thinking and identified a product focus revenue growth lever
- **Results:** A focus on this new product delivered a 240% revenue increase within 6-months.

LANDYNAMIX

- **The Challenge:** Identifying a clear pathway to simultaneous revenue growth and operational efficiency
- **Strategy Workshop:** Identified two unique buyer factors, two revenue growth levers and a new Go-to-Market Channel
- **Results:** Decreased mid-term revenue growth goals from 5-years to 4-years, a 20% improvement.

MACSTEEL

- **The Challenge:** Despite a customer base exceeding 10 000, market share, volume and profitability were under pressure
- **Strategy Process:** Customer segmentation, market opportunity analysis, followed by Sales Force structure and sizing
- **Results:** An industry-first channel to better service a valuable customer sector identified during the Customer Segmentation Project, valued at a minimum volume increase of 7.4%.

PERI SA

- **The Challenge:** Difficulty achieving revenue growth and improved EBITDA in a flat economy and a shrinking construction market space
- **Strategy Workshop:** Identified and deployed two new revenue growth levers with specific growth and operational projects
- **Results:** 34% revenue growth opportunity over 12-18 months.

by Covid, as well as those that have been beleaguered by supply chain issues, rising input costs, strike action and other disruptions.

In our experience, the common denominator of companies like these that are pursuing and achieving revenue targets above inflation, are those led by growth-minded CEOs and teams.

We assist these organisations to identify the right revenue growth levers to help them gain short- and mid-term advantage in the current environment.

The essence of our Revenue Growth Strategy (see the exhibit on page 13) approach lies in analysing and then planning which of these six key revenue growth levers to pursue:

1. Customer growth
2. Market share gain
3. New market vertical entry
4. New market territory entry
5. Market expansion
6. Product focus

You're no doubt familiar with these six levers – at a glance, you may even feel you have them covered. This is where we find many companies fall short. Designing a Revenue Growth Strategy that delivers exponential growth of 20%+ resides in the methodology detail.

We've built a methodology based on a specific sequence of components, and that's the secret. The components making up our methodology are not new, but the sequence followed helps companies build clear and powerful Revenue Growth roadmaps – fast.

TRAP 3
External consultants can't add value because they don't know our business

While it's true that external parties will likely never match the knowledge or experience you hold in your field, that's not our objective.

Our mission is different. It's to leverage our expertise in Revenue Growth Engineering – using our tried and tested frameworks to guide your team, extract their insights and expertise and merge our knowledge with yours.

When we run Revenue Growth Strategy Workshops, we bring your leadership team and brain trust together for two days to review your competitor analysis, your value to buyers and your go-to-market options (to name a few) – to ultimately determine which growth levers will result in the highest opportunities for your revenue growth over the next 12-18 months and beyond.

Our role is not to tell our customers what to do. Our role is to facilitate, channel (and where necessary, challenge) the solid, lateral, and open thinking of your company's brain trust.

We provide the frameworks and insights gleaned from our catalogue of experience with cross-sector clients to enable your leadership team to define and build your own successful Revenue Growth Strategy.

TRAP 4
We've employed talented people, they can handle it

True, and maybe true. Let me elaborate.

Problem one. Yes, you have a talented team – but in our experience most Managers are already over-burdened with hefty workloads and seemingly never-ending demands for their attention.

Under these conditions, what is 'urgent' (day-to-day tasks, client emergencies, meetings, subordinates, reporting, etc) always takes precedence over what is 'important' (committing the time and focus to structured planning and the actions that emanate).

Problem two. That old nugget about 'not being able to see the wood for the trees.' When we're deeply immersed in 'what is', it can be difficult to envision 'what could be' – particularly when we're talking about fast-cycle planning that requires an 'outside-in' perspective to identify previously overlooked revenue growth potential.

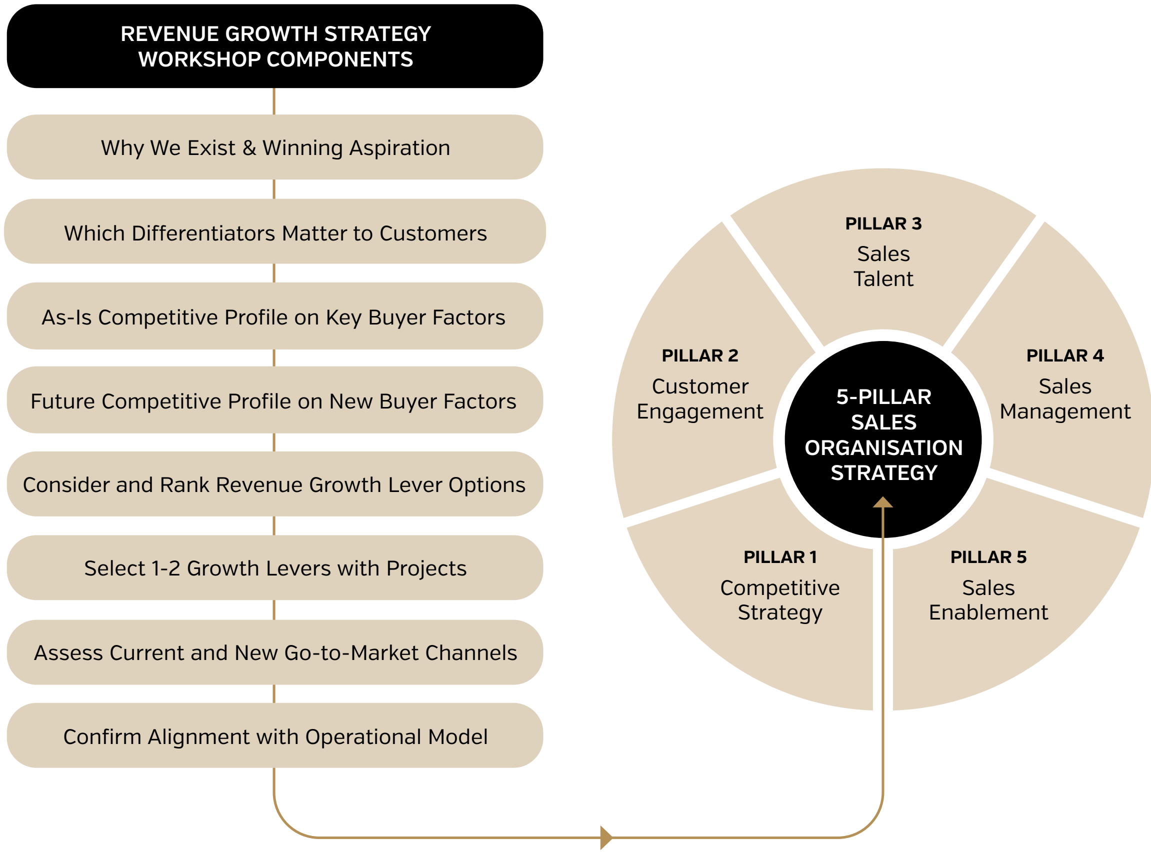
As outlined above, our approach is purpose-built to facilitate fast-cycle planning, but as we all know, without an execution plan in place, no strategy is worth the paper it's printed on.

Here's how we cater for execution outcomes in our Revenue Growth Strategy Workshops to help your team overcome time and focus challenges:

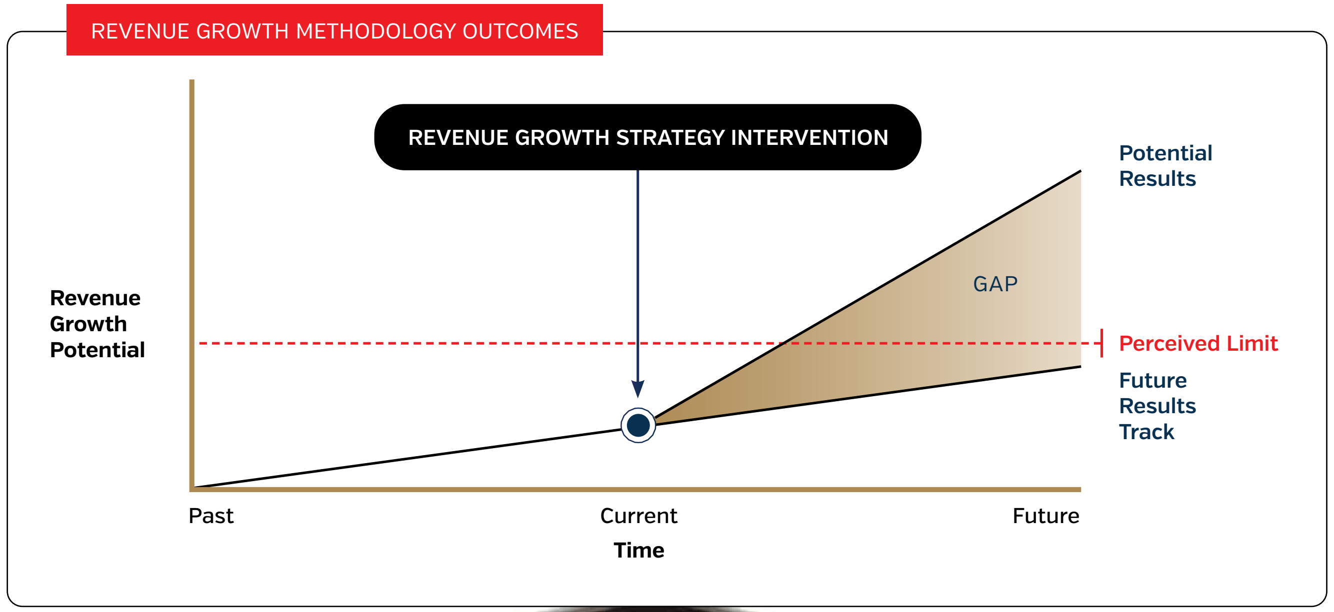
- The Workshops are conducted in a formal setting designed to deliver specific outcomes
- Teams can formulate a winning Revenue Growth Strategy in two days
- A proven methodology guides the process, leveraging structured frameworks and canvasses
- Results are achieved quickly because the brain trust of the organisation is in the room
- Projects with clear, measurable outcomes are identified and designed
- The outcomes cascade down to the Sales Organisation to translate into on-the-ground results
- Once primary growth levers are identified, projects are determined, marketing alignment achieved, and operational budgets catered for.

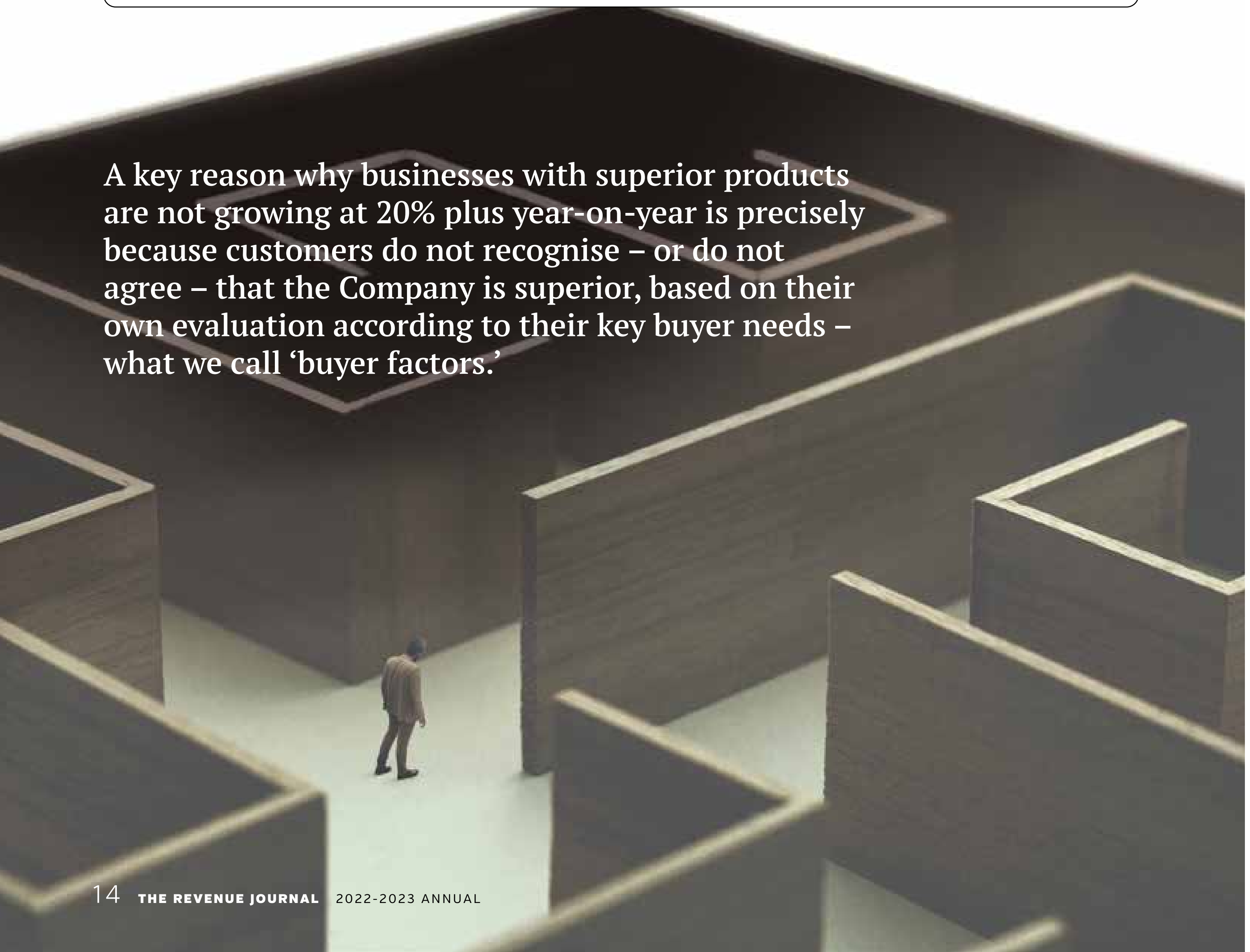
REVENUE GROWTH METHODOLOGY

This methodology is delivered through five phases, sequenced as follows: 1: Revenue Growth Strategy, 2: Sales Organisation Strategy, 3: Sales Process Design, 4: Process Deployment Training, 5: Refresher Training & Coaching.



When Organisations realise the value of alignment between a Corporate Revenue Growth Strategy and a Sales Strategy, a powerful shift takes place.





A key reason why businesses with superior products are not growing at 20% plus year-on-year is precisely because customers do not recognise – or do not agree – that the Company is superior, based on their own evaluation according to their key buyer needs – what we call 'buyer factors.'

TRAP 5

Our offering is superior to our competitors'

This belief is not unusual – most businesses that hold it do genuinely have a good offering. Unfortunately, it's meaningless unless your customers agree with you – and many don't.

A key reason why businesses with superior products are not growing at 20%+ year-on-year is precisely because customers do not recognise – or do not agree – that your Company is superior, based on *their* own evaluation, according to *their* key buyer needs – what we call 'buyer factors.'

Consequently, they only measure your Company on price, and unless you are definitively the #1 lowest cost option, they will either opt for your competitor or simply remain with the status quo.

Wanting something to be a buyer factor doesn't mean it is a buyer factor.

This realisation has been the root of countless 'aha' moments in our workshops thanks to a simple but powerful exercise we facilitate in which we plot our customers 'As-Is Competitive Profile' with them.

One such 'aha' moment came when we screened the results of a customer's 'As-Is Competitive Profile.' for their Company.

The room grew silent as the picture emerged. Not only did this Company look identical to its competitors on most buyer factors, but on two factors they scored lower than their competitors. In the view of this customer, those two factors had never been a big deal – but what they came to realise was that for their buyers, these factors are a big deal.

At this point, I asked the team if they wanted to re-evaluate themselves, perhaps they had been too self-critical. "No," said the CEO. "This is reflective of how we are perceived in the market, and it's the reason we've been struggling to grow. We look just like our competitors. The only real difference from the outside is that we're more expensive – and customers don't know why."

TRAP 6

Our value is clear, and our customers get it

If your Company can truly claim to lead with an 'outside-in' philosophy where customer value is central to your offering, articulated in all your messaging and championed at every touch point – then congratulations, your business represents a small percentage of companies that get it right.

The truth is, while many senior executives would like to believe their organisation ticks these boxes, they simply don't. The majority of B2B organisations still operate with 'inside-out' mentality and lead with a 'features and benefits' approach, while operating under the mistaken belief they are customer-centric.

There is a particular cognitive bias that may account for this miscalculation. It's termed the 'Curse of Knowledge' and it refers to a phenomenon when an individual, steeped in knowledge on a particular subject, unknowingly assumes that the others have the background to understand that subject. After all, given their own immersion in the topic, the facts are now so obvious to them, they don't consider that they would be anything but obvious to another.

In 1990, a Stanford University graduate student named Elizabeth Newton set out to illustrate the 'Curse of Knowledge.' She devised a simple game involving two participants – one would be the tapper, the other the listener. Each tapper was asked to select a well-known song, such as 'Happy Birthday,' and tap out the rhythm with their fingers on a table. The listener's job was to guess the song.

But before the tapping commenced, Newton asked the tappers to predict the probability that the listeners would guess the tune correctly – in other words how confident were they that the tune would be obvious to the listener. On average the tappers predicted 50% – assuming 1 in 2 listeners would get it right.

The results? Over the course of Newton's experiment, 120 songs were tapped out. Only 3 people guessed the correct tunes – that's 3 in 120 – a success ratio of 2.5%.

In business today you can't assume the value you offer is clearly perceived by your customers. In our Revenue Growth Programmes we put these assumptions to the test. Vision, mission and values are not enough – nor are platitudes about customer service or 'partnering for success'.

When a prospective buyer doesn't understand what you do for them and why you're different, price becomes the only differentiating factor. And unless your Company is definitively the #1 lowest cost option, why would a prospect buy from you?

We interrogate what you do for your customers, what your solutions look like inside their business and how you assist your customers increase revenue or decrease costs.

The outcome? "Since defining why we exist, we have clarity on why customers and prospects would care if we were not around. Our vision and mission didn't answer this," said one CEO attending our workshop.

TRAP 7

Revenue growth falls under the purview of the Sales Force

There are three problems with this stance.

Problem one.
Corporate strategy, or revenue growth initiatives, often fail to translate into the required daily on-the-ground Sales Rep activities and customer engagement actions needed for exponential results. Consequently, impactful revenue change is not achieved. We help our customers fix this.

When Organisations realise the value of alignment between a Corporate Revenue Growth Strategy and a Sales Strategy, a powerful shift takes place.

It begins with the acknowledgement that Revenue Growth and Sales starts in the boardroom. Sales cannot be handed a Corporate Strategy and told to execute. Instead, a Sales Strategy based on the Corporate Revenue Growth Strategy must be designed with clear revenue generating projects and actions in place.

Problem two.
The Sales Organisation is a multi-dimensional business unit in a Company. Within its domain resides the following 5-Pillars:

1. **Strategy** with focus areas that include Sales Force Productivity Design, Customer Portfolio Mapping and Territory Planning, to name just a few
2. **Customer Engagement** is next and includes process design and value articulation
3. Then comes **Sales Talent** with hiring, onboarding and training considerations
4. Followed by **Sales Management** that entails hiring, activity management, coaching and forecasting
5. And finally, **Sales Enablement** that looks at case studies, lead generation, CRM and sales support tools.

As you can see, within each of the 5-Pillars lies a multitude of additional factors. To build a world-class, high-performance Sales Organisation, leaders require absolute clarity on their current strengths and weaknesses on each factor within all 5-Pillars. Vague notions simply won't cut it.

We've designed a powerful gap analysis tool that has been used by almost 300 companies to score their Sales Organsations against all these critical factors. This 5-Pillar Sales Organisation Assessment enables companies to score themselves using multiple inputs from Sales Leaders and Managers for 360-degree sales planning and execution reporting (with peer benchmarking), that is tailored to their top 3 sales objectives for the coming 12 months.

Problem three.
There is a commonly held view that assumes sales success is the outcome of hiring, incentivising, motivating, training and driving Sales Reps. This view is flawed.

When its scalable revenue growth you're after, talent alone will never beat process. Let me explain why.

When it comes to high-performing Sales Reps, those rocks stars who possess the perfect blend of Sales DNA, charisma, determination and expertise, they are unstoppable and are likely responsible for generating an out-sized proportion of your Sales Team's revenue.

If your Sales Force was populated by nothing but these top-performing rock stars, there would be no reason for our services. The problem is, these unicorns are hard to find and hard to replace.

> For mid-sized and large organisations looking to unlock real revenue opportunities, or stem revenue losses – sales training alone is the equivalent of using a Band-Aid to treat a bullet wound.

In almost every company we've worked with, these stars account for around only 20% of the Sales Force. The question is, how do you uplift the remaining 80%?

The reality is that unless a Sales Director and their Managers devote considerable time and energy to establishing and maintaining a disciplined Sales Process, making target is often more fluke – and missing the numbers is blamed on a few poor performers who are always below target.

In the absence of a Sales Process, top performers are left to carry the load for the business – creating an unacceptably high risk if – or rather when – they leave.

Talent is not the answer. The key is in building a scalable, customer engagement process designed to drive leading (not lagging) indicators – one process that can be managed, measured, and coached. And here's the key reason why this has become a non-negotiable in modern sales: Customers have gained power.

They are spoilt for choice. Access to the Internet means they can do their own research. This means they don't need your Sales Reps other than to generate a quote, by which time the key measurement for selection is typically price. If your Company is selected as the preferred supplier (note the absence of the word 'partner') the Sales Rep is expected to deliver the quote and ensure implementation and results.

And the globalisation of business means you are not only competing with local suppliers, but in many instances with international players too.

In a nutshell, saying the customer is king is no longer just an empty platitude. It's the reality. That's why your charismatic, experienced top-achievers perform well. They've developed their own process that works for them and their customers, and they understand what their customers need from them.

So, how do you equip the rest of the team to differentiate your Company in a sea of competitors and ensure the high expectations of your customers are consistently met?

A successful Sales Process must be designed according to your Sales Strategy, and must be flawlessly executed by the Sales Force in an agile manner to enable:

- Scalable expansion with fast-tracked onboarding
- A framework to transform customer engagements from one-dimensional interactions into business outcomes-driven discussions where your customers' challenges and needs are clearly identified and linked to your solutions
- One process to which your Managers can align measurement, training and coaching
- A focus on leading indicators to build pipeline quality and quantity
- Dependable forecasting.

Yes, 'Sales DNA' is important (and it can be identified and measured to attract and retain more candidates who possess it), but if you want to rebalance your reliance on top performers and achieve predictable and scalable results, the people must be aligned with the process, and not the other way round.

And before you mentally check the 'we already have a Sales Process in place' box, first establish whether all your Sales Reps are actually following it, your Managers are measuring leading indicators and forecasting against it, and your training and coaching aligns to it. For many companies, on deeper inspection, that answer is 'no.'

TRAP 8

Sales training can fix the problem

A Revenue Growth Strategy is not sales training.

For mid-sized and large organisations looking to unlock real revenue opportunities, or stem revenue losses – sales training alone is the equivalent of using a Band-Aid to treat a bullet wound.

Let's be clear, we're not knocking training; it plays an essential role in shaping the correct mindset and equipping Managers and Reps with the right skills – and it's an important component of our offering.

The problem is that without having the right foundations in place (strategy and process), training efforts may provide a short-term morale boost but will be ineffective in delivering impactful revenue growth.

In summary, sequencing is key
Over the years, we've engaged with many customers who thought what they needed was sales training to improve their revenue results, but what they really needed was a Corporate Revenue Growth Strategy with specific projects to deliver results.

This Revenue Growth Strategy in turn cascades down to the Sales Organisation, where an in-depth assessment identifies the projects necessary to leverage strengths and mitigate weaknesses.

Sales training that delivers results is based on a unique Sales Process design, informed by the Revenue Growth and Sales Organisation strategies.

Only once these projects and processes are in place should sales training effectively take place.

It all comes down to sequencing in a cascading effect. It is a pathway to exponential revenue growth. There is no shortcut. ■

ANDREW HONEY is the co-founder and Chairman of RevenuePartners and has been instrumental in assisting numerous Companies achieve exponential revenue growth and optimise their Sales Organisations.

TRANSIENT ADVANTAGE

Achieving a sustainable competitive edge is nearly impossible these days. Here's a new playbook for strategy in today's high-velocity world.

By Professor Rita Gunther McGrath

ARTICLE IN BRIEF

THE PROBLEM

The dominant idea in the field of strategy – that success consists of establishing a unique competitive position, sustained for long periods of time – is no longer relevant for most businesses.

WHAT'S MISSING

Success will require a new set of operational capabilities.

THE FIX

Companies will need to embrace the notion of transient advantage instead, learning to launch new strategic initiatives again and again, and creating a portfolio of advantages that can be built quickly and abandoned just as rapidly.

STRATEGY IS STUCK.

For too long the business world has been obsessed with the notion of building a sustainable competitive advantage. That idea is at the core of most strategy textbooks; it forms the basis of Warren Buffett's investment strategy; it's central to the success of companies on the 'most admired' lists.

I'm not arguing that it's a bad idea – obviously, it's marvelous to compete in a way that others can't imitate. And even today there are companies that create a strong position and defend it for extended periods of time – companies such as Google, Amazon, IKEA, and Unilever. But it's now rare for a company to maintain a truly lasting advantage.

Competitors and customers have become too unpredictable, and industries too amorphous. The forces at work here are familiar: the digital revolution, a "flat" world, fewer barriers to entry, globalisation.

Strategy is still useful in turbulent industries like consumer electronics, fast-moving consumer goods, television, publishing, photography, and... well, you get the idea. Leaders in these businesses can compete effectively – but not by sticking to the same old playbook. **In a world where a competitive advantage often evaporates in less than a year, companies can't afford to spend months at a time crafting a single long-term strategy. To stay ahead, they need to constantly start new strategic initiatives, building and exploiting many transient competitive advantages at once.** Though individually temporary, these advantages, as a portfolio, can keep companies in the lead over the long run. Companies that have figured this out – such as Milliken & Company, a US-based textiles and chemicals company; Cognizant, a global IT services company; and Brambles, a logistics company based in Australia – have abandoned the assumption that stability in business is the norm. They don't even think it should be a goal. Instead, they work to spark continuous change, avoiding dangerous rigidity. They view strategy differently – as more fluid, more customer-centric, less industry-bound. And the ways they formulate it – the lens they use to define the competitive playing field, their methods for evaluating new business opportunities, their approach to innovation – are different as well.

I'm hardly the first person to write about how fast-moving competition changes strategy; indeed, I'm building on the work of Ian MacMillan [a longtime co-author], Kathleen Eisenhardt, Yves Doz, George Stalk, Mikko Kosonen, Richard D'Aveni, Paul Nunes, and others. However, the thinking in this area – and the reality on the ground – has reached an inflection point. **The field of strategy needs to acknowledge what a multitude of practitioners already know: Sustainable competitive advantage is now the exception, not the rule. Transient advantage is the new normal.**

Sustainable competitive advantage is now the exception, not the rule. Transient advantage is the new normal.

THE ANATOMY OF A TRANSIENT ADVANTAGE

Any competitive advantage – whether it lasts two seasons or two decades – goes through the same life cycle. But when advantages are fleeting, companies must rotate through the cycle much more quickly and more often, so they need a deeper understanding of the early and late stages than they would if they were able to maintain one strong position for many years.

A competitive advantage begins with a launch process, in which the organisation identifies an opportunity and mobilises resources to capitalise on it. In this phase a company needs people who are capable of filling in blank sheets of paper with ideas, who are comfortable with experimentation and iteration, and who probably get bored with the kind of structure required to manage a large, complex organisation.

In the next phase, ramp up, the business idea is brought to scale. This period calls for people who can assemble the right resources at the right time with the right quality and deliver on the promise of the idea.

Then, if a company is fortunate, it begins a period of exploitation, in which it captures profits and share, and forces competitors to react. At this point a company needs people who are good at M&A, analytical decision making, and efficiency. Traditional established companies have plenty of talent with this skillset.

Often, the very success of the initiative spawns competition, weakening the advantage. So the company has to reconfigure what it's doing to keep the advantage fresh. For reconfigurations, a company needs people who aren't afraid to radically rethink business models or resources.

In some cases, the advantage is completely eroded, compelling the company to begin a disengagement process in which resources are extracted and reallocated to the next-generation advantage. To manage this process, you need people who can be candid and tough-minded and can make emotionally difficult decisions.

For sensible reasons, companies with any degree of maturity tend to be oriented toward the exploitation phase of the life cycle. But as I've suggested, they need different skills, metrics, and people to manage the tasks inherent in each stage of an advantage's development. **If they're creating a pipeline of competitive advantages, the challenge is even more complex, because they'll need to orchestrate many activities that are inconsistent with one another.**

Milliken & Company is a fascinating example of an organisation that managed to overcome the competitive forces that annihilated its industry (albeit over a longer time period than some companies today will be granted). By 1991 virtually all of Milliken's traditional competitors had vanished, victims of a surge in global competition that moved the entire business of textile manufacturing to Asia. In Milliken, one sees very clearly the pattern of entering new, more promising arenas while disengaging from older, exhausted ones. Ultimately, the company exited most of its textile lines, but it did not do so suddenly. It gradually shut down American plants, starting in the 1980s and continuing through 2009. (Every effort was made, as best I can tell, to reallocate workers who might have suffered as a result.) At the same time the company was investing in international expansion, new technologies, and new markets, including forays into new arenas to which its capabilities provided access. As a result, a company that had been largely focused on textiles and chemicals through the 1960s, and advanced materials and flameproof products through the 1990s, had become a leader in specialty materials and high-IP specialty chemicals by the 2000s.

FACING THE BRUTAL TRUTH

In a world that values exploitation, people on the front lines are rarely rewarded for telling powerful senior executives that a competitive advantage is fading away. Better to shore up an existing advantage for as long as possible, until the pain becomes so obvious that there is no choice. That's what happened at IBM, Sony, Nokia, Kodak, and a host of other companies that got themselves into terrible trouble, despite ample early warnings from those working with customers.

To compete in a transient-advantage economy, you must be willing to honestly assess whether current advantages are at risk. Ask yourself which of these statements is true of your company:

- I don't buy my own company's products or services
- We're investing at the same or higher levels and not getting better margins or growth in return
- Customers are finding cheaper or simpler solutions to be 'good enough'
- Competition is emerging from places we didn't expect
- Customers are no longer excited about what we have to offer
- We're not considered a top place to work by the people we'd like to hire
- Some of our very best people are leaving
- Our stock is perpetually undervalued.

> Often, the very success of the initiative spawns competition, weakening the advantage. So the firm has to reconfigure what it's doing to keep the advantage fresh.

If you nodded in agreement with four or more of these, that's a clear warning that you may be facing imminent erosion.

But it isn't enough to recognise a problem. You also have to abandon many of the traditional notions about competitive strategy that will exacerbate the challenge of strategy reinvention.

DANGERS TO AVOID

7 Dangerous Misconceptions

Most executives working in a high-velocity setting know perfectly well that they need to change their mode of operation. Often, though, deeply embedded assumptions can lead companies into danger. Here are the issues I see most often.

1. THE FIRST-MOVER ISSUE
This is the belief that being first to market and owning assets, create a sustainable position. In some businesses – like aircraft engines or mining – that's still true. But in most industries a first-mover advantage doesn't last.

2. THE SUPERIORITY ISSUE
Almost any early-stage technology, process, or product won't be as effective as something that's been honed and polished for years. Because of that disparity, many companies don't see the need to invest in improving their established offerings – until the upstart innovations mature, by which time it's often too late for the incumbents.

3. THE QUALITY ISSUE
Many businesses in exploit mode stick with a level of quality higher than customers are prepared to pay for. When a cheaper, simpler offer is good enough, customers will abandon the incumbent.

4. THE HOSTAGE-RESOURCES ISSUE
In most companies, executives running big, profitable businesses get to call the shots. These people have no incentive to shift resources to new ventures. I remember holding a Nokia product that was remarkably similar to today's iPad – in about 2004. It hooked up to the internet, accessed web pages, and even had a rudimentary app constellation. Why did Nokia never capitalise on this groundbreaking innovation? Because the company's emphasis was on mass-market phones, and resource allocation decisions were made accordingly.

5. THE WHITE-SPACE ISSUE
When I ask executives about the biggest barriers to innovation, I often hear, "Well, these things fall between the cracks of our organisational structure." When opportunities don't fit their structure, companies often simply forego them instead of making the effort to reorganise. For instance, a product manufacturer might pass up potentially profitable moves into services because they require coordination of activities along a customer's experience, rather than by product line.

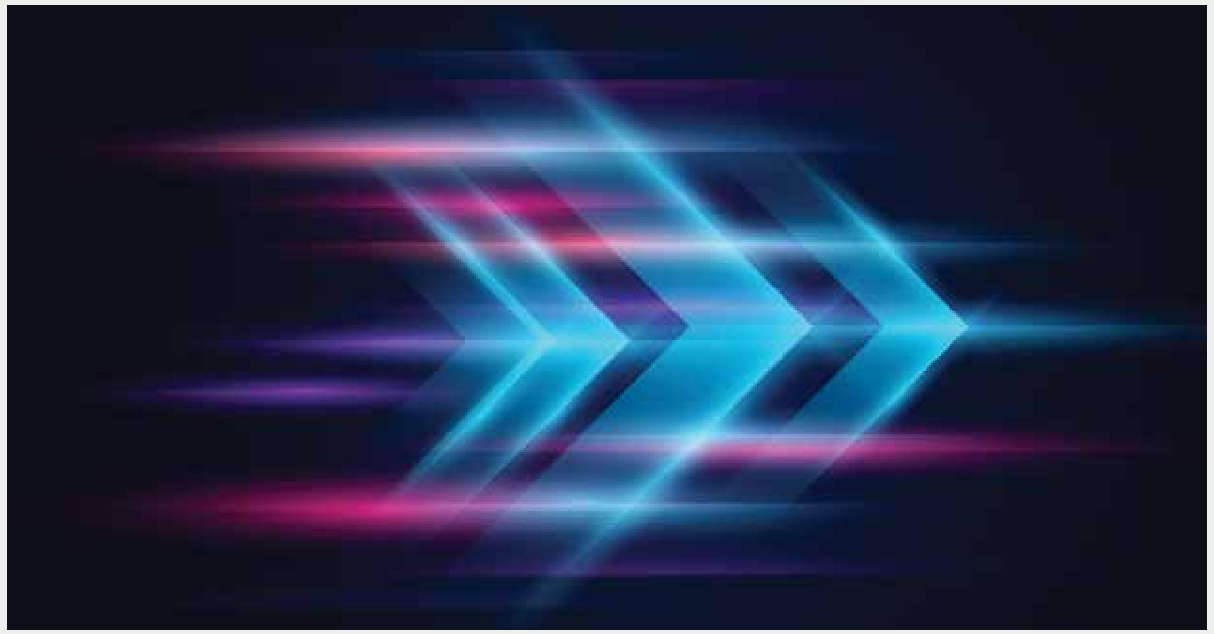
6. THE EMPIRE-BUILDING ISSUE
In a lot of companies, the more assets and employees you manage, the better. This system promotes hoarding, bureaucracy building, and fierce defence of the status quo; it inhibits experimentation, iterative learning, and risk taking. And it causes employees who like to do new things, to leave.

7. THE SPORADIC-INNOVATION ISSUE
Many companies do not have a system for creating a pipeline of new advantages. As a result, innovation is an on-again, off-again process that is driven by individuals, making it extraordinarily vulnerable to swings in the business cycle.

WHAT NEXT?

STRATEGY FOR TRANSIENT ADVANTAGE: THE NEW PLAYBOOK

Companies that want to create a portfolio of transient advantages need to make eight major shifts in the way that they operate.



1 THINK ABOUT ARENAS, NOT INDUSTRIES

One of the more cherished ideas in traditional management is that by looking at data about other companies like yours, you can uncover the right strategy for your organisation. Indeed, one of the most influential strategy frameworks – Michael Porter's five forces model – assumes that you are mainly comparing your company to others in a similar industry. In today's environment, where industry lines are quickly blurring, this can blindside you.

I've seen untraditional competitors take companies by surprise repeatedly. In the 1980s, for instance, no money-centre bank even saw the threat posed by Merrill Lynch's new cash-management accounts, because they weren't offered by any bank. Millions in deposits flew out the door before the banks realised what was going on. But in recent years, the phenomenon has become more common.

Google's moves into phone operating systems and online video have created consternation in traditional phone businesses; retailers like Walmart have begun edging into health care; and the entire activity of making payments is being disrupted by players from a variety of industries, including mobile phone operators, internet credit providers, and swipe-card makers.

Today strategy involves orchestrating competitive moves in what I call "arenas." An arena is a combination of a customer segment, an offer, and a place in which that offer is delivered. It isn't that industries aren't relevant anymore; it's just that industry-level analysis doesn't give you the full picture. Indeed, the very notion of a transient competitive advantage is less about making more money than your industry peers, as conventional definitions would have it, and more about responding to customers' "jobs to be done" (as Tony Ulwick would call it) in a given space.

2 SET BROAD THEMES, AND THEN LET PEOPLE EXPERIMENT

The shift to a focus on arenas means that you can't analyse your way to an advantage with armies of junior staffers or consultants anymore. Today's gifted strategists examine the data, certainly, but they also use advanced pattern recognition, direct observation, and the interpretation of weak signals in the environment to set broad themes. Within those themes, they free people to try different approaches and business models.

Tech company Cognizant, for instance, clearly spells out the competitive terrain it would like to claim but permits people on the ground considerable latitude within that framework. "The Future of Work" is Cognizant's umbrella term for a host of services intended to help clients rethink their business models, reinvent their workforces, and rewire their operations – all with the company's assistance, of course.

3 ADOPT METRICS THAT SUPPORT ENTREPRENEURIAL GROWTH

When advantages come and go, conventional metrics can effectively kill off innovations by imposing decision rules that make no sense. The net present value rule, for instance, assumes that you will complete every project you start, that advantages will last for quite a while, and that there will even be a "terminal value" left once they are gone. It leads companies to underinvest in new opportunities.

Instead, companies can use the logic of "real options" to evaluate new moves. A real option is a small investment that conveys the right, but not the obligation, to make a more significant commitment in the future. It allows the organisation to learn through trial and error. Consider the way financial software company Intuit has made experimentation a core strategic process, amplifying by orders of magnitude its ability to venture into new spaces and try new things. As Kaaren Hanson, the company's vice president of design innovation, said at a recent conference at Columbia Business School, the important thing is to "fall in love with the problem you are trying to solve" rather than with the solution, and to be comfortable with iteration as you work toward the answer.

4 FOCUS ON EXPERIENCES AND SOLUTIONS TO PROBLEMS

As barriers to entry tumble, product features can be copied in an instant. Even service offerings in many industries have become commoditised. Once a company has demonstrated that demand for something exists, competitors quickly move in. What customers crave – and few companies provide – are well-designed experiences and complete solutions to their problems. Unfortunately, many companies are so internally focused that they're oblivious to the customer's experience. You call up your friendly local cable company or telephone provider and get connected to a robot. The robot wants to know your customer number, which you dutifully provide. Eventually, the robot decides that your particular problem is too difficult and hands you over to a live person. What's the first thing the person wants to know? Yup, your customer number. It's symptomatic of the disjointed and fragmented way most complex organisations handle customers.

Companies skilled at exploiting transient advantage put themselves in their customers' place and consider the outcome customers are trying to achieve. Australia's Brambles has done a really great job of this even though it is in a seemingly dull industry (managing the logistics of pallets and other containers). The company realised that one of their grocers' biggest costs was the labour required to shelve goods delivered to their stores. Brambles designed a solution: plastic bins that can be filled by growers right in the fields and lifted directly from pallets and placed on shelves, from which customers can help themselves. It has cut labour costs significantly. Better yet, fruits and vegetables arrive at the point of purchase in better shape because they aren't manhandled repeatedly as they go from field to box to truck to warehouse to storage room to shelf. Although seemingly low-tech, this initiative and others like it have generated substantial profits and steady growth for the company – not to mention customers' appreciation.

Product features can be copied in an instant. Even service offerings in many industries have become commoditised. Once a company has demonstrated that demand for something exists, competitors quickly move in.

5 BUILD STRONG RELATIONSHIPS AND NETWORKS

One of the few barriers to entry that remain powerful in a transient-advantage context has to do with people and their personal networks. Indeed, evidence suggests that the most successful and sought-after employees are those with the most robust networks.

Realising that strong relationships with customers are a profound source of advantage, many companies have begun to invest in communities and networks as a way of deepening ties with customers.

Intuit, for example, has created a space on its website where customers can interact, solve one another's problems, and share ideas. The company goes so far as to recognise exemplary problem solvers with special titles and short profiles of them on the site. Amazon and TripAdvisor both make contributions from their communities a core part of the value they offer customers. And of course, social networks have the power to enhance or destroy a company's credibility in nanoseconds as customers enjoy an unprecedented ability to connect with one another.

Companies that are skilled at managing networks are also notable for the way they preserve important relationships. Digital consulting and services company Infosys, for instance, is choosy about which customers it will serve, but it maintains a 97% customer retention rate. Sagentia, a technical consultancy in the UK, is extremely conscientious about making sure that people who are let go remain on good terms with the company and land well in new positions.

> What customers crave – and few companies provide – are well-designed experiences and complete solutions to their problems. Unfortunately, many companies are so internally focused that they're oblivious to the customer's experience.

6 AVOID BRUTAL RESTRUCTURING; LEARN HEALTHY DISENGAGEMENT

In researching companies that effectively navigate the transient-advantage economy, I was struck by how seldom they engaged in restructuring, downsizing, or mass firings. Instead, many of them seemed to continually adjust and readjust their resources. At Infosys, I was told, people don't really believe in "chopping things off." Rather, when an initiative is wound down, they say it "finds its way to insignificance."

Preparing customers to transition away from old advantages is a lot like getting them to adopt a new product, but in reverse. Not all customers will be prepared to move at the same rate. There is a sequence to which customers you should transition first, second, and so on.

7 GET SYSTEMATIC ABOUT EARLY-STAGE INNOVATION

If advantages eventually disappear, it only makes sense to have a process for filling your pipeline with new ones. This in turn means rather than being an on-again, off-again mishmash of projects, your innovation process needs to be carefully orchestrated.

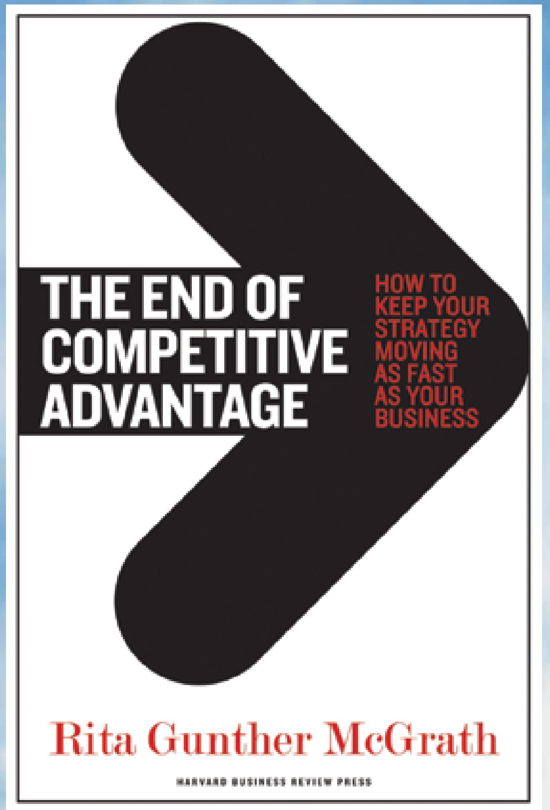
Companies that innovate proficiently manage the process in similar ways. They have a governance structure suitable for innovation: They set aside a separate budget and staff for innovation and allow senior leaders to make go or no-go decisions about it outside the planning processes for individual businesses.

The earmarked innovation budget, which gets allocated across projects, means that new initiatives don't have to compete with established businesses for resources. Such companies also have a strong sense of how innovations fit into the larger portfolio, and a line of sight to initiatives in all different stages. They hunt systematically for opportunities, usually searching beyond the boundaries of the company and its R&D department – to figure out what customers are trying to accomplish and how the company can help them do it.

8 EXPERIMENT, ITERATE, LEARN

As I've said for many years, a big mistake companies make all the time is planning new ventures with the same approaches they use for more-established businesses. Instead, they need to focus on experimentation and learning, and be prepared to make a shift or change emphasis as new discoveries happen. The discovery phase is followed by business model definition and incubation, in which a project takes the shape of an actual business and may begin pilot tests or serving customers. Only once the initiative is relatively stable and healthy is it ramped up. All too often, in their haste to get commercial traction, companies rush through this phase; as a result whatever product they introduce has critical flaws. They also spend way too much money before testing the critical assumptions that will spell success or failure. ■

> A competitive advantage begins with a launch process, in which the organisation identifies an opportunity and mobilises resources to capitalise on it.



RITA GUNTHER MCGRATH, a professor at Columbia Business School, researches strategy in uncertain and volatile environments. Her latest book is *The End of Competitive Advantage.*

LEADERSHIP AS ORCHESTRATION

No leader could cognitively handle the complexity of scores of individual arenas, all at slightly different stages of development. What great leaders do is figure out some key directional guidelines, put in place good processes for core activities such as innovation, and use their influence over a few crucial inflection points to direct the flow of activities in the organisation.

QUESTIONING STATUS QUO

This requires a new kind of leader – one who initiates conversations that question, rather than reinforce, the status quo. A strong leader seeks contrasting opinions and honest disagreement. Diversity increasingly becomes a tool for picking up signals that things may be changing. Broader constituencies may well become involved in the strategy process.

MOVING WITH SPEED

Finally, transient-advantage leaders recognise the need for speed. Fast and roughly right decision making will replace deliberations that are precise but slow. In a world where advantages last for five minutes, you can blink and miss the window of opportunity.

MAKING TOUGH CHOICES

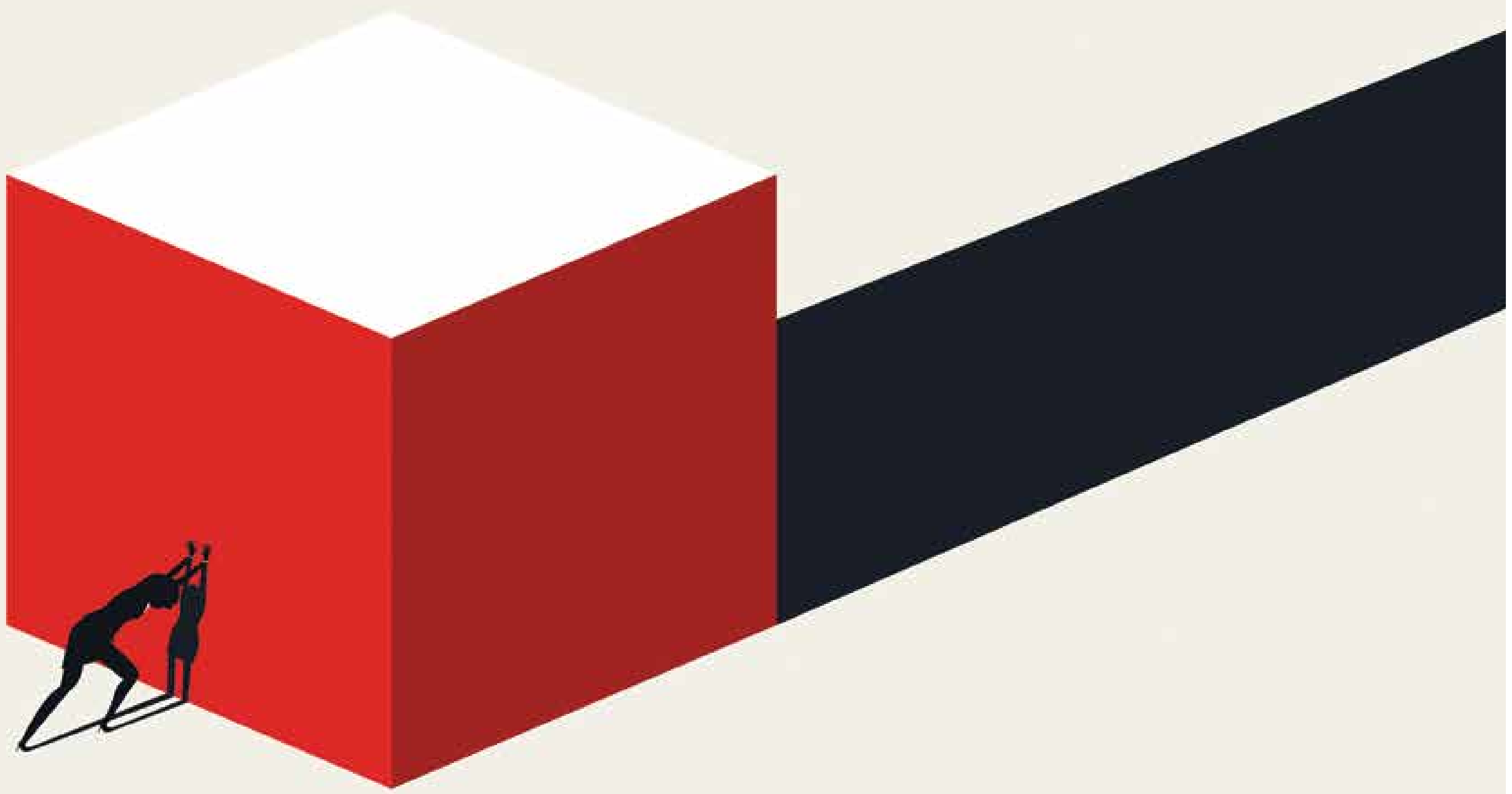
One thing about strategy hasn't changed: It still requires making tough choices about what to do and, even more important, what not to do.

Even though you are orchestrating scores of arenas, you can do only so many things. So defining where you want to compete, how you intend to win, and how you are going to move from advantage to advantage is critical. While we might be tempted to throw up our hands and say that strategy is no longer useful, I think the opposite conclusion is called for.

It's more important than ever. It just isn't about the status quo any longer.

CHANGE MANAGEMENT

WHY CHANGE INITIATIVES FAIL and what to do about it.



There is hardly a business article that has been written in the past two years that has not referenced the 'unprecedented change' and upheaval caused by the pandemic.

But flux is nothing new. You're probably familiar with the quote: "The Only Constant in Life Is Change." That bumper sticker has been doing the rounds since the ancient Greek philosopher, Heraclitus, coined it back in 500 BC.

No doubt, the pandemic has created a novel set of circumstances for the world in general – and the world of work, in particular. But much of its impact has been the acceleration of pre-pandemic trends that were already in play: The speed of advancing technology, the fourth industrial revolution, seismic shifts in many industries, and 'agile' development practices – characterised by a cycle of never-ending iterations in the quest for continuous improvement.

In direct response to the pandemic and the pandemic-fueled accelerated pace of change, businesses have had to rethink the way they work; how, what and who they sell to – and in some cases the business model itself.

Each of these course corrections result in changed priorities, reporting structures, KPIs, duties, technologies, and/or ways of working.

And in most instances, it's not new staff entering the organisation for the first time that have to execute on these changes… it's your existing team of change-fatigued executives, Managers, Reps and Administrators that have to re-adjust (again).

So how do change initiatives generally fair?

Statistics around the success of change initiatives vary, but one thing is consistent: failure rates remain unacceptably high.

According to research conducted by John Kotter for Leading Change (1996), 70% of change programmes fail.

This simple fact led to a proliferation of Change Management literature and courses, from Who Moved My Cheese to Our Iceberg Is Melting. And yet despite awareness, frameworks and focus, by 2008 a McKinsey survey of 3 199 global executives found that only one transformation in three succeeds. In other words, 66% of change management programmes were still failing.

Which leads to the big question: Why?

FACT: Many important business initiatives that start strong, ultimately failed through a lack of commitment, or follow-through.

Welcome to the Valley of Despair

The Valley of Despair is a common reaction to change in business. It's the boneyard were good projects go to die.

The top three things we change in business are: Process, structure and technology (sometimes all three). Adjustments may be radical overhauls, or incremental improvements – but they all result in change.

And here's the real problem: Everyone is comfortable with the old way of doing things, which means that a lot of what we're accustomed to doing, happens automatically and without much thought.

In the absence of a comprehensive change management programme, leadership often exacerbates the problem by hyping the benefits of the change, down-playing the impending challenges, and labelling the cross-over as something that will be 'easy' to accomplish.

So, when there's change, and things don't work – because they often won't (especially upfront when kinks become apparent and we are very unproductive), what happens? Everyone collectively enters what's called the Valley of Despair.

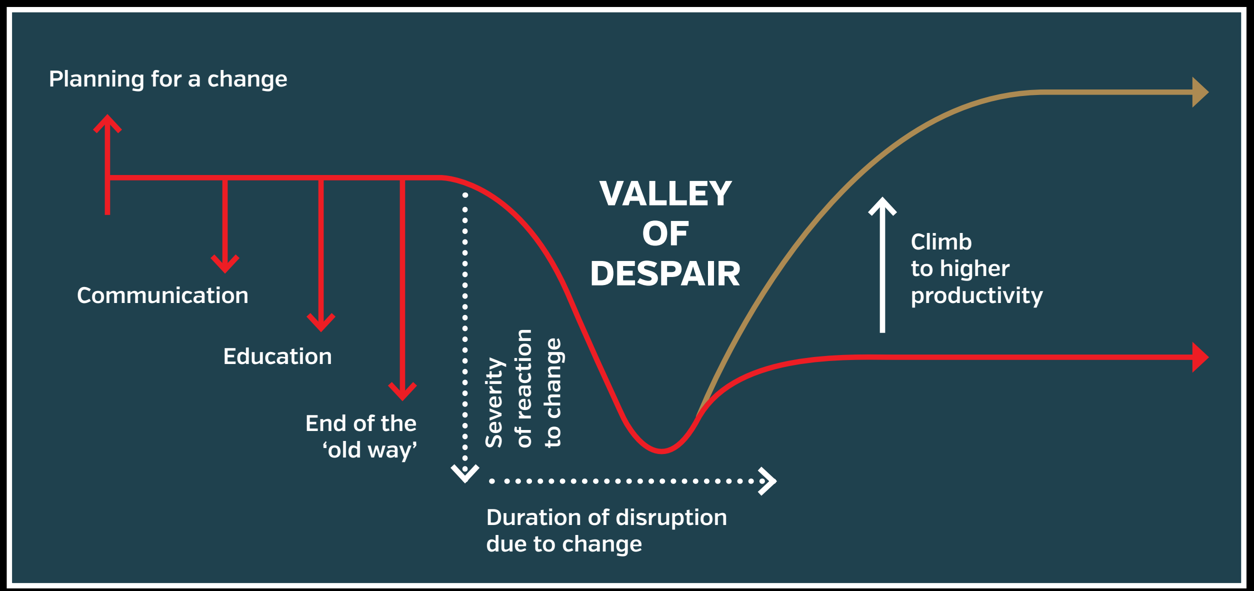
This is what happens when employees look back and romanticise the way it was – focusing on how much better, and simpler, the old ways were. Frustration sets in when they're not able to get their work done as quickly or easily. And soon employees become demotivated and resistant to the change.

Without the keen eye of active and ongoing change managers, the projects are not uniformly executed – and/or they are abandoned with many (or all) employees reverting back to the old way of doing things.

If change management efforts are not well-coordinated and sustained, the 'Valley of Despair' is where your projects will die – resulting in significant wasted time, investment, and opportunity.

What is the role of change management?

1. To decrease the severity of the reaction that people have to the change and the difficulties that come with the change
2. To shorten the duration that it takes for them to get to the other side of the Valley of Despair, where they feel good again and where they have a higher level of productivity
3. And to stick with it until behaviour changes, and the change itself becomes the new default way of doing things.



EXPERT INSIGHTS

LEADING CHANGE WITH PURPOSE

We sat down with **Jaco Swart,** Strategic Analyst at RevenuePartners. As a change management expert, having executed major turnarounds in Nigeria and South Africa, Swart understands how change initiatives get derailed – and what to do about it.

Q: Let's begin with the big question… what is the single greatest issue when it comes to failure in change management projects?

In my experience, management teams underestimate the time and effort needed to fundamentally and permanently change employee behaviour to support the changes needed. Obviously simpler process changes require less effort – but if you're looking to overhaul your company's sales process for instance, it's not a one-and-done exercise.

Q: What's the reason for this underestimation?

There are a couple of factors at play here. Let's take a scenario we often encounter at RevenuePartners. Companies are finding it increasingly difficult to differentiate in the current environment. As a result of aggressive competitors, their position of dominance is being eroded, with customers jumping ship for cheaper prices. We work with companies to improve their competitive positioning and help them differentiate themselves through their sales process. This inevitably requires a change in the way the Sales Force engages with customers and how Sales Managers manage their Reps and the process.

This new sales process requires Reps to dig deeper and expend more time and energy to uncover the customer's challenges and produce business cases that tie these challenges to the unique outcomes they can deliver, by leveraging their differentiators in a way that creates greater value, in order to shift customer buying criteria beyond 'cheapest price' as the primary factor.

Now as we all know change is painful, so we humans work hard to resist it – and we work even harder to resist change when it's being forced on us.

The senior management teams who have recognised the need to change, have done so over the course of months, sometimes years. They've considered a multitude of potential solutions to the challenges facing them – and they've weighed the pros and cons of each… finally arriving at what they believe to be the best means to achieve the necessary outcome.

Conversely, the team on the ground (Reps and Front Line Managers) responsible for executing this change have not been party to this process – and in many instances they may not have a full appreciation of the scale of the problem and its potential impact on the company, nor any deep concern when it comes to fixing an existential organisational issue.

Now the senior management team unveils the impending change to Reps and Front Line Managers. They explain what it entails, how it will benefit the company, and how it will benefit the individuals. They may acknowledge it will be tough, but necessary – and they'll re-emphasise the benefits and expected rewards. This unveiling may take place at a meeting/s, a company conference or a bosberaad. Following the announcement, some form of training will be given on the 'new way,' periodic messaging to encourage adoption will follow and Managers will be required to report back regularly on progress and results. As issues arise they will be dealt with. And that is typically it!

Q: Why is this approach deficient?

Depending on the severity of the change, the level of disruption to the comfortable 'old way' of doing things, and the delay before significant (personal) positive impacts are realised, resistance will begin… and as the team becomes mired in the Valley of Despair… it will intensify. What happens next is fairly predictable. Behaviour is contagious. If employees don't have the support they need to assist them make the change, coupled with tough penalties for non-compliance, they will return to old habits and processes. Eventually people band together and lobby Managers on all the reasons why the new system is flawed and the old way was better. And when your fatigued Managers turn a blind eye to non-compliance or buy into the discontent, you know your project is doomed.

The keystone for success is appointing a dedicated Change Manager, or Change Task Team for larger projects, with the right linked KPIs and true commitment to the project.

Q: So, what's the fix?

The first point, is to walk into any change project with your eyes wide open. The high failure rate of change projects is common because of the factors I've mentioned, so they must be mitigated. Companies need to acknowledge that managing change is not a 'one-and-done' thing, a significant amount of time and energy must be committed. Depending on the severity of the change we could be talking years, not months.

It's also important to expect some churn. There are some employees and Managers who will simply refuse to change. You need to be prepared to let them go.

Finally, the keystone for success is appointing a dedicated Change Manager, or Change Task Team for larger projects, with the right linked KPIs and true commitment to the project. This person or persons will be responsible for championing the project, identifying and removing stumbling blocks, monitoring adoption and compliance, communicating successes, reporting back to senior management and leading process iterations. They will be single-minded in making a success of the change. Delegating these important tasks to Managers who are already over-taxed with their current workloads is a recipe for failure.

Q: What steps can be taken in paving the pathway for success?

In many change projects, iteration and refinement is a necessary part of the process. These refinements however place an additional burden on change-fatigued teams in terms of having to make more adjustments. So, building a culture that embraces agility is important. Piloting the programme with a smaller cohort can also be tremendously beneficial, in that lessons learnt can help iron out kinks for smoother deployment to the broader base and early success stories can help to boost morale and excitement around the change.

Tracking the right success metric is also crucial. You need one simple metric that demonstrates the 'winning future' – a statistic that shows what the end result looks like, in other words the outcome of change. For example, taking a revised sales process for instance, the 'winning future' metric may be the percentage of increase in deal size. This simple metric creates clarity for the team in terms of what they're aiming for, and shows it's doable.

Finally, sharing success stories (even small wins) fuels enthusiasm and can act as instructional case studies. So be purposeful about collecting them as signposts on the path to success and encourage peer-to-peer sharing and learning. Tracking the 'winning future' metric and sharing these success stories substantiates why the change is necessary.

Q: Beyond appointing a dedicated Change Manager, do you have any tips for how organisations can better-support change initiatives and straighten those kinks?

Stumbling blocks on the path to change are inevitable – and I've also mentioned the need for iteration and refinement. These factors require focused enablement support, overseen by the Change Manager. For example, your Sales Force may require updates to presentations, brochures, proposal documents, etc. You want to minimise the time it takes to get these updated tools to the team and to train them on how best to use them.

Daily (or weekly) huddle meetings serve as valuable short-interval feedback forums to allow your team members to share positive stories and voice issues or concerns. These sessions must be led by a strong Manager who can ensure that any critique remains constructive and who can action outcomes quickly. Again, this is where the Change Manager plays a critical role. The key here though, is action and feedback because people can easily become despondent if the concerns they raise are not addressed.

You also need to ensure the Sales Team is receiving ongoing training and individual coaching to train them on the new way.

Change Managers will be single-minded in making a success of the change. Delegating these important tasks to managers who are already over-taxed with their current workloads is a recipe for failure.

Q: To what extent does company culture influence success or failure in change initiatives?

Any company's culture is shaped by the leaders at the top, and that filters down to the team on the ground – so yes, company culture is critical.

Senior management must set the tone from the outset. They need to invest in unpacking the 'why' in a way that connects with their team, ensure the correct resources are in place to support a prolonged change effort, establish the non-negotiables and finally maintain close involvement throughout the change project to ensure it's not derailed – and again this may mean months, or it may mean years before the 'new way' becomes the 'default way.' ■

JACO SWART is a profit and performance improvement specialist with nearly two decades' experience in business development and managing corporate turnaround projects. As a Strategic Analyst at RevenuePartners, Jaco assists strategic sales improvement projects that drive functional optimisation and revenue.

ASSESS YOUR COMPANY

Are You Revenue Growth Ready?

Use the **Strategy, Execution and Results Scorecard** to evaluate the Competitive Strategy of your Company.

HOW WE ASSIST CUSTOMERS

At **RevenuePartners** we deploy unique **strategy frameworks** which enable **fast-cycle planning** that assists customers assess, design and deploy new revenue growth levers, Go-to-Market channels and a Sales Organisation designed to differentiate the Company to achieve exponential revenue growth results.

OUR IMPACT

Turn to the back of the magazine to view our solutions and results.

PLANNING & EXECUTION SCORECARD

Rate your Revenue Growth Strategy

How does your Company score on these Revenue Growth Strategy questions?

		No plan	Plan in progress	Yes, documented & finalised		No execution	Dissatisfied	Satisfied	Highly satisfied		Results off plan	Results on plan	Results beyond plan	SUB-TOTALS
1. In the past 12-months did your Revenue Growth Strategy include a revenue growth lever to deliver 20% plus upside over 12-18 months and beyond?	Plan in place	0	1	3	Execution in place	0	1	3	5	Results to plan	0	5	10	
2. In the past 12-months were existing and potential Go-to-Market channels reviewed and considered to enable or surpass the 20% plus revenue upside?	Plan in place	0	1	3	Execution in place	0	1	3	5	Results to plan	0	5	10	
3. In the past 12-months was a 360-degree assessment of the Sales Organisation conducted to enable the design of a Sales Strategy to mitigate weaknesses and deliver the 20% plus growth opportunity identified?	Plan in place	0	1	3	Execution in place	0	1	3	5	Results to plan	0	5	10	
													GRAND TOTAL	

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Score your company on each question by plan, execution and results
2. Add your scores per question and enter the sub-total in the last column
3. Add your 3 sub-totals for a grand total and check your scoring against the ranges below
4. Decide on a plan of action to address risks or to leverage growth potential.

RANGE	GRADE	ACTION
0-24	Revenue growth potential is low	Urgently design an action plan to address revenue growth
25-36	Revenue growth potential at risk	Plan where weaknesses can be mitigated for improved growth
37-54	Revenue growth potential is good	Consider opportunities for exponential growth

How do you score?

Once you've read this section, turn to **page 54** to rate how you score on revenue growth readiness in **Pillar 2**

PILLAR 2

Customer Engagement

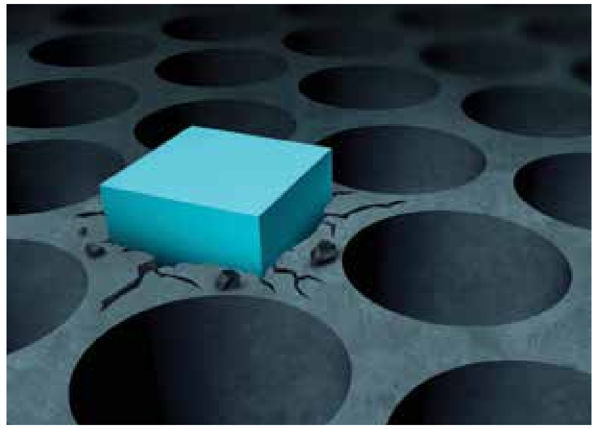
Revenue Growth Engineering™

2

VALUE-SELLING

Is your sales team struggling to sell solutions?

It seems after four decades of talk about the 'consultative' or 'solution' sales approach, companies would be adept at selling this way by now. Unfortunately, that's not the case. **BY SCOTT EDINGER**



Many sales professionals struggle to move beyond pitching their products or services to providing solutions that are connected to customer business outcomes. This is one of the most common concerns I hear from CEOs about their Sales Organisation.

Traditional selling tends to focus on a pitch or capabilities presentation to communicate the value of a company's products or services, then closing on a commitment to purchase.

In contrast, the consultative approach requires sellers to create value by helping customers identify issues and opportunities they haven't recognised and provide solutions they hadn't anticipated. In this way, the sales process is more about understanding the customer's circumstances, needs, and objectives and positioning products and services to meet them. Connecting to the customers' goals is what transforms offerings into solutions.

Solution selling has become a critical skillset as markets evolve. Global spending in the Internet of Things (IoT) market is projected to surpass $1 trillion by 2024, and the research think tank Gartner highlights that a critical factor for success in this market will be a "well-trained consultative Sales Organisation." Using a consultative sales approach is a key recommendation for being able to "effectively sell complete IoT solutions, not just parts and pieces," according to Gartner. Here is a trillion-dollar market with no single market leader, and a primary key to success is having a team that can sell business value and outcomes by understanding customer pain points.

SO, WHAT'S THE PROBLEM?

So why hasn't the shift to selling solutions happened already? There are three primary reasons:

1. Consultative selling is far more difficult to do well than most realise

When I speak at conferences, many leaders still suggest that sales success is largely about personality and drive. In fact The Wall Street Journal reported in July of this year that a primary barrier to filling sales jobs, which are plentiful and high paying, is the stigma of "Mad Men"-style representatives and used car salesman that won't seem to go away. This isn't a new realisation: the WSJ published an article making the same point in 2015.

For the most part, sales effectiveness is not taught in school. At the few colleges that have sales curricula in the business school, courses are largely centred on operationalising sales – things like territory sizing, quota setting, analytics and so forth – not mastering the behaviours for effective consultative selling.

What's more, unlike old-school tips and tactics training that focuses on pitching and closing techniques, from the Ben Franklin to the Puppy Dog (yes these still exist), executing a strategic sales process, requires a lot of practice to gain mastery. It requires strategic thinking while simultaneously conducting a disciplined process of interaction with one or more people. It's unlikely that anyone could reach the level of mastery, let alone competence, after attending a few training sessions, any more than one could become good at playing golf or the piano with a similar amount of instruction.

Understanding the skills for consultative selling is easy and can be learned in about an hour. But knowing doesn't equal doing. While training is necessary when tackling a challenging skillset, it is insufficient without what K. Anders Ericsson's research calls Deliberate Practice. Deliberate practice – having a clear model of success, the opportunity to practice in a safe environment (e.g. not with top prospects and customers), and receiving precise coaching and feedback on where to improve – is the key. And practicing just a few times isn't enough. It requires a commitment on the part of executives to coaching and developing sales talent. Without any disrespect to Human Resources, where I started my career, it can't be led by HR. Creating a culture of coaching and building sales capability must be a strategic imperative. It's the only way you'll develop the kind of consultative Sales Organisation that enables you to win big chunks of a trillion-dollar market.

2. It's not central to business strategy and doesn't get proper focus

While it's one of the primary factors in winning or losing in your chosen markets, the sales experience is conspicuously absent within corporate strategy. Most corporate strategy decks focus on which markets to pursue and which competitive advantages you'll employ to win. This is important information at the heart of most strategy models. But how you sell a product or service can be nearly as vital as what you are selling.

When competing alternatives are similar, or even perceived as the same, delivering a sales experience focused on value, insight, and expertise can be the differentiation that enables you to win. In my work with clients on growth strategy, I always advise they pay the same kind of strategic attention to how they are selling as they do to what they are selling. I suggest answering the question, "How will our sales experience create value?"

The answers to this question can change the role of your Sales Organisation. It moves Sales Reps beyond simply communicating your competitive advantages and makes them an important part of the competitive advantage. By helping customers to think differently about how to address issues they are facing or how to capitalise on opportunities they haven't considered, the sales process itself becomes a point of value. This will not happen by simply telling the sales team that they need to go sell more, sell better, or sell differently. It starts with making the sales process a central ingredient in the go-to-market strategy. Then the role of sales becomes integral in the execution of that strategy.

3. Sales management and leadership practices don't support the consultative sale

After every consultative sales training program, I hear this from participants: "I'm not managed this way." The issue isn't just the lack of effective coaching and development. It's about fundamental management practices associated with everything from revenue forecasting and metrics for progress reporting to product and service education.

Too often, management spends most of their time on late-stage opportunities in the pipeline, while the real action for a consultative sales process is in the early stages. That's where customer opportunities expand and the scope of deals are determined.

Leaders should prepare Reps to create value early in the sales process by doing joint call planning, account strategy and identifying issues customers may be missing or opportunities they haven't considered.

Most importantly, management should not pressure Reps to close a deal within the month or quarter. I worked with a services division of a Fortune 100 company where 83% of their revenue was coming in the last two weeks of every quarter. That revenue also had 30% lower margins than the other 17%. Why? Management put intense pressure on driving a quarterly close number, which led Reps to behave with desperation, offering significant discounts to make any sale happen. Over time, customers got wise to this and knew they could wait for the fire sale. No amount of training or strategy could overcome this behaviour if management practices for revenue forecasting and managing the numbers didn't change. Consultative selling is a long game, and pressure to close something – anything – to make a quota, runs counter to the principles you need your Salespeople to embrace.

It's easy to point your efforts at the sales team to get them to sell differently. There is no shortage of good sales training in the market, and it's existed for decades. The primary reasons Reps struggle to be more consultative and sell solutions effectively have more to do with leadership than sales. Focus on addressing these three issues to build a high-performance Sales Organisation that is a part of your competitive advantage. ■

SCOTT EDINGER, is the author of *The Hidden Leader: Discover and Develop Greatness Within Your Company.*

A PRACTICAL GUIDE TO GROWING LOYALTY & WALLETSHARE

Shifting from Customer Service to Customer Success

Ready to take a quantum leap in customer loyalty, retention and lifetime value? Then it's time to take a genuine 'customer first' approach by operationalising customer retention and growth.

BY NICOLE HONEY

ARTICLE IN BRIEF

THE PROBLEM

B2B Sales Organisations acknowledge the benefits of maximising customer lifetime value, but many lack the formal structures to ensure customers obtain their desired objectives, thus not paving the way for up-sells, cross-sells, advocacy and referrals.

WHAT'S MISSING

Customer Service is reactive. Customer Success is proactive. Sadly, many organisations fail to excel at either.

THE SOLUTION

Companies need to be purposeful about their approach to Customer Success by implementing processes, assigning KPIs and being dilligent in monitoring progress.

Take a moment to consider your previous 10 encounters with service providers. Think ordering at restaurants, servicing your car, dealing with brokers, bankers, contractors, suppliers and the like. You get the picture.

How many earned a 5-star service rating from you? How many would warrant an on-camera testimonial from you where you share with the world, your stunned admiration on their stellar performance in knocking your expectations right out of the park?

That's right… crickets.

In our training interventions on the topic, when we ask delegates the same question, we typically get one to two anecdotes from the group on instances of outstanding, proactive problem solving or exceeded expectations.

Many of these stories relate to an individual following through on a commitment, investing some extra time or energy in resolving an issue, or following-up with a call to check all is in order after the resolution of an issue.

Hardly earth-shattering. And moreover, in our experience, these anecdotes only achieve their elevated status on account of comparison to mostly dismal service encounters.

Generally speaking, these experiences are the exception rather than the rule.

As a whole, South Africa is not a country synonymous with outstanding Customer Service.

This does not bode well for most B2B organisations navigating shrinking spend and fierce competitors and yet ensuring the retention and growth of an existing customer base should be a no-brainer if you consider the cost of acquiring new customers.

Positive customer experiences not only provide a mechanism for up-sell and cross-sell opportunities, but capitalising on excellent win-win relationships.

Let's break it down in terms of a hypothetical R1000 of revenue…

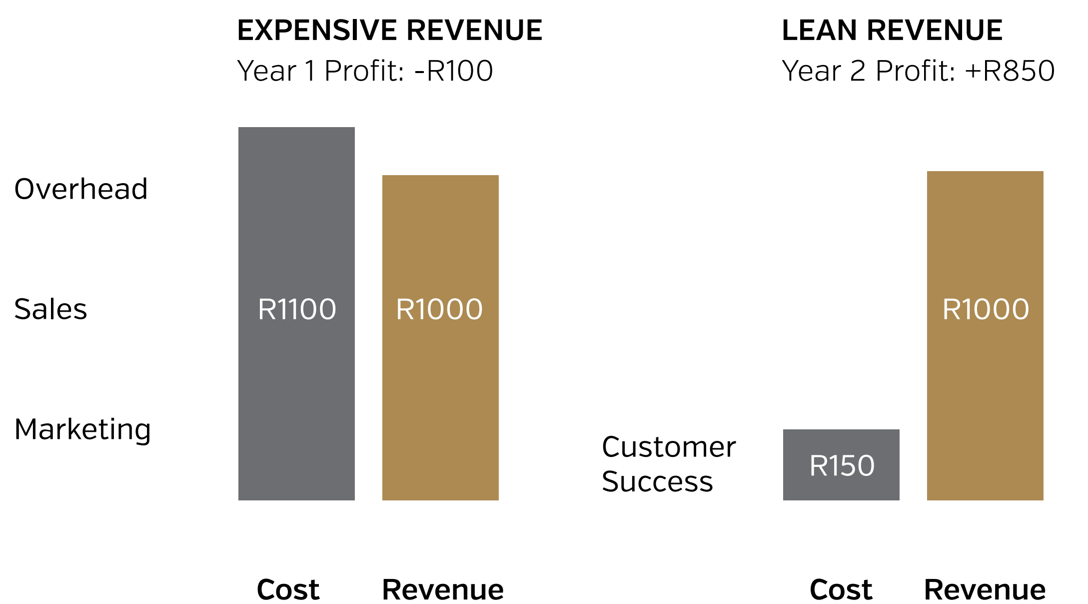
THE COST TO ACQUIRE R1000 OF REVENUE

Typically, the costs associated with acquiring a new customer often outstrips the revenue you'll generate in year one. By year two the benefit kicks in and it's not uncommon for this trend to continue in the upcoming years of ongoing purchasing from satisfied customers. Add to this wallet share expansion opportunities (up-sell and cross-sell, second-order revenue via referrals and advocacy and a customer in-hand is worth far more than an unknown prospect.

The sad truth is, regardless of the mantras etched into plaques on the wall, many companies fail to instil best-practice Customer Service principles on-the-ground. And worse yet, when it comes to lifetime customer value yield, 'Customer Service' (although essential) is merely table stakes in B2B selling today – and a baseline that many companies are failing to reach.

The good news lies in the opportunity this tepid performance presents.

If companies wish to leverage the financial gains that customer retention over acquisition offers, operationalising purposeful Customer Success Strategy is essential.



Source: www.gainsight.com

Operationalising Customer Retention & Growth

IN AN ENVIRONMENT where good Customer Service should be the minimum requirement, most organisations fail to consistently match even this standard. The good news is that for those companies nimble enough to plan and operationalise a competitive advantage through their Sales Organisation, this presents a substantial opportunity.

Customer Success is the key. At face value, Customer Service versus Customer Success may appear to be nothing more than semantics, but in truth a Customer Success approach is closer to a quantum leap.

Let's take a deeper look.

The distinction between Customer Service and Customer Success

For decades businesses across industries and sectors have lauded Customer Service as their differentiator. But what is Customer Service really and why do so many companies still miss the mark?

Customer Service is the most basic level of customer interaction. It's shaped by the quality of interactions between your employees and the customer:

- It tends to be measured on speed and the resolution of a problem
- It's mostly reactive – responding to a customer need *that has already arisen*
- Customers tend to rate high service on the following factors: The quality in terms of responsiveness, effective resolution of a problem, going the extra mile in terms of exceeding an expectation and proactively solving unseen issues or resolving potential issues that may arise and /or following up on previous queries and problems.

How does a company achieve effective Customer Service?

You simply need to provide your employees with a framework on how and when to respond to issues for consistent experiences across the team and ensure the commitment of team members to deliver high levels of service without deviation.

*However, most B2B companies and their teams **still** do not get this right, even though this is the most basic service level that customers expect.*

Most companies provide reactive responses, falling short of quickly or effectively solving issues. Failing to anticipate and resolve common customer issues before they arise often results in numerous and ultimately unnecessary negative interactions with clients.

Customer Success is different

Moving away from the baseline of service, Customer Success is proactive. It seeks to pave the way to reduce friction and ensure your customers achieve the impact and results they're seeking. It's the ultimate expression of what your organisation wants to achieve if your goal is customer retention, loyalty and growth.

At its core, Customer Success has four key objectives:

1. A proactive, real-time sales approach
2. Focused on building relationships with existing customers
3. It's based on an in-depth understanding of the customer, their company, and their internal product/solution objectives
4. And most importantly, it focuses on ensuring customers meet their goals.

TABLE STAKES

GETTING YOUR CUSTOMER SERVICE RIGHT

While Customer Service is inadequate in delivering Customer Success, it's essential nevertheless.

At minimum here's what your organisation should have in place:

1. Minimum response times
2. A culture that promotes individual accountability and follow-through on commitments
3. Guidelines on preferred language to use with customers
4. Frameworks on how to resolve issues and when to escalate
5. The extra 'secret sauce' – determine a set of proactive actions that will be perceived as 'going above and beyond' by clients to exceed their expectations, and institutionalise them in your organisation's 'way of life'
6. Methods to collect feedback directly from clients on their levels of satisfaction and KPIs related to service criteria.

Shaping Customer Success

Consider this: As the sales arm of your organisation, you're making certain promises to your customers around what your solution can do for them and their company's success.

The problem is that too often, once a sale is made, implementation is handled by other divisions. Because the sales team doesn't have direct control over the delivery of the solution, they abdicate their responsibility and don't ensure that their promises are met (and even better, exceeded).

There's an obvious problem in that an organisation should always deliver on its promises, but in the specific context of sales, how can your team achieve repeat sales and up-sell customers unless this is happening? And the only way to ensure it, is if the Sales Organisation remains involved in the entire process as much as possible.

Ensuring your customers receive the results you promised lies at the heart of Customer Success. Here are six key ways to achieve this:

1. Proactive vs Reactive

- Reactive organisations have 'customer service teams' that look for solutions only once problems have already arisen
- Customer Success teams are proactive – they identify and address problems before they occur
- Their primary focus is to ensure customers are correctly onboarded and in doing so, identify areas that could prevent customers from realising their goals
- They do this by leveraging their experience of past issues and impediments, creating real-time visibility into core issues and co-ordinating internal and customer resources to help their clients pre-empt and overcome challenges.

2. Goal Achievement vs Issue Resolution

- Customer Service teams care about the speed with which they can resolve customer-specific issues
- Customer Success teams are focused on overall customer goal achievement
- This means they care about the process i.e., bottlenecks and inefficiencies that could jeopardise the overall success of the customer's organisation
- They identify and track milestones at timely intervals to smooth out smaller issues before they become larger problems. This presents the added benefit of building proximity and trust with your client through regular, meaningful check-ins.

3. Customer Value vs Service

- The goal of the Customer Success organisation is to help its customers achieve their goals through their solution, thereby maximising their overall value.
- This means that Customer Success is measured against customer outcomes, not merely on customer satisfaction.

4. Long-Term vs Short-Term Perspective

- Service organisations are only concerned with the areas of the customer's business that make use of their solution
- They want to be able to resolve issues quickly and efficiently, but their scope does not extend to the customer's entire organisation
- Customer Success organisations on the other hand, work to resolve universal adoption issues and other common problems that hinder achievement of goals.

5. Revenue Generating vs Cost Centre

- Customer Service organisations focus strictly on driving customer satisfaction through resolution of issues to ensure customer retention
- Customer Success organisations are not only focused on customer retention – they want to drive their revenue growth through up-selling, cross-selling, and new business referrals
- One key way to achieve this growth in your organisation, is to be instrumental in helping your customers to grow their organisations.

6. Company-Wide Initiative vs Single Functional Initiative

- Fully integrated, cross-functional team collaborations are essential to seed shared purpose and defined goals
- When the delivery of your solution is viewed holistically by your team – data, experience and delivery is shared and leveraged for full effect, to enhance Customer Success. ■

NICOLE HONEY is the co-founder and Managing Director of RevenuePartners and the developer of many of its training programmes. She is an internationally award-winning business editor and publisher and has developed strategic content on behalf of a number of SA's largest enterprises.

REVENUE MATURITY & CUSTOMER SUCCESS

We employ the RevenuePartners Revenue Maturity Model to help companies achieve peak performance within their Sales Organisations. Here's a look at how Customer Success is viewed through the Sales Maturity lens:

STAGE	1. Lagging	2. Defining	3. Aligning	4. Embedding	5. Optimising
STATE OF MATURITY	There is no formal process that directs or measures Customer Success.	Frameworks have been formally documented to educate and guide teams on the 'what, who, when, how and why' of Customer Success.	Customer Success objectives and methods are aligned across the 5 Pillars of the Sales Organisation and all business units (BUs).	Customer Success is operationalised to become a 'way of life' in the Sales Organisation and BUs. Team members are regularly reviewed on Customer Success KPIs.	Customer Success interviews are conducted, and data points are monitored and scored. This info is used for ongoing planning and optimisation of marketing, sales, service, and R&D.

EMBEDDING THE CHANGE

YOUR CUSTOMER SUCCESS PROCESS

Consider these strategies at each point of the sales cycle to resolve common issues:

PRE-SALE

Help your clients to correctly identify their needs, pain points, and bottlenecks, and inform them of common blind spots, risks, etc. Look for anything that will negatively impact customer satisfaction in this stage of the buying journey.

SALES NEGOTIATION

Streamline anything your customers might need, from requests for information to supplier forms etc. Even better – anticipate what they'll need before they ask for it. Identify bottlenecks and pain points that could arise. Is the customer's organisation correctly positioned and resourced to gain the full benefit of the solution they are purchasing?

ONBOARDING

Once the sale is concluded, many sales teams hand the new customer over and focus on new prospects. Customer Success is reliant on an effective and comprehensive onboarding process.

POST-SALE

How are you assisting your customers with implementation? Have you set milestones and timelines for post-sales implementation with your clients to track success? What pain points will your customer face in the near future? How can your organisation proactively assist your client to avoid or overcome these?

ONGOING CUSTOMER SUCCESS

Do you have a formal method of tracking internal delivery on actions needed to achieve and deliver client success? Do you host quarterly reviews with qualifying customers to assess their success and detect issues to correct?

Finally, remember Customer Success is not a 'one and done' intervention. It requires a consistent focus on the customer, from pre-sales through to a long-term relationship.

To ensure adoption, changes to mindset and behaviour must be trained and supported by process frameworks that indicate how, when and who executes Customer Success. And importantly, this must be championed by leaders, embedded in your culture and managed through KPIs and metrics.

A PRACTICAL GUIDE

SELLING TO PROCUREMENT

Your Organisation's ability to foster key relationships with Procurement will lead to short-term and long-term sales success.

BY NADINE VON MOLTKE-TODD

The rise and rise of Procurement

While the ideal for many companies may be revenue growth, the reality of the current economic climate is one that demands aggressive cost-cutting.

This means that when engaging with prospects, your sales team will increasingly be met with redirects to the Procurement department.

Procurement's priorities

Unsurprisingly, in a *Key Issues Study* conducted by The Hackett Group, cost-reduction was at the top of the Procurement agenda in 2021, with the reduction of supply change risk coming in at number two, followed by the need for Procurement to elevate its strategic role in the organisation by aligning with key stakeholders and enabling various business units to deliver on the company's strategy.

How to respond

The ability to understand and support these priorities presents an opportunity for B2B Sales Organisations. A two-pronged approach is needed to increase your odds of success:

1 Proactively present value to Procurement *before* RFPs are issued

2 A careful and stepped approach to responding to RFPs

1 Proactively present value to Procurement *before* RFPs are issued

Whether you are selling short-term or long-term gains, your sales team's relationship with Procurement can add huge value to both your organisations.

Being invited to respond to a Request for Proposal (RFP) after carefully nurturing a prospect takes your Sales Force one step closer to closing a deal. Unfortunately, an RFP is by no means a done deal.

Unless you have an entrenched relationship or can offer the best total solution (which includes superior product and support, lowest price and total cost of ownership (TCO) and checks all the relevant compliance boxes), you'll still need to present a compelling value argument to Procurement and other financial stakeholders.

This means transcending the typical concerns of Procurement – such as the containment of costs, minimising of risk and ensuring compliance – to appeal to 'growth catalyst' revenue generation drivers. This is done through value creation and creating a competitive advantage through innovation.

Remember – Procurement teams are evolving past 'administrators.' Procurement is interested in proving its own value to the business, which means their requirements within RFPs are evolving and becoming more sophisticated. It also represents an excellent opportunity for your sales team to support the Procurement team in proving their worth to the organisation.

The evolving role & value of Procurement

Value proposition of Procurement services		Role of Suppliers	Role of Procurement
Increase business value derived from spend	Value Management	Innovative/ flexible	Trusted business advisor & change agent
Reduce demand activity, complexity, & variability	Demand Management	Aligned/loyal	Budget spend consultant & relationship manager
Shift from lowest price of total cost of ownership	Total Cost of Ownership	Operationally excellent	Supply expert, team leader, project manager
Right goods/services AND at the right price	Purchase Price Reduction	Priced fairly	Negotiator
Right goods/ services at the right time & place	Supply Assurance	Reliable	Buyer/planner

Source: The Hackett Group

1. Don't just think cost savings, think revenue growth

In today's highly competitive landscape and uncertain economy, the CFO is not only responsible for ensuring that the books are accurate. They are expected to be intimately involved in the stability and revenue growth strategy of the business.

CFOs therefore understand the value of Procurement from a cost savings perspective, but what about the value that the correct solutions can bring to the business's growth prospects?

When responding to RFPs, always include the short-term benefits and the long-term growth that your solution will facilitate, over and above any cost savings.

2. Design to value

Procurement teams who add value to their organisations are using increasingly complex structural levers to generate savings opportunities. These include leveraging value analyses, optimising the supply chain, and supplier development.

However, often, these levers come down to product rationalisation. A raw material is changed or a manufacturing process is adjusted, for example. This might optimise the cost of a product, but it doesn't necessarily add value to the business or end-users over-and-above cost benefits.

Instead, a 'design to value' strategy matches cost with the value perceived by customers and is designed to generate higher turnover and profits.

3. Unpack and articulate operational value

This aligns with point one. As Warren Buffett says, "price is what you pay…value is what you get." The Procurement team you are dealing with has most likely been tasked with spending the business's budget according to specific compliance and legal regulations. They also need to spend within budget. But that doesn't mean they are always obligated to choose the lowest price option.

Value to the business is more than just price – however, do not expect Procurement to determine operational value on your behalf. Give them everything they need to show stakeholders how you add value to the business's operations – and how Procurement has brought this value to the organisation through you.

4. View Sales and Procurement as two sides of the same coin

Sales teams sell the value their solutions can bring to the table to help their customers achieve their goals.

Procurement is doing exactly the same thing, except they are pitching an external solution and supplier to an internal team. If you have the best solution and deliver the highest value, supporting you will not only make Procurement look good, but they'll be supporting the business's strategic growth objectives as well.

It's important to remember that different stakeholders have different needs. Procurement is dealing with each stakeholder who will be impacted by a project – make sure your proposal covers each stakeholder's key concerns so that they feel cared for by Procurement.

5. Embed your value proposition in proposals

If your Sales Force is focusing on differentiating through value, you are most likely selling the long-term value of your products and services, with less immediate focus on price. This is when total cost of ownership (TCO) becomes important.

As mentioned, however, you understand your value proposition and cannot only educate Procurement, but the stakeholders they report to as well. When your Procurement contact can make a strong TCO business case for a particular purchase, you are creating value together. Value-based sales, partnered with value-based Procurement, is a good relationship builder.

6. Understand your buyer's end users

Procurement is the conduit between your solution, product or service and the end user in your customer's organisation.

To support Procurement and build short- and long-term value, it's important to understand that there are two different expectations from end-users:

- End-users who place an order and expect timely delivery. Procurement's role is to ensure that orders are streamlined and everyone has what they need to do their jobs. If you don't perform in terms of fulfilment, Procurement looks bad.

- End-users and stakeholders who require a solution to a problem and Procurement's role is to research and source the best supplier to deliver that solution. This is where you can add value to all stakeholders involved and create a strategic relationship with Procurement.

Remember, each department and project has an allocated budget that Procurement is expected to adhere to as well.

7. Help Procurement communicate their value

To add real value to their organisation, today's Procurement teams must elevate their roles to 'business enablement leaders' – this demands an evolution of strategic Procurement leaders who are aligned to key stakeholders and enable various business units according to the company's strategy.

Procurement will therefore be continuously sharing its value to all key stakeholders. They are selling their services – and in many ways, their service is your organisation and your solutions. The more you tailor your solution to each stakeholder, the more Procurement can tailor what they share with various stakeholders.

8. Support Procurement with data

When it comes to selling Procurement's value to an organisation, nothing sells it better than data, including key insights into spending, trends and key vendors. This is because data is accurate and complete, and the more granular the data, the better.

Which is where your sales team comes in. If you are a trusted advisor, how much data can you share with Procurement to support their insights? The more detailed the data you share with them, the better the insights that they can share with their organisation – particularly if it relates to revenue growth, cost savings and total cost of ownership.

9. Team up Procurement with finance on cost modelling

Successful Procurement teams match TCO models internally with finance and accounting.

There is sometimes functional friction between Procurement and Finance over how budget is spent. Encourage Procurement to bring Finance into the cost analysis and support them with as much data as possible. Developing trust between various business functions and Procurement sets the foundation for long-term collaboration, and your sales team can be integral in supporting and facilitating these relationships.

10. Accelerate time to market

In many companies, Procurement is not involved in pre-project phases and is therefore unaware of the innovations in the sector. By ensuring that Procurement is up-to-date with what is happening in your industry and the various innovations your business is involved in, you are equipping them with knowledge that puts them at the forefront of what is possible in terms of solutions to specific challenges within their organisations.

To support Procurement adequately in this regard, stay on top of the skills, resources and development and processes of the buyer's company, so that you can combine your know-how with theirs.

You can then work with Procurement and various stakeholders to jointly differentiate solutions and implement multi-year technology roadmaps, getting solutions implemented faster for a highly competitive world.

11. Foster an innovation ecosystem

Most innovation opportunities are linked to digital transformation and the evolution of business models, and in order for suppliers to add real value to their customers (and for customers to benefit from the full value suppliers can offer) these opportunities must be activated and managed within a complex ecosystem.

The purchasing function has an important role to play in defining and managing the innovation ecosystem, but as a supplier, you can support Procurement by focusing on being a strategic partner who shares your industry insights, experiences and innovations.

12. Leverage data to cost new products and deliver best-practice products

Sending an RFP to secure new business often contains a lot of losses for Sales Organisations operating in the B2B sector. A high investment of resources is required in developing proposals that speak to various stakeholders involved, including R&D, Finance, Procurement and Production.
The process is lengthy and tends to involve reverts. Unfortunately, even though a large investment goes into proposals, they often are not geared towards the customer's business – specifications are not correct or taken properly into account, business processes are not clearly articulated and existing data is not adequately leveraged.

However, if customer data can be used to significantly reduce the time and resources required to cost new products and orientate design proposals towards best-practices, your organisation will derive value, but so will your customer with a solution tailored to their needs at an optimal cost.

13. Embrace digital transformation – even in the sales to Procurement space

As the fourth industrial revolution, driven by innovations in AI and the Internet of Things (IoT), ushers in new benefits concerning data automation and data management, Procurement is experiencing its own mini-revolution known as Purchasing 4.0.

Characterised by new models designed to meet modern consumer needs, new business tools, new ways of working and more connected ecosystems – Purchasing 4.0 is expected to deliver lower costs, better risk management, improved visibility and tighter compliance.

The purchasing function has an important role to play in defining and managing the innovation ecosystem, but as a supplier, you can support Procurement by focusing on being a strategic partner who shares your industry insights, experiences and innovations.

How can your organisation complement this transition? Share insights and value. Firstly, for all the benefits offered by automation – human-led insights are still crucial. Procurement needs to be seen as a valuable resource within the organisation. In order to engage with stakeholders at that level, they must gather information to share it.

Secondly, consider developing a value-sharing ethos with your customers that speaks to 'pay as you grow' – in other words, the more value you add to their business, the more they grow, the more your business with them will grow.

INFLUENCE FROM A DISTANCE

Influence from a distance

Often, Procurement teams only reach out to potential vendors once they have done their own online research into solutions. It's therefore critical to leverage online content to ensure you are 'discoverable' during this research phase and that you are present as an industry contender and leader in your field. Successful online content should include a number of factors to ensure it is valuable to Procurement teams. Principally it should:

- Answer key questions customers in your sector typically ask or struggle with
- Outline the ROI and total cost of ownership of your solution
- Cater to role profiles, as an HR stakeholder's motivations will be very different from those in finance
- Include third party endorsements – not only do referrals give your brand authenticity and position you as an expert, but real-world examples help buyers to picture how your solution will impact their business as well.

To find out more about creating successful sales enablement content, turn to page 86.

2 A careful and stepped approach to responding to RFPs

How – and when – to transform RFP check box exercises by Procurement into winnable opportunities for your Sales Team.

Many Sales Forces view RFPs as a dream come true – a request to pitch a solution without investing time or resources in moving a client through the sales funnel.

The justification is simple: Surely our team stands just as good a chance of winning as anyone else?

Other teams dismiss RFPs out of hand, recognising that most RFPs that are received out of the blue are little more than check box exercises that Procurement must adhere to, in order to prove that more than one supplier was considered for a solution.

Unfortunately, these RFPs are often written with a solution already in mind (that of Procurement's favourite candidate) and are therefore biased.

So, should you respond to every RFP? With Procurement's importance on the rise, RFPs should not be dismissed out-of-hand. Instead, they can become strategic drivers to increase your potential win rate, because even if you aren't the preferred candidate to begin with, they provide a key bridge to Procurement teams.

CALCULATE THE VALUE OF RFPs

Before responding to an RFP, always determine if it's worth it. Yes, there are benefits in engaging with Procurement teams and an RFP is one way to do that – even if you know you are not the preferred supplier.

However, responding to every RFP can be a huge waste of time – and it takes your Sales Teams away from prospecting and targeting more viable opportunities to win.

Start with a few quick calculations based on past performance:

- How many proposals does your team typically respond to per year?
- How many people work on each proposal?
- How long does each proposal take?
- How many proposals were won during that time?
- What is your win rate for RFPs versus proposals sent to prospects nurtured by your Sales Reps?
- What is the lost opportunity cost of the time invested in RFPs versus nurtured prospects?

Note: If you cannot calculate the cost of RFPs because your team does not keep track of what you respond to, there is already a problem – you should be tracking all key activities across your Sales Organisation, particularly actions and processes as time consuming, as responding to RFPs.

LEVERAGE UNEXPECTED RFPs

Even though every RFP can potentially be an avenue to building a relationship with Procurement, if it is received without your Sales Force first engaging with the customer, assume that it may be biased towards a competitive solution or Procurement's goal to renew a contract with an existing supplier.

This does not mean that you should ignore the RFP. Procurement has recognised your solution while researching competitive sources. However, the nature of the RFP reveals that they are biased towards a specific supplier or solution.

This gives your team the perfect opportunity to access key stakeholders and influencers to better understand these biases. With this insight in hand, your Sales Force can re-engineer Procurement's existing opinion to one that favours your solution.

However, if it is clear that your solution does not meet the buyer's needs, rather walk away from the deal. Pitching a solution that is not correct will not help your team build a stronger relationship with the Procurement team based on trust. Instead, walking away may keep the door open for future deals that are more suited to the value you can offer the buyer.

SHOULD WE RESPOND TO THIS RFP?

Here is a simple process to follow when responding to unforeseen RFPs.

First, contact Procurement and ask a few key questions. These should include:

1. Why have we received this RFP?

- There are a number of factors that influence RFPs.
- We've already mentioned governance and 'going through the motions' before choosing the supplier who is already the favourite, but it could also be because the business's process is to check whether a better deal can be secured every few years.
- This isn't a compelling reason to change given the pain of onboarding new suppliers and is unlikely to result in a successful deal.
- However, simply the fact that you have received an RFP gives you the opportunity to show the buyer what is available and how you can add value to their business.

2. What factors are driving a decision to change?

- Listen to the answers to this question with a critical ear.
- Change is never welcomed, even if the buyer has a burning platform that requires it.
- Many unsolicited RFPs are also designed to extract a better price from an existing supplier – if price comes up, you will either need to work harder to prove value or it might be worth walking away from the deal.
- Remember, any time your team spends on RFPs is time not spent on prospecting.
- Price is also a poor competitive differentiator unless you are truly the lowest cost provider in your market and your business still achieves good margins through volume.

3. Is your business changing or adding providers?

- Many buyers will be honest and tell you that they are unlikely to change but need to present at least three RFPs.
- Others might say they are evaluating their options, and still others that they are absolutely planning to change.
- Obviously, your odds are improved if the answer is the latter, but it's good to understand the landscape so that you can make an informed decision whether or not to pursue the RFP.

PROCEED TO INTERVIEW

- Once armed with this knowledge, request one-hour interviews with the relevant project stakeholders to enable your team to create a suitable RFP. This step is critical – if you cannot meet with key stakeholders, your team will be unable to influence the requirements of the RFP in your solution's favour.
- If your request for a meeting is denied because it is deemed unfair to the competitors who have also been sent an RFP or because Procurement thinks interviews are unnecessary, you can reply with the following script:

"Unfortunately, while I believe our solution will add value to your business, our policy is to not respond to RFPs until we have personally interviewed the key stakeholders impacted by the scope of the project. This crucial step allows us to understand our customers pain points so that we can co-create a solution that delivers measurable return on investment. Your stakeholders will be the primary beneficiaries of these interviews."

- Remember, the existing stakeholder is very familiar with the buyer's business, as is any competitor who is already a forerunner. It's therefore critical to argue that your role in creating value begins with an understanding of their real needs and an exploration of how you create value.

ADD STRATEGIC VALUE TO THE RELEVANT STAKEHOLDERS

Once you have secured your stakeholder interview, your team's goal is to understand the primary issues that are driving the project. Each stakeholder will have different strategic goals and it's important to remember that Procurement will also have its own agenda.

Before you conduct the interviews, read the RFP carefully. Don't review it through the lens of your solution. Instead, think of the business, financial, and operational considerations that have not been adequately addressed in the RFP.

Identifying these areas and highlighting them for the stakeholders you will be engaging with, will add value to their roles.

There is a second element you can add that will highlight your understanding of the business and the stakeholders who are invested in this project. Create an executive summary that succinctly captures each stakeholder's primary objectives and align them to your solution.

INTERVIEW CHEATSHEET

Here are key areas that your Sales Reps and Sales Managers should be asking in the stakeholder interviews:

1. Identify that X should have been included in the RFP based on the buyer's stated business objectives and determine how X is impacting each stakeholder's ability to meet strategic initiatives.

2. Be as comprehensive as possible. Address each aspect of the RFP with insightful questions that reveal the pain points behind them that must be solved.

3. Focus more on the business side and not only the technical side – you will most likely deal with a technical stakeholder, but budget decisions are made at board level and so the business case must be explored.

4. Be as relevant as possible – ultimately your RFP will tie your capabilities to each challenge to demonstrate your business value.

While this exercise will help your team to create a more relevant RFP, the interview process itself also shows the stakeholders involved in the project that you understand their business and the industry-specific issues they are facing, and by extension that your team is more experienced in solving their challenges and delivering value and a return on investment.

Once you have completed the interviews, your team has an opportunity to add value to each stakeholder before the deal progresses (and even if it does not progress further, laying the foundation for a future relationship) when they forward your RFP.

First and foremost, your RFP will be aligned with the insights you gleaned from the various stakeholders you have spoken to. This is far more valuable than a simple response to a broad RFP.

However, there is a second element you can add that will highlight your understanding of the business and the stakeholders who are invested in this project. Create an executive summary that succinctly captures each stakeholder's primary objectives and align them to your solution.

Please find our response to your RFP attached. We have identified # objectives based on the scope of the RFP as well as interviews with primary stakeholders.

Our solution meets these objectives in these ways:

- *Objective #1: One line summary of how solution meets the objective*
- *Objective #2: One line summary of how solution meets the objective*
- *Objective #3: One line summary of how solution meets the objective.*

NADINE VON MOLTKE-TODD is the Senior Editor at RevenuePartners, an award-winning business editor and content development specialist.

INCREASE SUCCESS RATE

Responding to RFIs

Requests for information offer an opportunity that RFPs often do not. Here's how to take better advantage of them.

MANY PROCUREMENT TEAMS WILL FIRST send out an RFI (request for information) before issuing an RFP (request for proposal). This can be for a number of reasons, including:

- Determining if the capabilities to solve a specific problem exist
- Establishing buying criteria and budgets
- Identifying whether one vendor or a team working together will be required to deliver a solution.

RFIs therefore offer suppliers an opportunity that RFPs often do not: The buyer does not have a fully formed vision of the solution yet and is researching options. This means that your Sales Force can potentially influence the buying criteria and requirements that will eventually shape the RFP. The steps we have outlined to respond to an RFP work equally well when responding to an RFI.

Help buyers write RFPs

Your team may engage with a buyer who is in the early stages of the sales cycle but has not sent an RFI or an RFP. This is no reason not to work closely with them. Many Sales Reps and Managers will wait to receive the RFP, knowing that the buyer is researching their options and developing the criteria they will include in the document. This makes it the ideal time to get involved – if you add value to the buyer at this stage, not only will you be able to shape the vision of a potential solution (and this vision will be the benchmark that all other solutions are compared against during the RFP process) but you can begin cementing your position as a trusted advisor.

In order for your team to position themselves as able to assist early-stage buyers, invest time and energy into micro-marketing activities that target specific prospect accounts. The goal is to influence buyers when they are still in the early stage of their purchase evaluation by sharing useful insights and information – but not pushing your solution in any way.

Marketing teams can support sales teams by publishing blog posts and white papers that guide buyers around the types of questions they should be asking in RFPs – specifically relating to the buyer's industry and needs. ■

ASSESS YOUR COMPANY

Are You Revenue Growth Ready?

Use the **Strategy, Execution and Results Scorecard** to evaluate the Customer Engagement Strategy of your Company.

HOW WE ASSIST CUSTOMERS

At **RevenuePartners** we use unique frameworks to design and deploy tailored **Customer Engagement processes** that provide a Company with a competitive advantage by differentiating their Sales Force through a set of unique customer-centric behaviours that are difficult for competitors to replicate.

OUR IMPACT

Turn to the back of the magazine to view our solutions and results.

PLANNING & EXECUTION SCORECARD

Rate your Customer Engagement

How does your Company score on these revenue growth Customer Engagement questions?

		No plan	Plan in progress	Yes, documented & finalised		No execution	Dissatisfied	Satisfied	Highly satisfied		Results off plan	Results on plan	Results beyond plan	SUB-TOTALS
1. Have you designed a unique customer engagement process to differentiate the Sales Force to deliver a revenue upside of 20% plus in the up-coming 12-18 months and beyond?	Plan in place	0	1	3	Execution in place	0	1	3	5	Results to plan	0	5	10	
2. Has your sales process allowed your Sales Force to sell at a Performance Level (value) and not at the Product Level (price)?	Plan in place	0	1	3	Execution in place	0	1	3	5	Results to plan	0	5	10	
3. Do you have a formal Win/Loss Review process in place for continuous improvement to strengthen your Sales Force and improve future win rates and customer retention?	Plan in place	0	1	3	Execution in place	0	1	3	5	Results to plan	0	5	10	
													GRAND TOTAL	

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Score your company on each question by plan, execution and results
2. Add your scores per question and enter the sub-total in the last column
3. Add your 3 sub-totals for a grand total and check your scoring against the ranges below
4. Decide on a plan of action to address risks or to leverage growth potential.

RANGE	GRADE	ACTION
0-24	Revenue growth potential is low	Urgently design an action plan to address revenue growth
25-36	Revenue growth potential at risk	Plan where weaknesses can be mitigated for improved growth
37-54	Revenue growth potential is good	Consider opportunities for exponential growth

How do you score?

Once you've read this section, turn to **page 64** to rate how you score on revenue growth readiness in **Pillar 3**

PILLAR 3

Sales Talent

Revenue Growth Engineering™

3

EXPERT INSIGHTS

HIRING MISTAKES TO AVOID

Your Sales Force is only as strong as the individuals who comprise it. We sat down with Senior Psychometrist at RevenuePartners, **Chantal Snelling** to learn more about the common mistakes companies make when hiring sales professionals – and how to fix them.

It's every Sales Managers' dream to have a team brimming with A players who shoot the lights out, month after month. In reality, teams comprise mostly B players, with some A and a serving of C.

And when it comes to improving performance, training and coaching can only take you so far. If the person you've hired for the job, fundamentally lacks the ability or aptitude to cut it in your environment, there's simply no remedy… and so, the arduous task of performance management begins.

What's the fix to solve this time, revenue, and morale sapping ordeal? It all begins with hiring.

One of the five pillars in high-performing Sales Organisations is Pillar 3: Sales Talent (turn to the back of the magazine to see the others). And when it comes to Sales Talent, our work at RevenuePartners, frequently entails reviewing our clients' hiring processes and deploying scientific methods of assessment.

In the course of this work, we've been in a unique position to observe common gaps in hiring. We sat down with Chantal Snelling, Senior Psychometrist at RevenuePartners to get her insights on where companies should be focusing to plug these gaps and hire more A-Players.

Q On average, how extensive are the hiring processes of clients you've worked with?

The vast majority of the clients we work with already have hiring processes in place. The problem is, the hiring process is a chain with many links, when one of those links is weak or missing, it can cause real problems and become a costly exercise if not done correctly.

Q Looking at some of these 'weak links' in the chain, where do you advise companies focus first?

I'd say the starting point is a role profile. Many companies have role profiles written up but, in some cases, they are too brief, or they don't consider a weighted approach to exactly what the Sales Rep is required to do on a day-to-day basis, or the role profile is simply out of date. For example, if you consider the massive shift we've seen to remote selling – the tasks and competencies for a Sales Rep may have changed significantly.

I can't over-emphasise the importance of job ads. Your company is looking to hire top performers, and so your job ad needs to appeal to that calibre of person. And if you've designed a rigorous hiring process – one that will demand a lot of time and effort from applicants – then you need to show sufficient value in the job ad in terms of the value offered by your company and the position, to ensure they stick with the process and see it through. Importantly your job ad also needs to provide candidates with an accurate picture of exactly what the job entails, (such as what they would be doing day-to-day) to ensure that you are attracting the best-matched candidates from the start.

Then when it comes to screening, you want to make sure you're weeding out non-fit candidates early on in the process. So here we help our clients to create pre-interview assignments that both test for competencies and filter candidates. We also use Psychometric Assessment Screens as a cost-effective and scientific tool to save Managers a lot of time at this point in the hiring process.

So, after the organisation has refined their role profiles, job ads and screening process, what's next?

Basically, there are three essential areas that must be tested to give you a holistic view of the candidate:

- Firstly, cognition, meaning their intelligence.
- Secondly their personality, referring to the individual's preferences – what they prefer to do.
- And thirdly, their behaviour – in other words, their competence to perform in the role.

A comprehensive hiring process must take each of these three factors into account by testing the candidate and importantly, by removing subjectivity in as far as possible.

And I think that's where some companies fall short, by not being rigorous enough and applying scientific measurement to all three of these factors.

Can you walk us through how companies can measure these factors?

If you're looking at cognitive intelligence that the person needs to have to perform – be it mathematical ability to calculate complex proposals, or verbal ability to form and translate logical thoughts into sentences – interviewers can use the GRT-2 Assessment offered by RevenuePartners to test the candidate's verbal, numerical and abstract reasoning ability.

For personality testing you're looking to gauge the individual's innate preferences – for example, their approach to planning and time management, their like or dislike of close supervision, their resilience in response to rejection, etc. The POP7 Psychometric Assessment we offer assesses Sales Reps against Competitive Sales DNA factors and is the only assessment to provide 'Predictor of Performance' and 'Predictor of Retention' scores.

Finally, to test competence you're looking at role plays, assignments and reference checks to validate the candidate's ability to perform in your particular role.

What's important here is to combine the results from testing these three outcomes with your interviews to gain an overall picture of the candidate and predict job performance.

In hiring Sales Reps, role plays are typically used to try and simulate a real-life sales interaction. How effective have you found role plays to be?

The topic of role plays is an interesting one, because not all role plays are created equal.

In many instances companies either use role plays in which they construct a hypothetical situation involving their solutions for the candidate and interviewer to engage, or they'll ask the candidate for some details on the current solutions they're selling and will base the role play on that context.

These types of role plays often fail to deliver a true test of how the Rep performs in your specific sales context, because in most cases the responses the interviewer is looking for are fairly superficial – it will typically be things like how the Rep handles rejection or push back, if they're able to ask the right questions and how tenacious they are in tackling objections. The panel will assess the candidate's performance along with factors such as likability, smarts, and confidence – with each interviewer focusing on their particular area of interest or concern.

This results in a high level of subjectivity and often fails to shed light on important skills and requirements for the job.

Where we help our clients, is through the development of case study-driven role plays designed to test a range of specific competencies, coupled with weighted scorecards that all interviewers use to rate the candidate across numerous areas with predetermined criteria.

By using weighted scores, with inputs from numerous raters throughout the hiring process from start to finish, we're able to remove a high level of subjectivity while ensuring key competencies are not overlooked.

> Many role plays fail to deliver a true test of how the Rep performs in your specific sales context, because in most cases the responses the interviewer is looking for are fairly superficial.

> A comprehensive hiring process must test the candidate on cognition, preferences and behaviours – and importantly remove subjectivity in so far as possible.

CHANTAL SNELLING
Senior Psychometrist at RevenuePartners

Most companies perform reference checks on candidates, are there other methods that are effective in flagging misrepresentation and dishonesty?

Misrepresentation can be a big problem and for many reasons. Candidates applying for your position may be doing so because they're currently under performance management in their current roles; or they may be out of work – so because the stakes are high, they may misrepresent or falsify information on their CVs or in the interview to try to get the job.

We've found it's essential to collect as much 'evidence' to validate claims made by candidates. For example, if a candidate has told you that they were a top performer and achieved various targets and earned commissions, it's advisable to ask them for a copy of their IRP 5, to validate their earnings and commissions.

Another area to check is the CV, so a couple of calls to companies where they previously worked to confirm their stated start and end dates is important.

Another area that requires rigorous due diligence is the reference contacts. Where employees have not performed well in previous positions, you'll typically find that they provide references of a peer or adjacent Manager, instead of their direct Line Manager. So before you contact the reference, it's advisable to call the company to ascertain the reporting structure and whether the reference contact details you were given, are those of the correct Manager.

As a further check, our Psychometric Assessments have a built-in warning system that alerts us when a candidate is answering questions to show themselves in a more positive light relative to their true innate nature.

Using our Assessment Report together with the interview questions (tailored to each candidate within the Report), the interviewer can then follow up with the individual, to clarify why they answered those questions in a particular manner.

Finally, are there any considerations when it comes to being more purposeful in linking hiring to onboarding?

It's nearly impossible to find the 'perfect' person for a position. While they may score well in the majority of competencies for your role, there may be some factors that need improvement. The onboarding process is essential to not only orientate the new hire in the position and equip them with the right company and product knowledge – onboarding (and further training or coaching) is also essential to shore up any weak areas.

For example, a Rep who aced their interview maybe weak at Excel – a tool used by your company to build proposals – and one that is essential for good performance in their role. Or they may be naturally introverted and may need coaching and encouragement to blossom. This is an area where interview score-carding and the coaching guides contained in our Psychometric Assessment reports can support HR and Sales Managers, in helping to comprehensively onboard candidates and get them hitting target sooner. ■

CHANTAL SNELLING is a Senior Psychometrist at RevenuePartners. She holds an Honours Degree in Psychology, is registered with the Health Professions Council of South Africa (HPCSA) and has a decade of experience in her field. At RevenuePartners, Chantal assists companies improve their hiring and development strategies and processes.

PRODUCTIVITY

Managing your most valuable resource

Time management is one of the costliest, and yet often overlooked, challenges facing Sales Reps and their Managers today.

BY NADINE VON MOLTKE-TODD

'You're going to tell us about Time Management. Seriously? Planning our time? We're all adults here. I think we've got this.'

Yes, it's understandable to see how 'Time Management 101' could elicit this sort of response. And yet, in our training courses, for both Sales Reps and Managers, Time Management – or more precisely 'Me Management' – has been the most highly-rated module for the past decade.

Time is a scarce resource. And one that is often mismanaged. Once lost, it can never be retrieved. And when it comes to assessing time loss across a sales team, over weeks or months, the costs can be significant.

Time management is a fallacy. There is no such thing as 'time management' – it's not possible to halt the hands of a ticking clock. Managing time is really about managing yourself. Productivity is the outcome of your ability (and discipline) to harness your energy and focus on completing a task. Basic, right?

Well, yes and no. Everyone *gets* that. The problem is, not everyone *does* that.

6 Disciplines to Regain Control of Productivity

Here are six disciplines Sales Managers can leverage to help their Reps build productive sales weeks:

1. Understand the difference between urgent and important

Urgent issues get our attention (and therefore time) – clients who require information, problems that require solving, requests by senior management, internal meetings, personal calls, etc.

So, the important activities – such as prospecting and lead nurturing to build future pipelines, nurturing prospects to grow accounts, and keeping commitments to close sales – take a back seat to the 'urgent'.

A balanced approach to time management sets time aside to address both.

2. Use time-blocking

Yes, Sales Reps need to be accessible to customers, Managers and colleagues, but they also need uninterrupted chunks of time for getting important tasks done.

Implement 'focus' times, where everyone turns off email notifications and gets started on high-priority tasks. Set aside time to update CRM outside of prime selling hours.

Allow for a 'spare' 30 to 60 minutes each day to deal with unscheduled urgent issues that arise.

3. Prioritise revenue-generating activities

These are the hours when your team should be talking to prospects and customers – they're the hours dedicated to revenue-generating activities (prospecting, nurturing cold and warm contacts, client meetings, etc).

Dedicated prospecting times should be prioritised within these 'money hours'. Adopt team-wide colour-coding of Sales Reps' diaries to easily distinguish between important revenue-generating activities and non-revenue-generating tasks.

4. Encourage daily planning

Lists help us reduce stress, because they relieve us of having to remember everything. They also help us to prioritise important tasks.

As a Sales Leader, don't assume your Sales Reps know how to prioritise their to-do lists. Provide training, assistance and conduct regular monitoring.

5. Eliminate non-essential internal meetings

Perhaps it's because we're more accustomed to online meetings, and inviting attendees is so easy. Perhaps it's a control mechanism for Managers to check in more frequently with their team. Whatever it is, it seems that the volume of internal meetings is on the rise.

Do a tally of the number of hours that your team collectively spend in non-essential internal meetings. If the number concerns you, it's time to step in and shield their time.

Implement 'focus' times, where everyone turns off email notifications and gets started on high-priority tasks. Set aside time to update CRM outside of prime selling hours.

6. Rinse and repeat

Finally, don't take it as a given that every member on your team has time management waxed.

Use team training to create a shared understanding of these time management principles, and establish ongoing personal accountability through routine monitoring. ■

ASSESS YOUR COMPANY

Are You Revenue Growth Ready?

Use the **Strategy, Execution and Results Scorecard** to evaluate the Talent Strategy of your Company.

HOW WE ASSIST CUSTOMERS

At **RevenuePartners** we offer integrated **Sales Talent solutions** – from hiring processes that include Sales Rep DNA assessments to process-aligned training. This equips Field Sales Reps, Call Centre Agents and Service Staff to differentiate in a highly competitive environment.

OUR IMPACT

Turn to the back of the magazine to view our solutions and results.

PLANNING & EXECUTION SCORECARD

Rate your Sales Talent Strategy

How does your Company score on these revenue growth Sales Talent questions?

		No plan	Plan in progress	Yes, documented & finalised		No execution	Dissatisfied	Satisfied	Highly satisfied		Results off plan	Results on plan	Results beyond plan	SUB-TOTALS
1. Is your current hiring process designed to attract candidates with the right competitive sales DNA to ensure Sales Reps are on target within the ideal time frame?	Plan in place	0	1	3	Execution in place	0	1	3	5	Results to plan	0	5	10	
2. Are your Sales Reps equipped with the right skillset for value selling, self-management and the right mindset to deal with stress and overcome adversity?	Plan in place	0	1	3	Execution in place	0	1	3	5	Results to plan	0	5	10	
3. Has your organisation conducted a productivity analysis to ensure Sales Reps and Managers are focused on the correct customers and tasks to protect and grow revenue?	Plan in place	0	1	3	Execution in place	0	1	3	5	Results to plan	0	5	10	
													GRAND TOTAL	

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Score your company on each question by plan, execution and results
2. Add your scores per question and enter the sub-total in the last column
3. Add your 3 sub-totals for a grand total and check your scoring against the ranges below
4. Decide on a plan of action to address risks or to leverage growth potential.

RANGE	GRADE	ACTION
0-24	Revenue growth potential is low	Urgently design an action plan to address revenue growth
25-36	Revenue growth potential at risk	Plan where weaknesses can be mitigated for improved growth
37-54	Revenue growth potential is good	Consider opportunities for exponential growth

How do you score?

Once you've read this section, turn to **page 78** to rate how you score on revenue growth readiness in **Pillar 4**

PILLAR 4

Sales Management

Revenue Growth Engineering™

4

"As a leader, share the business's strategy and remind everyone of their purpose within the organisation and the impact they deliver to society."

EXPERT INSIGHTS

Fueling optimism & purpose

It's not enough for leaders to lead from the front. If you really want to inspire your team you need to foster optimism and purpose, says **Billy Selekane.**

RE-ALIGN

Fostering the value of work

There is a Japanese concept, *Hatarakigai* which in essence means the value of work. I believe that Managers can embrace this concept and use it as an anchor to engage and inspire their people by creating an environment within which their people can build mental resilience.

ELEVATE MEANING

Assign meaning to the work that your people are doing. It is no longer about input but about outcome and impact. Highlight the impact and outcome of their work in society or within the organisation. When their consciousness and vibration is congruent to the impact they are having, they rise above their current circumstances and see what they can do differently, which inspires more of the same actions.

LEVERAGE HIDDEN TALENTS

Reassign your people where possible. It's important for them to step away from their day-to-day activities to not only grow intellectually and operationally but to discover their hidden genius. When people are not given an opportunity to do something different, they end up feeling stuck, which usually leads to disengagement. Remember that people within organisations don't just disengage for no reason; disengagement is generally the result of an environment that creates and unconsciously supports disengagement.

We all need growth and to be challenged and stretched. It is the leadership team's imperative to ensure that mental stimulation becomes the core of the management arsenal.

FOSTER TRIBES

When people are part of a tribe their level of engagement increases because they trust their leaders and colleagues and feel a strong sense of belonging.

Tribes have traditions, rituals and symbols that identify them and bind them together. As a leader, encourage your teams to develop traditions that embed your culture and increase engagement. Let them own the process instead of feeding it to them from the top. When people build together, they grow strong together and support each other in powerful ways. When a tribe is solid, the organisation achieves work and home integration, people show up in a different way and their level of engagement soars, positively impacting productivity.

ENGAGE

Build a culture of purpose

The deepest role that a leader can occupy in their organisation is to be deeply concerned with their people. To be their chief inspirational officer. To connect at a much higher level than just talking about targets.

The love and compassion of a leader must therefore touch their people. When your people know that you understand them, and more importantly, that you care, their engagement levels increase. That's why I believe that a leader should do the following:

BE THE CHIEF STORYTELLER

Always be the one that reminds people of where the organisation comes from, the humble beginnings, the shared major victories, and the challenges that have been collectively faced. These are told through stories that show your team members that they are part of a bigger picture. Stories bring everyone into the fold. They show each individual that they are part of something great. They show worthiness in each team member. Stories resonate with people, and become a meeting point and place of alignment for everyone.

ALIGN PEOPLE TO THE VALUE CHAIN

It is imperative for leaders to demonstrate to people within their organisations exactly where and how they fit into the value chain. When people see the bigger picture and the respective roles they play in this story, inspiration becomes their foundation. This alignment must happen in two ways:

- Alignment within the department or team
- Alignment to the organisation.

As a leader, share the business's strategy and remind everyone of their purpose within the organisation and the impact they deliver to society.

Many organisations fail to deliver on their strategy because they do not connect their strategy to the organisational culture. Engagement increases when people have an intrinsic understanding of where the organisation they are part of is going.

I believe that when leaders focus on inspiring, engaging and re-aligning, we build high conscious organisations that are not only profitable, but also responsible corporate citizens that can be impactful through generations. ■

BILLY SELEKANE is an author, internationally acclaimed speaker, and an organisational effectiveness specialist.

They say that the only constant is change. With shock after shock in the current operating conditions, this has never been more relevant or clearer. **Keith Coats** shares his insights in fostering adaptability and resilience.

ADAPTIVE LEADERSHIP

Becoming adaptable in an uncertain world

There has always been uncertainty in the world, but with a spotlight on it now as a result of the pandemic and unfolding world events, there are those who have embraced it and are learning to thrive in the midst of uncertainty and then there are those who are silently (and maybe not so silently) hoping things will 'go back to normal'… which essentially means what the world was like in 2019!

Those leaders who had intentionally worked on engaging with uncertainty prior to being forced to, are coping better than those who didn't. Think of it like being asked to run a half-marathon. Those who were already fit to varying degrees… no problem; those who weren't at all fit, but understood the need to run are doing it, but not without some pain. And then there are those who are sitting on the sidelines doing whatever they can to either not run or procrastinating in the hope that the race will be called off. It won't.

Learning to embrace change

The responsibility to embrace adaptability starts with leadership. Leaders create the context and culture that allows adaptability to flourish.

Based on evolutionary biological research, we know that the four key characteristics or elements of adaptability are:

1. Embracing change and uncertainty
2. Inviting learning
3. Activating difference
4. Giving control

Notice that each of these characteristics are prefaced by a verb: an 'action word' as we learnt in school. Each of these four things require action and as you – or your organisation – goes about the 'doing' of these very practical and pragmatic things, you are building adaptive capacity! There is no silver bullet or magic formula to developing this capacity, just as there isn't in getting physically fit. It requires a sense of purpose or intent, hard work and a level of consistency that morphs into a habit.

In the past, leaders faced technical challenges. In a technical challenge, the problem is known; as is the solution. Experience was highly valued, because those with experience have a greater number of 'solutions sitting on their shelf'; and the role of the leader (or locus of control) is simply to apply the solution to the problem.

However, today, we are facing adaptive challenges, and the problem is no longer clear (we just know things aren't working like they used to) and so there is an element of 'learning what the problem is.' The solution will also require (new) learning and all the stakeholders need to be involved.

The role of learning

To be an adaptive leader or organisation, learning is fundamental. In my experience, very often the C-suite believe they are 'done with learning'. The idea that 'we have been successful doing what we have done and have years of experience underpinning our success' is implicit in the way they approach situations.

"The problem is that success is very often the enemy of adaptability."

They readily sign-off on learning 'for everyone else' in the organisation but don't see these learning initiatives as inclusive of themselves, I often encounter this dichotomy in the leadership development classrooms in which I find myself. If you feel this is somewhat harsh let me ask you:

- What have you learnt during the pandemic about yourself, your colleagues, your customers or clients?
- What are you learning right now?
- When last were you wrong?
- When last did you ask if you could sit-in on some leadership initiative taking place within your organisation?
- When last did you challenge your own orthodoxies, assumptions or business model? What was the last book you read that really challenged your thinking?
- When last did you ask open-ended questions with your team?

"Becoming adaptive rests in leadership's hands and it can be avoided or embraced as a wonderful challenge and responsibility."

Avoiding adaptive failure

I am sometimes asked what is the most common reason companies fail when it comes to being adaptive? Naturally the answer is complex and context specific but, if pressed for one 'simple' answer, it would be this: they simply don't believe they need to adapt or perhaps lack the courage to do so.

Very often success masks the need to adapt and the mantra, "never change a winning team" justifies the status quo. This is especially true in organisations that do not have a learning culture. I remember seeing a plaque that read: 'Always be yourself, unless you can be Batman. Then always be Batman'. I would adapt that to read: 'Always be yourself, unless you can be a Learner. Then always be a Learner'. ■

KEITH COATS is a Global Leadership Thinker and Futurist at TomorrowToday Global.

EXPERT INSIGHTS

COACHING FOR REAL REVENUE IMPACT

Most companies recognise the importance of coaching, yet as Senior Consultant at RevenuePartners **Philip Pierce-Jones** explains, few have equipped their Managers with the specialist skills required to actually move the needle.

"Research shows that coaching Sales Reps increases their performance and win rates." Duh. It's hardly a stretch to imagine how receiving guidance from a seasoned pro can up your game. Look no further than personal trainers, dieticians, life coaches, business coaches, speaking coaches, sports coaches, acting coaches… you get the picture. Virtually every professional at the top of their game today – CEOs, investors, politicians, athletes, celebrities, etc. – will have at least one of these experts on their payroll, pushing them to conceive and achieve the next level of their success.

Few business leaders need convincing on the merits of coaching. But when it comes to assuming the role of coach, the problem is knowing exactly how to go about coaching. Or more precisely, *how can you ensure your Managers are investing their time… in the right coaching methods… in a consistent and scalable manner… for predictable outcomes that result in direct improvements on performance and revenue?*

THE PROBLEM WITH SALES COACHING

So, what makes for effective coaching in sales? Is it delivering shoulders back, chest-out Tony Robbins-style mantras that challenge the individual to strive towards greater success through commitment, purpose and self-belief, the Dr Phil method in helping your team overcome self-limiting beliefs and destructive habits, or Sir Alex Ferguson's approach to tackling weakness through authoritative leadership and straight talk?

When it comes to Sales Rep coaching, the Sales Manager will typically review the Rep's sales figures, pipeline activity, and recent performance (good and bad). They'll ask the Rep for their input on where they feel they can improve, and where they need help? The Manager will then channel their inner Robbins, Dr Phil or Ferguson and offer their advice on how to tackle tricky client situations and pending deals, along with making recommendations for remedial steps to up activities, revise call scripts, tweak client approaches, and the like. The Sales Rep will then be sent on their way to execute until the next pipeline review session.

While this approach may lead to improvement – be it boosted self-confidence, higher morale and/or improved deal progression – it's definitely not the formula for a scalable coaching programme or predictable results – and therein lies the problem.

Picture a mid- to large-sized company that employs a team of 3-10 Sales Managers. Each Manager will bring their own flavour (Robbins, Dr Phil, Ferguson… or other) and cadence to coaching interactions. The Managers will likely select their own criteria for what to focus on with each individual, and in our experience in working with over 500 clients, the formality, content and regularity of coaching sessions will differ wildly from Manager to Manager.

On one end of the spectrum, Manager A will diligently prepare for each session, using scientific criteria to identify, coach and monitor development areas. At the other end of the gamut, Manager Z will opt for sporadic, informal coaching preferring to 'coach on the fly,' by offering up their advice on what they would do in that situation, with no accompanying documentation, no concrete outcomes, and little if any follow up.

The result? A mixed bag with diluted impact. At best, a measure of improvement in the sales team under the eye of diligent Manager A. At worst, unfocused efforts that fail to move the needle, wasting the time and opportunities available to Manager Z and their team.

BUILDING A SCALABLE COACHING PROCESS

There is no doubt that sales is part art and (a lot of) science. The 'science' principle leverages best-practice, process and continuous optimisation. It outlines the formulas and frameworks that lead to predictable outcomes and superior performance, that can be scaled across teams, territories, and continents.

The 'art' speaks to that extra 'something special' – the dynamic combination of intelligence, experience, and charisma that an individual brings, in executing on the process.

Not everyone is equally gifted with the talents that rise to the level of 'art', but everyone can follow a process.

When it comes to improving sales revenue through coaching, the formula lies in building a formal, metrics-driven coaching process and equipping Managers with the hard skills (science) and soft skills (art) necessary to execute impactful coaching interventions – that result in real revenue improvement.

Let's look at what this entails.

1 FORMALITY

If the contribution of Ford's assembly line and McDonald's world domination have taught us anything, it's the principle that exponential success is achieved by following a defined formula with repeatable actions, executed in a precise order, without deviation.

A formalised coaching structure demands the same discipline.

You want Manager A and Manager Z following exactly the same process. This means developing a standard coaching agenda, a standard framework to determine who to coach, standard management training for how to coach, a standard procedure for documenting development plans, and a standard process for monitoring improvement and reporting on the results.

2 CADENCE

Cadence is key. Consistency can only be established and maintained through setting regular meetings, for instance the first Friday of each month.

These meetings should allow time for the Manager to review the outcomes of each Rep's previous session along with their current performance (qualitative) and metrics (quantitative) – and reflect on skills development plans.

This should be followed by the review meeting itself where the skills development plan will be co-created with the Sales Rep and the actual coaching session will be scheduled for a later date.

Finally, to ensure accountability, commitment and – most importantly – results, Sales Managers should be required to report on their reviews, skills development plans and performance outcomes to senior-level management at regular intervals.

When it comes to coaching, Managers tend to select their own criteria for what to focus on with each individual, and in our experience in working with over 500 clients, the formality, content and regularity of coaching sessions will differ wildly from Manager to Manager.

3 METRICS

A metrics-driven approach to coaching removes subjectivity, clearly illuminates improvement areas, enables precise monitoring and tracking of performance and ultimately saves Managers' time.

Metrics monitored will typically include:

- **Activities metrics:** Calls, emails, appointments, presentations
- **Pipeline metrics:** Number of new leads, number of prospects in the pipeline, progression and drop-off rates per stage, stalled deals, lost deals
- **Performance metrics:** Velocity, pipeline value, quota attainment, win rate, revenue, average deal size, etc.

If you are evaluating the performance of a Sales Rep responsible for new business development, you may begin with number of calls and connects. But if the conversion rate is low, the answer in improvement does not necessarily lie in increasing the level of activity (in this case the number of dials) there may be a root-problem that needs to be identified and dealt with.

Is the Sales Rep investing too much time and effort in unqualified leads? Is it a time management problem? Does the Rep lack confidence on the phone? Is it a problem with the script? Are they calling at the wrong times of the day? Or do they have low motivation, or a bad attitude?

Once you have the individual's metrics, track their performance against the group's numbers, paying particular attention to where an individual's numbers are lower than group averages.

Problem areas in metrics should inform the coaching agenda, in which Managers answer these three questions:

1. What is the one skill you will work on this month with this Sales Rep?
2. How did you decide on that skill?
3. What is the customised coaching plan to develop that skill?

4 SKILLSET

When it comes to identifying the appropriate coaching response, consider the composition of a typical Sales Force: Star performers, core performers and laggards. Overlay this with other factors such as tenure in present role, differing levels of experience, capability, knowledge, attitude, and motivation.

It's clear that a 'one-size-fits-all' approach won't cut it. Managers need a framework to know who to coach, when to coach and when not to coach. In certain instances, coaching is not the appropriate solution – some Reps need training, empowering or performance management instead.

Managers also require the hard skills to lead purposeful and impactful coaching conversations,

A metrics-driven approach to coaching removes subjectivity, clearly illuminates improvement areas, enables precise monitoring and tracking of performance and ultimately saves Managers time.

along with the ability to know how and when to employ a directive (instructing the individual) versus non-directive (empowering the individual) approach to problem-solving.

When it comes to soft skills, a metrics-driven coaching approach does not require Robbins, Dr Phil, or Ferguson. It's not the responsibility of the Sales Manager to help Reps overcome emotional burdens or cheer-lead them to success. To be an effective coach however, Managers must obtain buy-in.
This means they must earn the respect and trust of the Sales Reps. This requires essential soft skills including self-awareness, listening ability, EQ and leading by example.

REMEMBER

Finally, it's important to remember that the best coaching plans are collaborative. Empower your Sales Reps by co-creating skills development plans, and foster engagement by encouraging them to set their own goals. ■

PHILIP PIERCE-JONES is a Senior Consultant at RevenuePartners, with over 30 years experience in B2B sales and business management and corporate training.

HOW WE ASSIST

Our **Coaching Pro for Sales Managers workshop** provides a complete framework for sales coaching that drives revenue growth.

The workshop encompasses the skills training and tools (agendas, coaching conversations cheat-sheets, matrix to identify who to coach and metrics-based coaching scorecards) for efficient knowledge transfer and immediate implementation.

Additional support services include assistance with rollout and adoption in the form of **Deployment, Refreshers** and **30-Day Management Reviews.**

EXPERT INSIGHTS

Rolling the Dice on Sales Forecasting

Is the reliability of your monthly sales forecasts rock-solid? Senior Consultant at RevenuePartners, **Shirley Hulley** shares her insights.

One of the key measures of the competency of senior sales professionals across the globe, is their ability to accurately forecast pending sales.

But here's the problem. When CSO Insights surveyed 700 sales teams worldwide, the results revealed that the chances of winning at roulette were higher (47,5%) than the standard accuracy for sales forecasting (46,5%).

THE HEART OF THE PROBLEM

Most forecasts are built on the inputs of Sales Reps, and are notoriously inaccurate for these reasons:

- **Commitment Phobia:** Because pipelines are used to forecast deals, many Sales Reps don't like to put unqualified opportunities into their pipelines because they're worried that they'll be committing to deals they are not certain they'll close.
- **Happy Ears:** On the other end of the scale, Sales Reps can be over-optimistic about deals they believe will close, however many fail to materialise.
- **Dust and Cobwebs:** Many pipelines are bogged down with stalled deals. A stalled deal is an indication that your Sales Rep failed to secure the important buyer commitments required at various stages of the sales cycle.

The result is pipelines that either don't include pending opportunities or are filled with flawed opportunities that just shouldn't be there. The challenge is that executive management teams make decisions based on these sales forecasts.

THE REALITY

According to our own research of over 300 mid- to large-sized South African organisations, 59% of companies reported not having formally outlined forecasting criteria, nor having designed a process for revenue-forecasting meetings to be held by Sales Managers with their Sales Reps.

In the absence of formal structures, these companies are inviting margins of error.

BETTER FORECASTING TECHNIQUES

Good forecasting requires an understanding of your buyer's behaviour. If you want to learn how sellers should sell, learn how buyers buy.

Too many forecasts are nothing more than lists or histories of what the Sales Rep has done in the past, without taking into consideration what the buyer is doing.

At the end of the day, deals only move forward when the buyer takes action, which is why it's so important to get a commitment at each step of the process.

Your process is key. Unless your Sales Organisation has mapped a formal sales process that identifies each stage of the sales cycle, and links that stage with the buyer commitments required to advance to the next step – then your Sales Managers and Reps are just guessing.

It's also vital to get a clear picture of how your buyer is making decisions. What process are they using?
What stages of the decision cycle are ahead? And what should you be doing differently at each stage?

Armed with this knowledge, your forecasts will become far more accurate. ■

Too many forecasts are nothing more than lists or histories of what the Sales Rep has done in the past, without taking into consideration what the buyer is doing.

OBTAINING BUYER COMMITMENTS

Here are ten buyer commitments you can use to remedy unreliable forecasting. As each commitment is achieved, your sales team can move the deal through your pipeline.

1. **Access:** Which key stakeholders have we not accessed yet?
2. **Attention:** How do we know we have their attention?
3. **Willingness to share information:** What information have they shared?
4. **Agreement to continue engagement:** Who agreed to continue the engagement to the next phase?
5. **Involvement of additional stakeholders:** Which of the decision-makers/ influencers are missing?
6. **Addressing and resolving concerns:** What concerns were raised, addressed and resolved?
7. **Confirmation of the problem:** Have all the stakeholders agreed that they have a problem that needs solving and have they quantified the cost of the problem?
8. **Decision to change:** What is their reason to change?
9. **Acceptance of the value of the solution:** Who has expressed belief in the solution's value and ROI?
10. **Commitment to buy:** What signed commitments are still missing?

SHIRLEY HULLEY is a Senior Consultant at RevenuePartners, with over 20 years of experience in senior leadership positions in local and global companies.

ASSESS YOUR COMPANY

Are You Revenue Growth Ready?

Use the **Strategy, Execution and Results Scorecard** to evaluate the Management Strategy of your Company.

HOW WE ASSIST CUSTOMERS

At **RevenuePartners** we offer integrated **Sales Manager solutions** – from hiring processes that include Sales Management DNA assessments, to training and metrics-based coaching that enable Sales Managers to deliver numbers in highly competitive markets.

OUR IMPACT

Turn to the back of the magazine to view our solutions and results.

PLANNING & EXECUTION SCORECARD

Rate your Sales Management Strategy

How does your Company score on these revenue growth Sales Management questions?

		No plan	Plan in progress	Yes, documented & finalised		No execution	Dissatisfied	Satisfied	Highly satisfied		Results off plan	Results on plan	Results beyond plan	**SUB-TOTALS**
1. Are your Sales Managers equipped with the skillsets required to manage their teams through adversity to achieve or surpass target?	Plan in place	0	1	3	Execution in place	0	1	3	5	Results to plan	0	5	10	
2. Are the pipelines and revenue forecasting your Sales Managers deliver to superiors accurate and reliable?	Plan in place	0	1	3	Execution in place	0	1	3	5	Results to plan	0	5	10	
3. Has your Company adopted a uniform metrics-based coaching program where Sales Managers are required to report on coaching metrics and skills enhancement to achieve or surpass targets?	Plan in place	0	1	3	Execution in place	0	1	3	5	Results to plan	0	5	10	
													GRAND TOTAL	

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Score your company on each question by plan, execution and results
2. Add your scores per question and enter the sub-total in the last column
3. Add your 3 sub-totals for a grand total and check your scoring against the ranges below
4. Decide on a plan of action to address risks or to leverage growth potential.

RANGE	GRADE	ACTION
0-24	Revenue growth potential is low	Urgently design an action plan to address revenue growth
25-36	Revenue growth potential at risk	Plan where weaknesses can be mitigated for improved growth
37-54	Revenue growth potential is good	Consider opportunities for exponential growth

How do you score?

Once you've read this section, turn to **page 88** to rate how you score on revenue growth readiness in **Pillar 5**

PILLAR 5

Sales Enablement

Revenue Growth Engineering™

5

DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION

Getting B2B Omnichannel Sales Right

Buyers want it. Sellers need it. But how do you get B2B omnichannel right?

How do you create a seamless experience for customers and drive profitable growth for suppliers? It's not trivial, but it's not rocket science either. The key is a comprehensive, cross-channel customer view.

BY DOUG CHUNG, ISABEL HUBER, JEAN-CHARLES DEVIGNES & TOM CLAUWAERT

During the early stages of the pandemic, many B2B companies considered remote interactions as a temporary patch, a way to stay in touch with customers while Sales Reps were confined to their home offices. Now, it's becoming clear that omnichannel is here to stay, and many businesses aren't prepared for this permanent change.

The latest B2B Pulse research from McKinsey shows that two thirds of U.S. buyers opt for remote human interactions or digital self-service at various stages of their decision journey, such as identifying, searching for, reviewing, and evaluating new suppliers, as well as for ordering and reordering. While this shift is partly driven by Covid-related lockdowns and distancing requirements, it is in tune with a larger trend that predates the pandemic. Over the course of the past five years, the number of channels B2B buyers use has doubled, from 5 in 2016 to 10 in 2021. And a staggering 94% of respondents say that the new omnichannel sales model is as effective as, or more effective than, the previous sales model.

Although B2B buyers are enthusiastic about omnichannel interactions, they are also very clear about what they want from suppliers – and very willing to switch if "must-haves" are not offered. For example, 82% of B2B decision makers will actively look for a new supplier if a performance guarantee is not offered. Players who get omnichannel right though, stand to not only attract new customers but retain existing ones too, leading to higher revenues, lower cost to serve, improved customer satisfaction scores, and reduced churn rates.

A COMPREHENSIVE VIEW OF EACH CUSTOMER IS KEY

B2B buyers expect the same level of omnichannel service and flexibility as when they shop in their personal lives. They want to be able to hop from channel to channel as they advance in their buying journey. They may start by researching their options on a supplier's website or a social media platform. When questions come up, they want to be able to open a chat, call a Sales Rep, or receive a call back within a few hours, and they expect the Sales Rep to be up to speed on their history, provided they have agreed to data collection. They may want a specialist to meet them on site at their plant to select the perfect product or solution for their purposes.

Many B2B players struggle with the implementation of omnichannel interactions because they treat channels as silos ("multichannel"), rather than as a set of interconnected tools a customer may want to use at different stages of a decision journey, or at different points in the relationship with a supplier ("omnichannel"). To enable seamless end-to-end omnichannel journeys, B2B players must create a comprehensive view of each customer and deliver consistent messages across channels. Successful omnichannel sellers use CRM tools that provide visibility on the entire customer journey. Such tools enable them to combine leads from different sales departments and channels. Based on this kind of transparency, they can create a seamless experience for customers, and they can reward Sales Reps regardless of where a customer makes the final purchase.

5 success factors for moving to omnichannel sales

WE'VE OBSERVED FIVE ELEMENTS of successful transitions from a multichannel model, where multiple channels exist side-by-side, to a fully integrated omnichannel model. The common factors among successful businesses that make this shift are customer centricity, a holistic approach, pro-active channel conflict management, strong digital foundations, and agile collaboration across functions.

1 CUSTOMER CENTRICITY

To create seamless and compelling customer journeys, pioneers put customers and their needs at the centre of their omnichannel offering. Over half of B2B companies in the U.S. conduct extensive primary research to better understand customer decision journeys, with top performing companies more likely to do so than slower growing companies.

They review transaction logs and conduct targeted research to come to a clear understanding of customer preferences at each touchpoint and stage of the decision journey. They build comprehensive, fully integrated customer profiles and manage relationships across channels. For example, a large technology company faced increasing pressure from smaller, highly customer-centric competitors.

In response, the company reimagined its customer experience and put customers back at the centre of its activities by designing, building, and operating a digital customer experience platform. A corresponding pilot was conducted with more than 450 customers to enable better identification of customer needs and more targeted solution recommendations. The program resulted in higher satisfaction, reduced churn, and an uplift in digital sales.

2 A HOLISTIC APPROACH

One in three B2B companies re-defined the role of each sales channel in their company's overall go-to-market strategy within the past year. A specialty chemicals company developed a holistic B2B omnichannel strategy that was tailored to the specific needs and characteristics of the company's business model and customer base.

The process involved setting up three distinct sales channels (field sales, inside sales, distribution) and a clear channel allocation approach. To forge a truly holistic approach, the channels were complemented by three supporting functions across the customer journey, spanning all channels and enabling a seamless experience:

1. A lead generator role was set up to generate leads at scale across all channels through market scans and by leveraging business intelligence.
2. The online presence was upgraded to address customers' needs across the digital buying journey via multiple digital platforms, including the company's website, social media profiles, and an e-commerce portal.
3. A dedicated customer service team supported customers with ordering and fulfillment.

Overall, this holistic approach enabled the company to increase the number and frequency of customer interactions with supporting digital information, to enhance the company's reach and relevance through external platforms and lead generators, and to provide customers with more flexibility by offering online ordering to all customers.

3 PROACTIVE CHANNEL CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

Many companies say they have faced increased channel-competition challenges as a result of field sales roles working from home (similar to inside sales), and they are very concerned about their relationships with distributors that are stifling e-commerce progress.

Omnichannel outperformers do not avoid conflict. Rather, they address it proactively, using segmentation to find the perfect fit of channels, customers, and products or services. This is what one industrial tech company did when it increased direct online sales to generate higher revenue and increase margins, reduce reliance on third-party distributors, and improve customer relationships.

The company needed to understand and mitigate the risk of channel conflict, particularly with dealers. It mapped the customer decision journey by segment, with the help of quantitative research and interviews. The segments were defined by factors such as interaction preference, average order size, purchase frequency, and expected lifetime value. The company also modelled the economic impact of shifting products from one channel to another (e.g., from distributors to direct sales, or from traditional sales to e-commerce). It also applied war gaming to determine how stakeholders might respond to a new channel strategy. Based on these actions, the company's omnichannel taskforce was able to recommend specific channels for different products and customer segments.

4 DIGITALLY ENABLED SALES AND MARKETING

Successful omnichannel transformations have a strong digital foundation. This requires investments in the right technology (hardware and software) and a strong connection between sales and IT, allowing organisations to make significant improvements in advanced analytics and the latest sales tools. Another important success factor is the implementation of marketing automation with digital analytics (e.g., for cross-/up-selling and dynamic pricing). Leading players also apply digital marketing and sales to drive personalisation at scale. An agricultural input distributor achieved significant revenue and performance gains through an omnichannel transformation focused on digitisation and analytics. Specifically, the company implemented new data streams to give sales teams more accurate tools for lead generation. This goal was achieved by combining three initiatives:

1. Multiple data sources were used to create digital lists that were delivered directly to each salesperson.
2. Advanced data and analytics supported the creation of live dashboards to track performance and value capture.
3. Customised lead lists were used to support digital marketing and campaigns to increase conversion.
4. The new platform was backed by a flexible and scalable technology and data stack to ensure long-term success.

5 AGILE CROSS-FUNCTIONAL COLLABORATION

Successful businesses implement agile ways of working across commercial and growth functions.

WHERE ARE YOU?

AN OMNICHANNEL MATURITY ASSESSMENT

To drive targeted omnichannel transformation efforts, companies should start by assessing their omnichannel maturity level. This type of assessment enables companies to prioritise investments as they embark on an omnichannel transformation effort.

LEVEL 1 OMNICHANNEL LAUNCH

- Companies at this level aspire to offer customers a more integrated omnichannel experience.
- Multiple channels are in place, but these work largely in isolation, rather than as part of a seamless customer experience.
- Level 1 companies seeking to overcome silo thinking should focus on the customer-centric reimagination and implementation of end-to-end journeys. In addition, detailed role descriptions should be defined for key functions (such as field representatives, inside sales, and customer care).
- Also, a mechanism to manage channel conflicts should be put in place (e.g., using segmentation and cross-channel incentives).

LEVEL 2 OMNICHANNEL ACCELERATION

- An omnichannel model is in place. Now the company is looking to differentiate its go-to-market approach and leverage analytics to reach the next level of growth.
- Level 2 companies must consider the benefits of marketing/sales automation.
- This can include the automation of standard parts of the sales process (for example, with AI-powered chatbots) or the implementation of website personalisation.
- Data-driven insights can be leveraged across channels to generate leads and capture growth.
- The transfer of digital analytics to other sales channels (for example, territory planning) can be helpful.

LEVEL 3 E-COMMERCE LAUNCH/ACCELERATION

- There are already multiple channels in place, and they work together seamlessly. The only thing missing is an effective e-commerce/digital channel.
- For level 3 companies seeking to build their own commerce portal or partner with an e-commerce marketplace, the link to other channels is crucial.
- Many B2B companies set up their websites as stand-alone solutions. While this may work well for new, online-only customers, it can lead to frustration among existing customers.
- Leading B2B companies use state-of-the-art, cloud-based platforms to integrate customer data across channels in real time.
- More importantly, they redefine the role of the Sales Rep and recognise that traditional sales roles have evolved and settled into an overall hybrid role. Hybrid and digital are the fastest-growing sales roles outpacing growth in more traditional roles like field sales.

A crucial factor is attracting or developing the right talent and getting people from different backgrounds to work together. A travel company focused on agile collaboration to build a successful B2B platform in only four months. It involved creating cross-functional agile teams with developers, designers, product, and business Managers.

Weekly meetings with project sponsors supported a rapid decision-making process and enabled the company to quickly remove roadblocks. Demos were conducted to illustrate new processes and generate enthusiasm within the organisation. In addition, close collaboration between marketing and commercial departments ensured the development of a state-of-the-art platform.

Getting omnichannel right is far from trivial, but it's worth the effort. A company-wide commitment to omnichannel excellence can be a real game changer for B2B companies. Early movers will not only be in a better position to fend off competition, but they can also capture cost savings, increase customer satisfaction, reduce churn, and grow their businesses. ■

INFLUENCE FROM A DISTANCE

Building instant trust with customers online

You have 20 seconds to capture attention, and three minutes to hold it. That's not a long time to convince a customer you're the one they want to spend their money with.

BY DIANE ALBERTYN

WHY CARE?

- B2B customers are almost 50% more likely to buy a product or service when they see personal value
- 71% of B2B searches begin with a generic query, not specific vendors, company names or products
- 68% of B2B customers prefer independent online research when considering a purchasing decision.

CONSIDER THIS

Capitalise on the powerful impact of content marketing in 3 easy steps:

1. **Adapt your content formulas, formats and sequencing.** Your customers don't move successively through a funnel, but use parallel streams to explore, evaluate, and engage with content.
2. **Create content for multiple formats.** Concise copy with core takeaways that punctuate each slide is the best way to capture and keep attention.
3. **Forget the myth of the 'best' day to post.** Rather select when to send content based on your prospect's engagement with specific types of content and follow-up after initial engagement.

ACCORDING TO GOOGLE, 71% of B2B searches begin with a generic query. This means that customers start by researching possible solutions to their challenges and problems, rather than searching for specific suppliers, company names or products.

In fact, research conducted by Forrester indicates that 68% of B2B customers prefer independent online research when they are considering a purchasing decision.

This means that while digital marketing platforms and websites offer unprecedented access to customers, it is essential to attract and maintain their interest and to build trust as quickly as possible.

THE BIG IDEA
DON'T JUST TELL A STORY, SHARE IT

Content marketing is evolving, and as buying becomes increasingly non-linear, it can play an important role in aligning selling with buying. But there are now many myths and unexamined assumptions that have accrued around content marketing as the practice has exploded.

"Don't follow the herd," says Frank Cespedes, Senior Lecturer at Harvard Business School and author of *Aligning Strategy and Sales.* "If you can't track what prospects read, when, where, and for how long, you have a blind spot in a big part of your marketing budget and are unlikely to get the ROI possible with this approach."

WHAT'S IN IT FOR YOU?
A HIGHER SALES COMPLETION RATE

By getting personal, B2B marketers can get ahead – creating purchase intent, pricing power, brand advocacy and, most importantly, happy customers.

Customer segmentation is critical. Buyers are interested in solutions that speak directly to their needs and challenges, within their industries and verticals.
The more customer-centric and segmented your content, the better.

The case study is still popular for a reason. According to Harvard Business Review, case study content is consumed in its entirety by prospects more than any other type of marketing content.

In our data, case studies have an 83% read completion rate – these rates are higher than other sales and marketing content provided during the buying journey.

This is because case studies are specific – they offer proof points for buyers and they are industry or vertical specific. ■

ASSESS YOUR COMPANY

Are You Revenue Growth Ready?

Use the **Strategy, Execution and Results Scorecard** to evaluate the Enablement Strategy of your Company.

HOW WE ASSIST CUSTOMERS

At **RevenuePartners** we offer **Sales Enablement Solutions** such as Lead Generation and ROI Case Studies to open new business opportunities by building trust and demonstrating ROI to justify purchase decisions.

OUR IMPACT

Turn to the back of the magazine to view our solutions and results.

PLANNING & EXECUTION SCORECARD

Rate your Enablement Strategy

How does your Company score on these revenue growth Sales Enablement questions?		No plan	Plan in progress	Yes, documented & finalised		No execution	Dissatisfied	Satisfied	Highly satisfied		Results off plan	Results on plan	Results beyond plan	SUB-TOTALS
1. Are you currently generating the right quality leads to create sufficient new business to achieve or surpass target?	Plan in place	0	1	3	Execution in place	0	1	3	5	Results to plan	0	5	10	
2. Do you have relevant customer case studies and testimonials per industry or product category (written or video)?	Plan in place	0	1	3	Execution in place	0	1	3	5	Results to plan	0	5	10	
3. Do you have relevant content marketing appropriate to all deal stages, products, and buyer actions?	Plan in place	0	1	3	Execution in place	0	1	3	5	Results to plan	0	5	10	
													GRAND TOTAL	

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Score your company on each question by plan, execution and results
2. Add your scores per question and enter the sub-total in the last column
3. Add your 3 sub-totals for a grand total and check your scoring against the ranges below
4. Decide on a plan of action to address risks or to leverage growth potential.

RANGE	GRADE	ACTION
0-24	Revenue growth potential is low	Urgently design an action plan to address revenue growth
25-36	Revenue growth potential at risk	Plan where weaknesses can be mitigated for improved growth
37-54	Revenue growth potential is good	Consider opportunities for exponential growth

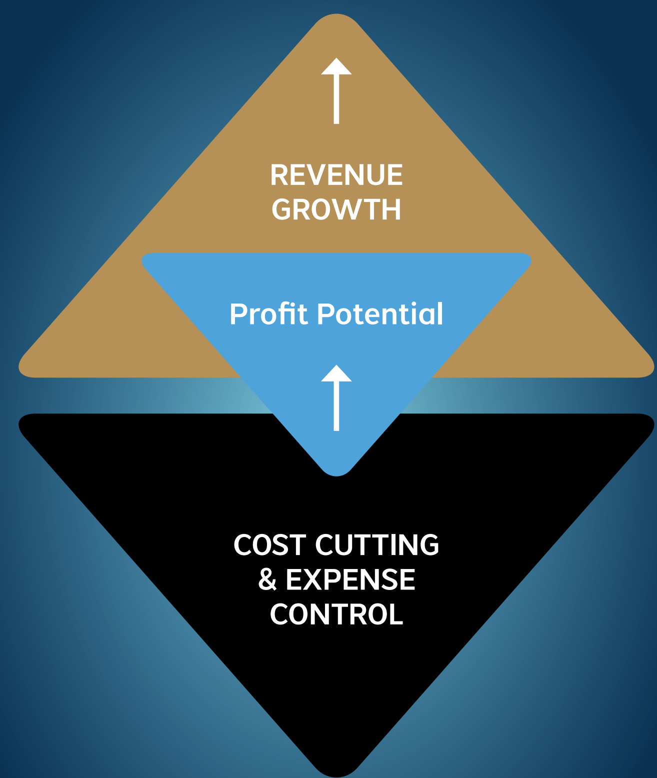
Here's how we solve challenges and deliver results

A QUESTION TO THE CEO & CFO

How are you delivering profit in today's economic climate?

There is no denying the impact of cost cutting on the bottom line. After all, every R1 saved is the equivalent to an average of 2X to 4X plus revenue earned through sales efforts.

While expense control may be a necessity for delivering EBITDA numbers today, it's not gearing your company to gain and retain sustainable bottom-line growth that you'll need tomorrow.



DELIVERING GOOD & SUSTAINED TOP-LINE GROWTH

In the long run right-priced revenue growth outpaces the worth of cost cutting for the bottom line.

Why?

Revenue Growth is unlimited. It's not confined to existing customers, competitors, industry or territory boundaries. By leveraging 1-2 revenue growth levers available to a company, executives can open blue-sky opportunities for hidden revenue growth, away from highly competitive desert landscapes.

Let's see what's holding you back.

revenuepartners
Revenue growth engineering™

OBSTACLES TO REVENUE GROWTH

IS YOUR COMPANY FACING THESE CHALLENGES?

Over the past 12 years, we have frequently encountered customers who face many of these challenges that impede their ability to grow top-line revenue.

EXTERNAL CHALLENGES

Business Model
Inability to improve revenue and EBITDA as the company is not the #1 Low Cost or Proposition player in the industry.

Market Size
Many players fighting for market share in a defined, shrinking territory.

New Entrants
New market entrants from adjacent industries (local and global) disrupting a sector.

Discounting
Competitors destroying value by selling at low prices to win business.

Differentiation
Difficulty differentiating when a product or solution is not clearly the cheapest or best proposition option.

Volatility
Unpredictable currency values and supply-chain delivery impact forward-planning and cashflow.

Budget Freeze
Potential buyers are cutting budgets or freezing spend to make their EBITDA numbers.

Noise
Customers and prospects are distracted by disruptive work routines, local issues and geo-political factors.

Status Quo
Change-resistant prospects do not want to invest the time, cost or effort to switch or buy.

Access
Remote working has further impeded sellers ability to connect with stakeholders.

INTERNAL CHALLENGES

CORPORATE REVENUE GROWTH CHALLENGES

- Identifying the best areas to grow organically
- Identifying the best go-to-market channels
- Delivering a differentiated customer experience
- Sales Force not equipped to achieve or surpass growth targets in the current environment.

Sales Maturity Challenges

- Sales Force analysis is adhoc and there is no clear identification of gaps
- Multiple sales processes are used by Reps, impeding Managers ability to effectively measure, manage and coach
- Sales processes not aligned to best-practice and not built to win in today's price-driven environment
- Pipelines are thin
- Forecasting is inaccurate
- Companies are too reliant on a small pool of star performers, without the ability to scale and equip non-stars to improve.

Execution Challenges

- Corporate Strategy does not cascade to the Sales Organisation and so fails to translate into results on the ground
- There may be a gap between what management perceives is happening and what is really happening.

Time Pressure Challenges

- Devoting time to planning and executing on new strategies and tactics is difficult due to excessive workloads and unrelenting pressure.

Change Resistance Challenges

- Change-fatigued teams slow progress.

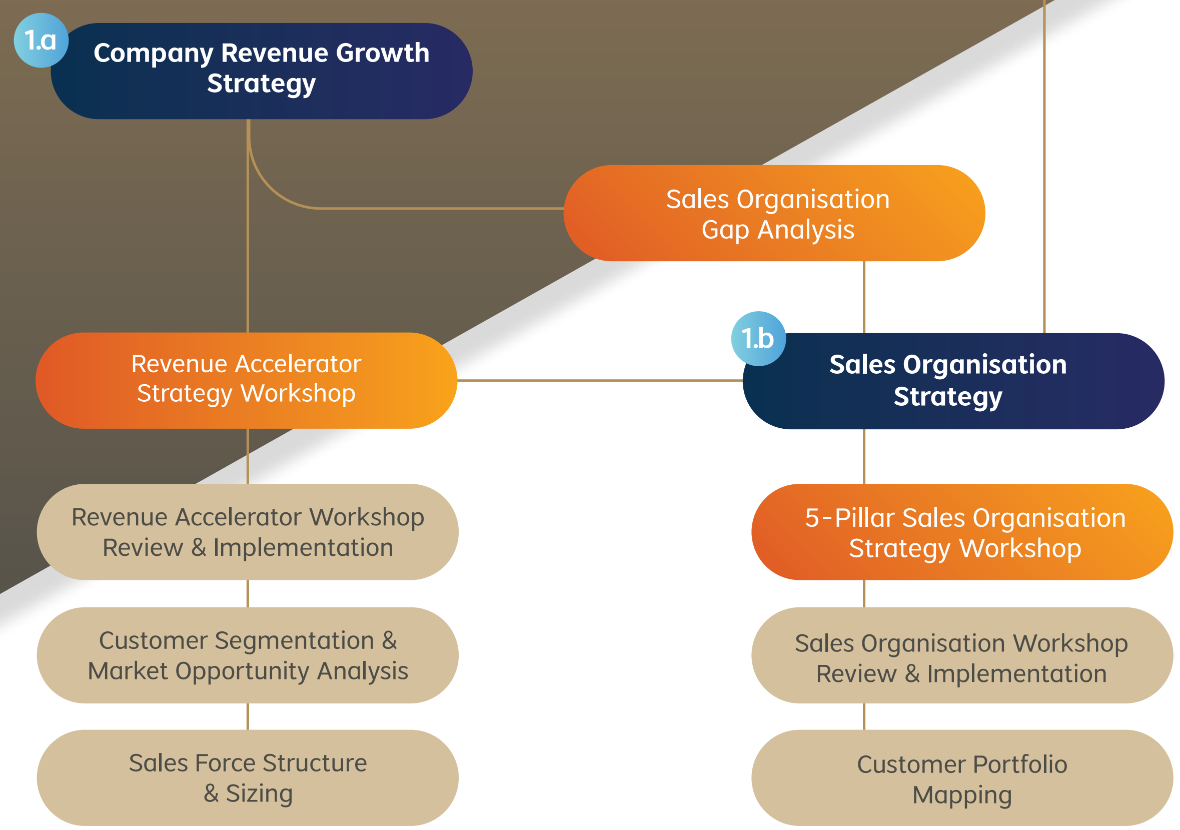
REVENUE GROWTH ENGINEERING

Top-line and EBITDA growth is possible in this market. Using fast-cycle planning, applied to a Revenue Growth Methodology offers companies a clear pathway to extraordinary results. **Turn the page to discover how.**

PARTNERING TO GROW YOUR REVENUE

At RevenuePartners we assist companies establish a competitive advantage to outperform their markets using our unique Revenue Growth Methodology for long-term capacity building, delivered through mutual execution accountability.

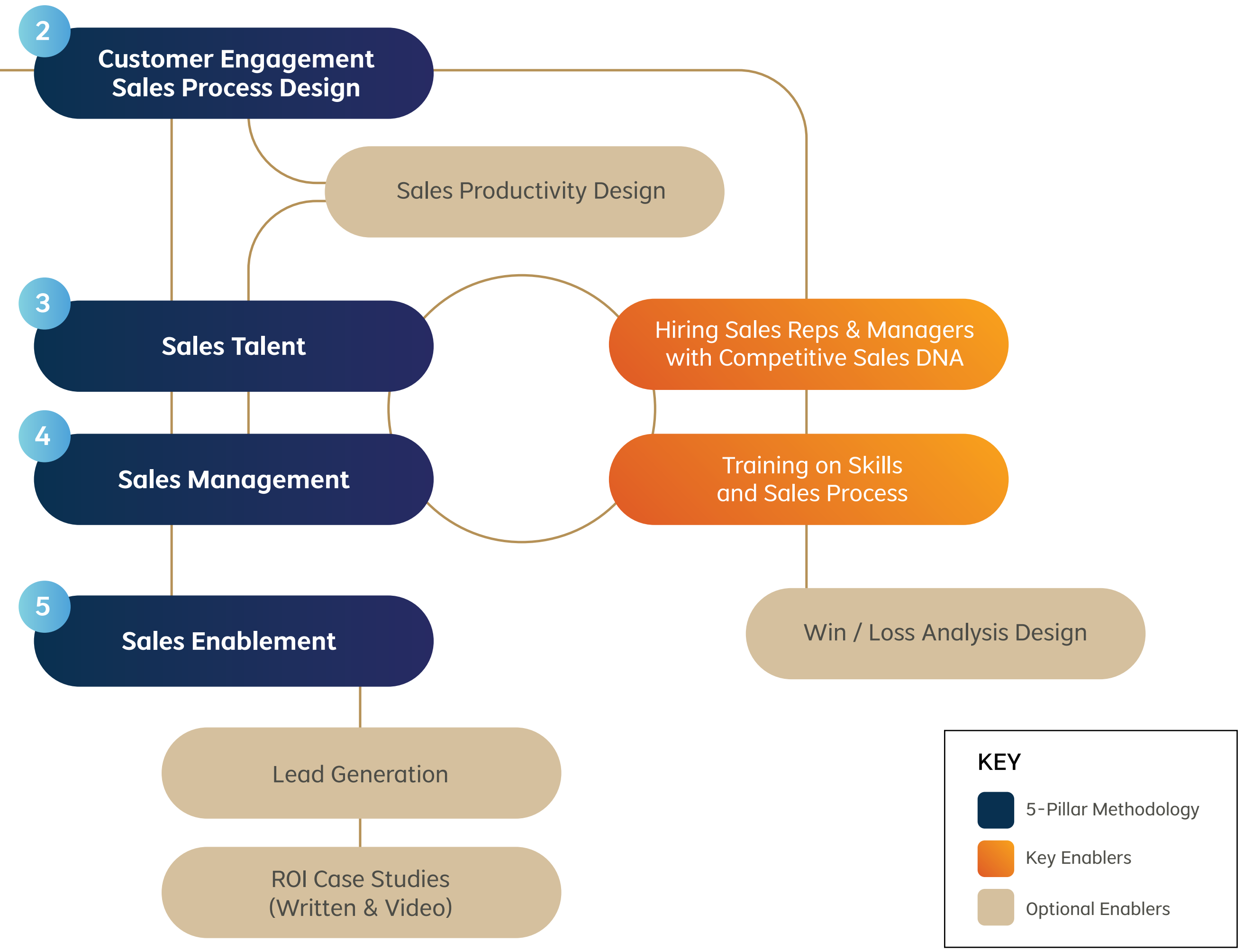
REVENUE GROWTH SEQUENCING



SALES ORGANISATION MATURITY

Long-term Capacity Building

Businesses are on guard when it comes to spending on adhoc interventions that only result in short-term gains. We assist our customers to map the 5-Pillars of their Sales Organisation (numbered below) to our Sales Organisation Maturity Model to provide clarity on where they currently stand, along with clear and tangible end-goals for long-term capacity building.



EXECUTION SUPPORT We assist our customers achieve their desired ROI through ongoing assistance via deployment, maintenance, coaching, iterating, monthly reviews and management reporting.

Shared Risk Model

We believe in win-win partnerships. That's why for qualifying accounts, we place a portion of our fee on risk - subject to our customers fulfilling specified obligations and achieving predefined activity metrics.

ACHIEVING SALES ORGANISATION MATURITY

Lagging | Defining | Aligning | Embedding | Optimising

We assist our customers to define formal processes and systems based on best-practice and then integrate them throughout their Sales Organisation and Business Units and embed them within the company's culture. Finally, we assist in reviewing them to ensure ongoing refinement and improvement.

OUR APPROACH

Revenue Growth Engineering

Since our launch in 2010, RevenuePartners (formerly ThinkSales) has assisted over 500 customers in more than 20 industries with interventions to improve revenue, increase productivity and lower costs.

OUR IMPACT

AutoTrader	BPW Axles	LanDynamix	Macsteel
20%	240%	20%	7%
Designed a unique AutoTrader Sales Process that contributed to revenue growth tending towards 20% over 4-5 years.	Identified a Product-focus Strategy that delivered a 240% revenue increase over 6-months.	Identified two new industry-first buyer factors, two growth levers and a new Go-to-Market Channel to reduce a 5-year revenue growth goal to 4-years.	Identified an industry first Outbound Call Centre with a 7% volume increase, effectively deployed in 2021.

PERI SA	Pnet	Sarens SA	WEBFLEET Solutions
34%	23%	50%	+250
Identified and deployed two new growth levers to add a 34% revenue upside opportunity over 12-24-months.	Designed and deployed a unique Pnet Sales Process for the Corporate Sales Division which led to a 23% increase in year-on-year revenue.	Identified and deployed a value-led sales approach that shifted Sales Reps from zero on target to 50% on target and the balance just off target within one year.	Deployed diagnostic value-selling which facilitated closing a deal for 250 buses in 2-weeks that had previously been stalled for 6-months.

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Revenue growth engineering™

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