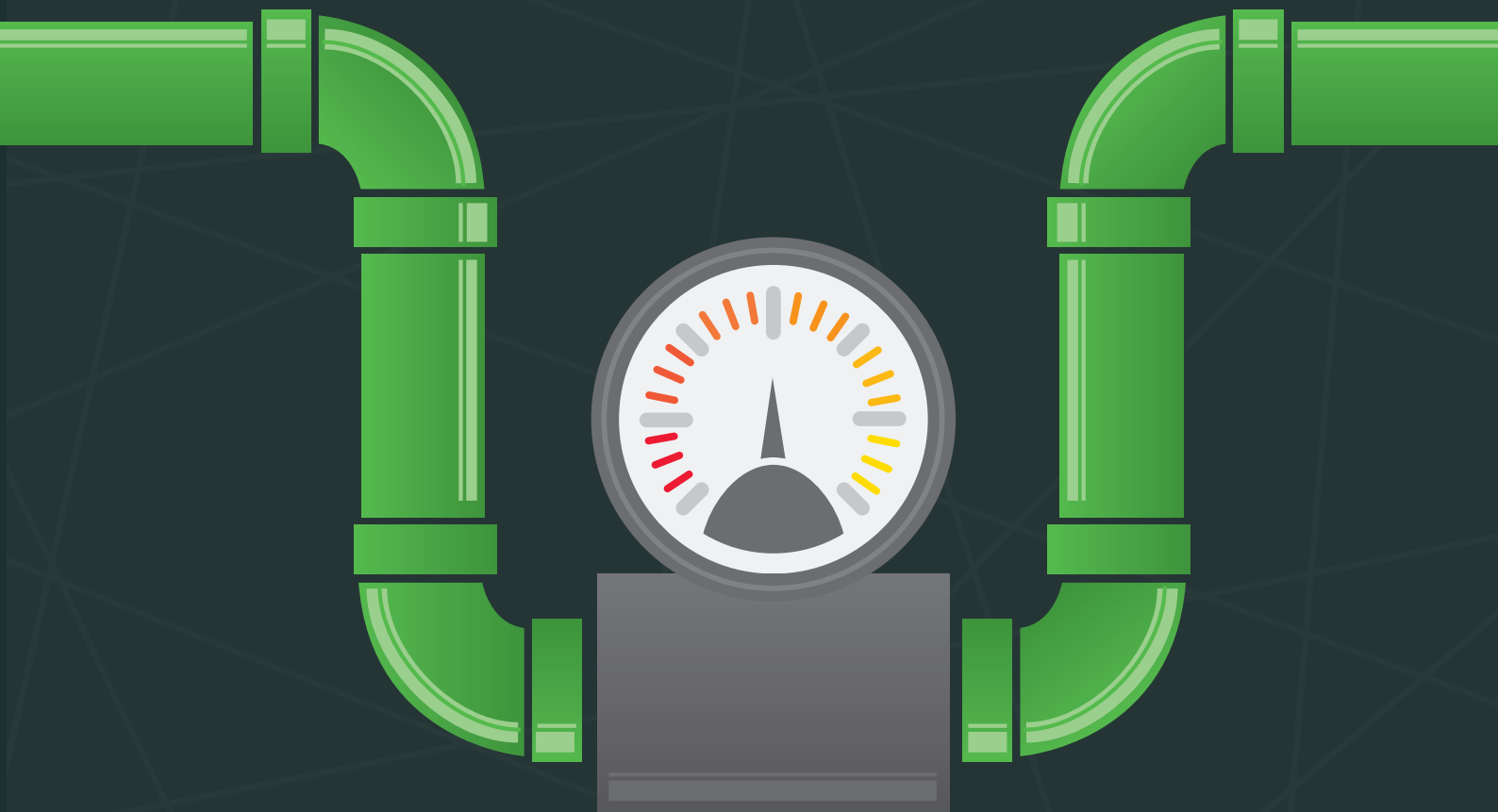


pipedrive

SALES PIPELINE ACADEMY



by Timo Rein and Urmas Purde

A Note From the Authors

We've built [sales software](#) for more than five years, and we spent the previous 10-plus years in sales management. Now, we've compressed our sales pipeline knowledge into 12 chapters over 48 pages.

Each of the 12 "lessons" can grow your sales by double digits. If you apply everything, this may more than double your sales.

The e-book is written for people who want to get more out of their sales pipeline, independent of whether they are seasoned sales pros or just starting out.

No BS. No "magic formulas." Achieving results requires work and some change in behavior.

NOW, DON'T TURN DOWN FREE AND AWESOME SALES ADVICE

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Chapter 1

The Numbers Game

LESSON #1

Understand the Numbers Game

Did you know you already possess the key to sales success? It's far simpler than you would expect, and anyone can do it. Although sales success does take a real focused effort, following the steps in Sales Pipeline Academy will make it difficult to fail and far easier to succeed than you may have thought possible.

**THE REAL TRICK TO SALES IS THAT
THERE IS NO REAL TRICK TO SALES**

Many feel that successful salespeople are just born with innate abilities that others don't possess. That's false. Sales success is based on the time and effort you put into managing your sales pipeline. The better your work ethic, the better your results.

A sales pipeline starts by dropping conversations with new and old contacts into one end with signed contracts and checks coming out of the other. When you understand the key concepts of a sales pipeline and manage your time and work habits, you'll see the results you want.

A SALES PIPELINE WORKS IN ITS OWN GOOD TIME

Your sales pipeline is every call, meeting, email, sales conversation, the guy you met at the boat show and other contacts you've had during the normal length of your sales cycle.

Most of these conversations are in early stages and far from the close. These are people you think need what you're offering. Others are folks with whom you already have a history. You've had several chats with them and you've identified a good fit between what you're offering and what they need.

An active and effective sales pipeline consists of conversations with prospects that lead to signed deals and fall within the time frame of your typical sales cycle.

As an example, if your normal sales cycle takes six weeks to get from the initial “Hi there” to the signature on the dotted line, then any conversation lasting longer than six weeks must be considered to be held outside the pipeline and put on the back burner.

“What, toss away that guy I’ve been working for the last two years?” you ask. No, you don’t ignore them altogether; it’s really a matter of focus. It might seem strange to think about taking your focus away from a long-term prospect, even if they might be near the close.

Profitable sales pipeline management is about focusing on those conversations that are most likely to close. This means only those that fall within your sales cycle. Persistence is a great quality, but focused effort is what makes money.

YOU GET BIG SALES NUMBERS WHEN YOU UNDERSTAND THE NUMBERS GAME

Here’s the truth about a sales pipeline: It’s not a solid pipe; it’s got a lot of holes in it. Not everybody you stuff into the front end will come sailing out the other with a big fat check.

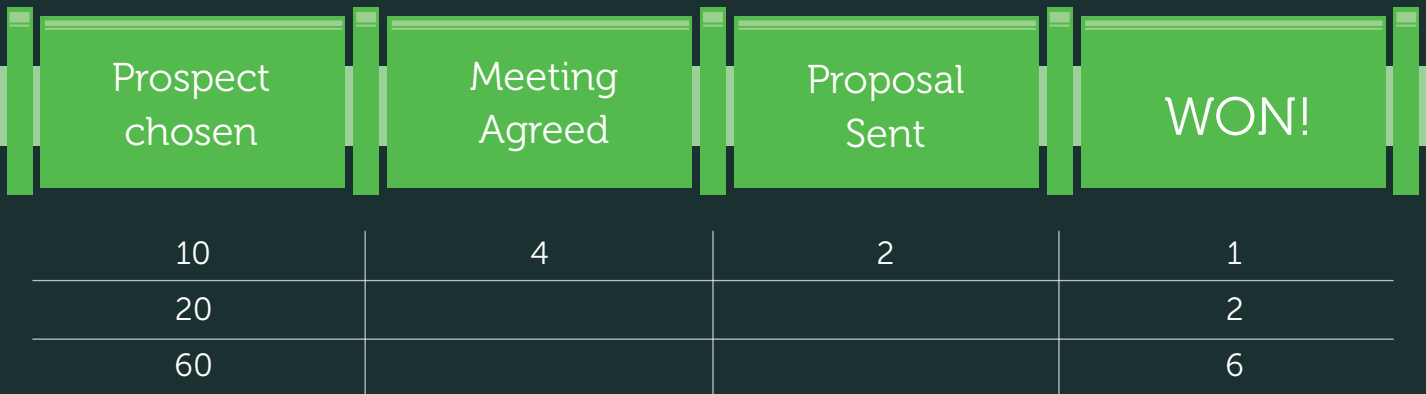
So the first thing to do is to understand your sales close ratio. What percentage of people you make initial contact with will eventually buy, or how many buy out of every 10 contacts?

Let’s say you’re selling website design services, and you have a list of 20 prospects you think will make good customers. Five will tell you to beat it, five won’t give you the time of day and eight give you all kinds of excuses why they can’t buy. Excuses like pricing, going with a competitor or not needing a website because of making nearly \$1,000 per month going door to door selling powdered water.

However, two will buy, thus making your close rate two out of 20, or 10% in this example. The more work you do, the more accurate your actual close ratio will be.

Sales Pipeline

Example 10% conversion rate



IDENTIFYING THIS RATIO GIVES YOU THE MAGIC KEY TO SALES SUCCESS

So, if your goal is one sale, you have to talk to 10 people. If you want six sales, you need to speak with 60. During a sales process, you might discover that to close a deal, it takes an initial call to set up a meeting, two meetings to discover the needs, two proposal drafts, a contract negotiation call and 10 to 15 emails over the course of the process. Well, you get the point. There's a lot of numbers involved. These are all just examples, but your homework assignment will give you the tools to determine your actual numbers.

In a future chapter, we'll discuss how each conversation that goes into the pipe is at a different stage of the sales cycle. What's important for now is the time factor and your close ratio. Now you know the true key to sales. To make X number of sales, you must talk to Y number of prospects. This is how sales pipeline management works and how you can guarantee that you make your sales goals every month.

Before you start on your homework assignment, [check out this video](#) we put together on this topic.



Homework

Sorry to use a dirty word. However, this assignment will give you a good start on laying a solid sales pipeline.

1

Calculate your sales conversion rate. For example, you make 50 calls to different people or companies, work on those and make two sales. Then, your close ratio would be $2/50=0.04$, or 4%.

2

Then calculate how many calls to make, emails to send or meetings you must have to make your conversion rate work. In the example with a 4% closing ratio, it takes 25 calls to have one sale.

If by doing these calculations you find a discrepancy with real life, it may be that you aren't putting enough people into the front end of your pipeline. It could also be that your conversion rate is too low. This means that besides working hard and putting in the necessary leads, you can always work smarter and improve your close ratio. We'll get to that in future chapters.



Chapter 2

Activity Goals

LESSON #2

Set the Right Kind of Goals

Every self-help book, motivational seminar and sales training weekend hammers into us the idea of goal-setting. The reason is that setting a solid goal adds tremendous power to your efforts.

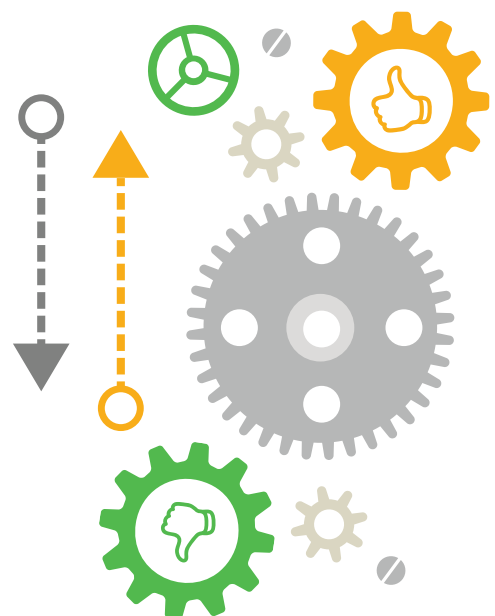
However, we're not here to persuade you to set sales goals. You know that it's a good idea already. Instead, the focus of this chapter will be how to set the right sales goals that will help you manage your sales pipeline to achieve and even exceed the results you're after.

THERE ARE GOOD AND BAD GOALS

This chapter isn't simply about goal setting, it's about proper goal setting. Did you know that more than 80% of companies set the wrong kinds of goals for their sales staff? Goals that you can't possibly meet? In a [recent study](#), it was shown that setting results-oriented goals made achieving these goals nearly impossible.

Think about it, if a sales manager could directly manage revenue, every salesperson in the world would be filling their bathtubs with gold coins. Of course, this doesn't happen. The reality is that we can't control results, we can only manage our own actions.

The good news is you can achieve astounding sales results by setting activity goals. In fact, the results that come out of carefully planned and managed activities can far exceed any results-oriented goal you may have set in the past.



A PERSONAL EXAMPLE

Imagine a bookseller who sets a goal to sell \$1,000 in books each day. What if he sold nothing after talking to 17 people? What if prospect No. 17 happened to be a harsh rejection? It would get you down and make it harder to keep going. Take it from us, before we founded Pipedrive, we got our start in sales this way.

Now what if the same bookseller had an activity goal of talking to 20 prospects each day. Even if 17 were to say no, it wouldn't matter. He would only have three prospects left to talk to.

Ironically, when you take your focus off the results and put it on activities, you start feeling better, and become more effective. Take Michael Phelps as an example. When he dives into the Olympic pool, his mind is not on the gold medal. His focus is on getting every move right — exactly like he's done it a thousand times before during training. If he gets every move right, only then will the gold be in his reach — and that much he knows.

YOU GET RESULTS BY FOCUSING ON THE THINGS YOU CAN DO, NOT ON THE THINGS YOU CAN'T DO ANYTHING ABOUT

As mentioned in [Chapter 1](#), everyone with whom you start a sales conversation will not end up buying. It's a matter of putting the right number of conversations into the front end of your pipeline and managing them along the way to ensure the right number of closed deals come out of the far end. It's not that you never think about your desired results; it's just that you don't let them monopolize your focus.

If you did the homework in the previous chapter, you should have a pretty good idea of the length of your sales cycle and the numbers that make it work.

So instead of worrying about a specific result, set an activity goal to initiate 10 new conversations and make four demos every day, for example. You don't know which of the 50 people in your sales pipeline will end up converting into a sale. The goal is to focus on making a powerful and effective presentation to each and every prospect, instead of worrying about what may or may not happen with the conversion.

Setting solid activity goals will build your confidence and reduce the sting of rejection. When you take your focus off of what might happen and put it on the activities that you can do, you'll find yourself exceeding any expectation of results you could ever have hoped of achieving.



Homework

- 1 Count the average number of your key activities including meetings, emails, follow-up calls, new conversations initiated per week, or per day, etc.
- 2 Set yourself daily and weekly activity goals based on how you're doing compared to your current business and revenue results. You can use the [Sales Pipeline Calculator](#) for this.



Chapter 3

Sales Stages

LESSON #3

Get Your Pipeline Stages Right

Our first chapter focused on putting a large enough number of conversations into your sales pipeline. In this chapter, we'll combine the activity goals from the previous chapter with properly segmenting your pipeline.

Defining sales stages probably sounds about as boring as any sales advice could get, right? Well, the result of this is very exciting. Organizations can increase their sales success by 20% to 30% simply by going through the exercise of clearly defining their sales stages!

WHY DEFINING SALES STAGES IS REALLY USEFUL

Defining your sales stages isn't just engaging in some tired old pipeline visualization exercise. What you're doing is creating a shared understanding of the ideal sales process. You set up a series of "valves" in the pipeline that one by one lead to a signed deal.



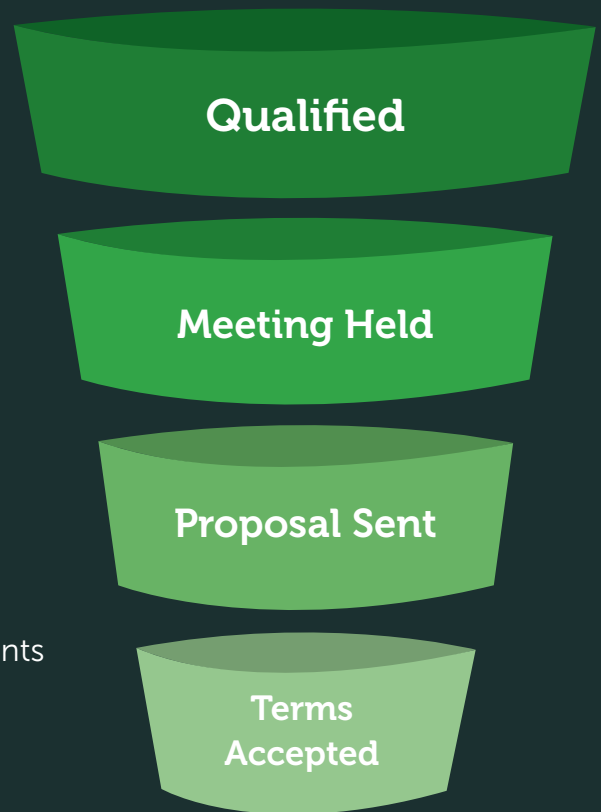
If, for example, your stages are to make first contact, identify the prospect's needs and then send them a quote, you don't want people jumping the gun and sending out quotes before they even know what the prospect needs. You take a shortcut from Stage 1 to Stage 3 and expect a good result.

Defining the stages of a sale is defining how you do things in your organization. It saves time and gets everyone in sync. Defining sales stages also helps you set more specific activity goals.

How to establish your sales stages:

You can segment your pipeline into whatever stages you want, but to help you along, here are some examples of typical sales stages:

- 1 Create a lead idea
- 2 Make initial contact with a potential customer
- 3 Find out what it is they want or need
- 4 Make them an offer that meets their needs or wants
- 5 Offer is accepted and a new customer emerges



Of course, your particular industry and business will influence exactly what stages you need to include as the segments of your pipeline. Your sales procedures, products or services offered, how your prospects make decisions and other factors all come into play. Just as in plumbing, no single pipeline design fits all situations... thankfully.

OK, BUT HOW CAN I DEFINE SALES STAGES THAT ACTUALLY FIT MY BUSINESS?

As part of your homework, we'll walk you through how you can define and optimize your own sales stages.

- 1 To begin, start by thinking about the decision-making and buying processes of your customers. How do they think? How do they approach a purchase? What drives these decisions?
- 2 Write down the matching sales stages associated with your customers' "buying stages." It shouldn't take you longer than 10 minutes or so.

- 3 Discuss your sales stages with your entire sales team and get everyone's input on the topic.
- 4 Go through all of your typical sales scenarios and make sure that the sales stages you've defined match with each of them. If you're doing this in group, keep in mind that smaller groups usually work better.
- 5 Review the sales stages with your team. It's vital that they not only grasp the stages, but understand why they're important. Also, make sure everyone agrees on the measuring activity at each stage or pipeline segment.
- 6 In a month or two, revise the stages once you have more hard information to work with. If any of the stages are confusing, rename, remove or add new stages to accurately reflect what's really happening with your sales pipeline.

If you'd like to learn more about defining sales stages, check out [this post](#).

Even now, this early in the book, you have the tools necessary to see huge increases in your close rate and results. If you're not already excited, wait until you see what's to come!



Chapter 4

More Deals

LESSON #4

How to Add More Deals

You're well on your way. You have a solid foundation and you've created a good sales pipeline that's properly segmented and ready to take in new prospects. Now we'll show you how to add oomph to your pipeline.

This chapter, and the three that follow, are a short series that will introduce you to the four levers of pipeline flow. You'll learn how to use these levers to get more deals, bigger deals, increase your conversion rate and do it all in less time.

$$\boxed{\text{MORE DEALS}} + \text{BIGGER DEALS} + \text{HIGHER CONVERSION} + \text{LESS TIME} = \text{BIGGER REVENUE \& PROFIT}$$

In this chapter, we're going to show you the different ways to put more new conversations into your pipeline.

PIPELINE LEVER 1

Adding new conversations keeps your sales pipeline flowing

Like with everything everything in this book, there is no magic key, secret technique or complicated formula to getting more deals. It's simple. All you have to do to get more deals out of the far end of your sales pipeline is to put more conversations into the front end.

3 STEPS TO HAVING A HEALTHY SALES PIPELINE FLOW:

1

Set a daily or weekly goal for adding new deals. We once set a goal for our sales teams to come up with a list of 10 sales opportunities every week. Within two months, we found that this technique was allowing us to increase our revenue. The time it will take you depends on the length of your sales cycle, of course. Make this list building an unbroken habit — "don't break the chain." Constant

2

effort keeps your pipeline full and the money flowing. Jerry Seinfeld is one of the most successful comedians of all time. When asked what the secret to his productivity was, he described a simple technique of creating a chain of activities that he never broke.

3

Get creative about how you make your weekly list. There are some simple and obvious ways to do this. We all know about following up with inbound leads and calling people from a list you bought. Those are good, but you have to get a bit more creative to keep that pipe full. Here are some ideas for your list-building activities:



- > Ask for referrals from your existing customers as well as from prospects who did not buy. Every NO can help build your pipeline.
- > Go back through your list of contacts and get in touch with people with whom you haven't spoken for three to six months, including those who initially said no. A lot can change over time.
- > Keep your finger on the pulse of what your contacts are doing. Often, job changes can be a good excuse to start a short conversation with them. Services like [Robuzz](#) help to track mentions of your friends and work contacts in the news.
- > Turn randomness into a system. There are many opportunities right under your nose. As you watch TV, read the paper or see a sign on the way to a meeting, take note of these and make contact.

Make it a habit to find new sales opportunities that continually help you to put new conversations into your sales pipeline. This persistent and consistent effort is one of the four levers to ensure that you get the most from your pipeline management efforts. In the next chapter, we'll focus on the second lever: how to grow revenues by getting bigger deals.

Chapter 5

Bigger Deals

LESSON #5

How to Go After Larger Deals

In the previous chapter, we touched upon the four ways to maximize your sales pipeline management efforts: more deals, bigger deals, higher conversion and less time. Now that we've explored how to get more deals, let's examine an even more exciting concept: getting bigger deals!

$$\text{MORE DEALS} + \boxed{\text{BIGGER DEALS}} + \text{HIGHER CONVERSION} + \text{LESS TIME} = \text{BIGGER REVENUE \& PROFIT}$$

THINK BIG AND YOU'LL GET BIG

Again, there's no magic behind landing bigger deals. You don't have to be a huge company to land larger and more profitable deals. It's a matter of proper sales pipeline management, focus and the right mindset.

- 1 Envision yourself closing bigger deals. A big part of sales success is self-belief. Before you can attain it, you must see it happening in your mind. If you imagine closing bigger deals, you'll soon believe that you can, and you'll also start finding new ways to turn your vision into reality.
- 2 Learn about how bigger companies purchase. Every client is different and it's tough to know how each one works. I used to frequently invite key employees from large companies to lunch and chat about the way they do business. It turned out to be very useful to learn who in their company made key decisions and who was just a gatekeeper.
- 3 Focus on bigger companies with bigger budgets. The bigger the customer the more people they have knocking on their door and the less time they want to spend talking to you. This can be a bit daunting, but if you want to land the bigger deals, you'd better find ways to get their attention.



Present logical add-ons and bundle multiple products and services into a deal. Upselling allows you to increase the size of your sale and serve your customers better.

“*Would you like fries with that?*” is a simple question that increased annual revenue of a McDonald’s franchise owner by more than \$200,000 back in the 1970s. It has made the company hundreds of millions in profits since.

WHAT IS YOUR \$200,000 QUESTION?



Homework



Begin by picturing yourself closing the biggest possible deal you can imagine. What activities can you imagine to make this deal a reality?



Based on what you envisioned, set yourself activity goals to approach a number of companies with bigger budgets or offer add-ons with each proposal — or both.

Chapter 6

Conversion

LESSON #6

Plug the Leaks in Your Pipeline

As we've established, there are four ways in which you can improve the effectiveness of your sales pipeline. More deals, bigger deals, increased conversion rate and getting to a yes more quickly. This lesson will focus on the third of these four multipliers — increasing your conversion rate.

$$\begin{array}{ccccccc} \text{MORE} & & \text{BIGGER} & & \text{HIGHER} & & \text{LESS} & & \text{BIGGER REVENUE} \\ \text{DEALS} & + & \text{DEALS} & + & \text{CONVERSION} & + & \text{TIME} & = & \text{\& PROFIT} \end{array}$$

4 KEYS TO MAXIMIZE CONVERSION RATES

Remember back in Chapter 1 how we mentioned that your sales pipeline had holes in it? We said that not everyone you talked to would buy. This is still true, but if you carefully study and implement these four key points, you will see a substantial increase in your close rate:

1 Work with the right people

When dealing with potential customers, there are many kinds of people you'll talk to. There are decision makers, influencers and those who are just the wrong ones to talk to. Influencers are relatively easy to get in touch with, but they will take up too much of your time and return very little.

On the other hand, decision makers are busy and don't have a lot of time to waste. They can give you a yes or no on their own. If you find that you're not getting through to the right people, you might need to work on that skill.

2

Go before you're invited

Many businesses have set up elaborate processes for buying services and goods: tenders, quote requests, etc. The problem with quote requests is that in most cases, the prospect has already made up their mind by the time the request goes out.

It's much easier, and far more effective, to spend your time helping customers form an opinion than trying to change one. Be proactive, borderline aggressive, and go after new customers yourself.

3

Drop the wrong prospect ASAP

Increasing your conversion rate is really more about searching for opportunities rather than trying to persuade someone to buy. If you want to be more effective as a salesperson, create a good buyer profile and stick with it. If you're talking to a prospect who doesn't fit the profile, move on quickly.

4

Get to know the business of your potential customers better than your competitors do

It could be said that this is the most important key of all. People and companies buy because they have a need, a want or both. If you can understand what those are and do your best to meet the desires or prospects on their wavelength, you'll see a dramatic increase in your conversion rate.

We once worked with a man who could close 50% of his prospects. What he heard most from his customers was something to the effect of, "Even though your prices were a bit higher, we felt that you really understood what we were looking for and offered a solution that showed it." If you ever want to make more money in sales, you can't go wrong by referring to this simple statement.

NEXT UP: INCREASING THE VELOCITY OF YOUR PIPELINE, THE LAST OF THE SERIES ABOUT THE 4 LEVERS OR PIPELINE FLOW.



Chapter 7

Velocity

LESSON #7

Get Ideas Flowing Faster

Now we've arrived to the last pipeline lever in our group. You've learned how to get more deals, get bigger deals and increase your conversion rate by plugging the leaks in your sales pipeline. Now it's time for the final piece that will help you really get the revenue flowing.

$$\begin{array}{ccccccc} \text{MORE} & + & \text{BIGGER} & + & \text{HIGHER} & + & \text{LESS} \\ \text{DEALS} & & \text{DEALS} & & \text{CONVERSION} & & \text{TIME} \\ & & & & & & \boxed{} \\ & & & & & & \text{TIME} \end{array} = \text{BIGGER REVENUE} \\ \text{\& PROFIT}$$

STEP ON THE GAS

We once asked a junior member of our sales team how long he thought a prospect should think about it before they made a decision. Interestingly, his answer was, "One week."

One week? Why not five days, or three weeks? The truth is that you can't just leave it up to the prospect to decide how long a decision takes. It should be up to both you and the prospect. To help you increase the speed at which you close deals, here are three ways to step on the accelerator:



1 Discover the decision-making process of companies you want to buy from you

It's hard to push a person or a company to go faster than they're used to, especially when you don't even know what its speed is. Do you know one of the best ways to find out? Simply ask your prospect.

Don't assume you know how to push each prospect through the stages of your pipeline. At each stage, ask them what is required to move forward to the next step. Do this a few times and you'll learn how decisions are made in a particular company. You'll probably discover industry-specific decision-making pattern as well.

2

Eliminate the common tendency of a prospect to “think about it”

Often, especially for those new to sales, there’s a reluctance to seem too pushy. As you move forward in your career, however, you will learn that it’s OK to press a little. Don’t give them too much time to think.

If one of your prospects gives you the classic line “Well ... let me think about it and get back to you,” You respond with, “Great, can you give me an idea of what you’d like to think about and maybe I can provide additional information to help in the process.”

Another example of reducing decision time: If a prospect says they need to discuss it with someone else and that discussion will take place tomorrow, respond with, “Terrific, so if I give you a call tomorrow afternoon, you’d be finished consulting and things would be much clearer regarding moving to the next step?”

This kind of gentle pressure can move things along faster, and even trigger an immediate decision.

3

Know when to walk away

If a prospect has been in your sales pipeline for longer than your established sales cycle, there’s a good chance you won’t close them. Generally, when we want to buy something, we do so quickly. If we’re unsure, we might hang on for a bit and see if the thing we’re considering buying grows on us.

If you can’t do anything to move your prospect into the next stage, it may be time to write them off. This is not to say you turn your back on them completely; it’s just that you want to focus on deals that you can close in a timely manner. Put this one in the “I’ll go back in six months” category we mentioned when talking about the ways to add more deals.

With the proper application of these tips, and the three previous levers as well, you can vastly increase the effectiveness of your sales pipeline management efforts.

By now, it should be clear that a superstar salesperson is nothing more than a focused individual with the right mindset and a clear plan of activity goals. It should also be clear that you too can be a star in the sales arena.

Chapter 8

Pipeline Flushing

LESSON #8

Empty the Pipeline to Keep It Flowing

You're thinking, "All you guys have been doing thus far is talking about filling my sales pipeline. Then filling it faster and with bigger prospects. Now you want me to empty it? Are you crazy?"

No, we're not crazy ... well, maybe a little. Although emptying your sales pipeline sounds counterintuitive, it's a great idea. When we say empty your pipeline, what we're really talking about is being picky about who you keep in your pipeline, and knowing when it's time to clean house.

BIGGER ISN'T ALWAYS BETTER

There's such a thing as too big. When it comes to your sales pipeline, you must be careful about not letting it get overstuffed with prospects.

Think of it this way. If your goal is to have 20 deals in your pipeline at any given time, and it turns out you have 50, it seems like a good thing, doesn't it? After all, with so many deals in the various stages of your pipeline, you're ahead of the game.

The reality is that this might not always be the case. Too many deals spread your available resources too thin. When you're overproductive in this way, you tend not to pay the proper amount of attention to all the deals in the pipeline, so some finally grow cold and stale.

WE KNOW, IT HAPPENED TO US...

We once hired a salesman who had really distinguished himself before signing with us. Strangely, it didn't take long before we realized he was having some challenges. In one month, he began with 10 great leads but by the end of that month, most of them hadn't

moved along the pipeline.

It took us awhile before the both of us came to the conclusion that the canned “we’re still thinking about it and we should have a definite decision in a couple of weeks” response wasn’t good enough. We had heard it too many times.

When our new star changed his close tactics and asked all prospects if they were ready to place an order that month, we found out that only one of the leads was going to make a purchase. It was clear that while the volume of conversations he was putting into the pipeline was reasonable, the velocity of those deals was abysmal. His pipeline which had seemed healthy had actually been “clogged.”

He quickly learned his lesson and became one of the best closers on the sales team. Slow prospects suck; they suck the \$\$\$ right out of your commission checks.

HOW TO TELL WHEN TO FLUSH THE PIPELINE

There are some indicators that a prospect who’s currently in your pipeline is not worth continual attention:

- Ask yourself: Would a customer laugh at the idea of being in your pipeline? If they don’t take you seriously, don’t take them seriously.
- Ask your prospects: Will they make a decision this month? If the answer is no, it’s time to move on.

When someone says that they would like your product or service, but not this month or quarter, it may not seem like a lost cause, but it is. You must consider them for flushing because there’s nothing you can do to close them within your sales cycle, or even in the near future.

HOW TO KEEP YOUR PIPELINE SQUEAKY CLEAN

Exactly how you flush them is up to you, but here are a few suggestions to help you formulate a definite plan:

- 1 Go through all of the contacts in your sales pipeline once a week, or every two weeks. If you find a prospect who’s been sitting in the pipe and clogging it up for longer than your typical sales cycle, and shows no signs of moving to the next stage any time soon, flush them.

2

Don't get rid of them entirely. Put these flushed prospects into a future pipeline or a future callback list. If you're using sales management software (may we suggest [Pipedrive](#) for this?), schedule a follow-up call or email.

3

Stay focused on deals that have a strong chance of closing during your established sales cycle.

Flushing prospects out of your sales pipeline will feel a bit strange. It's hard to put aside a potential customer, even a lukewarm one. But the whole purpose and thrust of this course is to keep your focus on the strong candidates and to keep them moving along your pipeline. Proper focus, good work habits and continuous effort create a steady flow of revenue.

Chapter 9

Time Management

LESSON #9

Get Smart about Time Management

One of the most effective ways to manage your sales pipeline is to be effective at managing your time. We all have the same 24 hours in a day. How we spend those hours will directly affect our sales results.

Some 90% of salespeople — and that probably includes you — continuously need to put new conversations into their sales pipeline. How many depends on your sales cycle and goals.

PLAYING FAVORITES IS NATURAL, BUT BAD FOR YOUR PIPELINE

There is a common tendency in sales to favor those prospects who are further along in the pipeline to new ones. It's natural, and there are good psychological reasons for this.

First of all, the further along prospects are in your pipeline, the more likely they are to be visible in your diary and your to-do list. You may have a meeting scheduled or a follow-up call set up.

On the other hand, brand-new prospects are somewhat more nebulous. Dealing with them doesn't seem to be urgent and they may not have a slot in your calendar at all.

Another reason we tend to favor conversations that are further along is that these are the more comfortable ones. An initial sales call can be intimidating simply because of the higher possibility of rejection. But you must always keep in mind that your "solid as gold" prospects initially required hard work.

DON'T GET SIDETRACKED: SCHEDULE TIME FOR PROSPECTING

You will always have to respond to emails, take phone calls or revise and send out proposals. These activities are necessary, but so is having enough time for prospecting. The truth of the matter is that the activity of adding new prospects into the pipeline creates the need for all these other activities.

BLOCK THE NECESSARY TIME TO MAKE THESE CALLS EVERY WEEK OR EVERY DAY IN YOUR CALENDAR

If a client wishes to talk during these times, schedule the conversation for another time. The time you block for adding new prospects should be set in stone and unbreakable.

This is the only way to avoid the trap of allowing the myriad other daily activities to consume critical prospecting time.

GET IN THE ZONE

It's easy to get into the habit of squeezing sales calls in between other activities. The downside is that this breaks up your rhythm.

You'll find that you have much better results if you make all your calls at once. You get into the zone by making 10 calls in a row, not by making them randomly throughout the day.



KEEP UP THE GOOD WORK, IT'S JUST A MATTER OF TIME

This is a simple and straightforward lesson. When you schedule the right amount of time to keeping new prospects flowing into your pipeline, you will see that your pipe is always full and a steady stream of deals is flowing from the other end.

P.S. If you would like some help in determining the number of new conversations you need to add to your pipeline, refer to our handy [Sales Pipeline Calculator](#).

Chapter 10

Need VS Like

LESSON #10

Unpleasant Things Get Results

(i.e., do what you need to do, not what you want to do)

// The secret of success of every man who has ever been successful lies in the fact that he formed the habit of doing things that failures don't like to do.

Albert E. N. Gray in *The Common Denominator of Success* //

Here's where the real power of sales pipeline management success lies. Up until now, the lessons have been about specific tasks. It's in the wisdom of this lesson that you will be able to see if all your hard work is really paying off.

MAKE THE SIMPLE HARD CHOICE

Let's begin with a personal example from Pipedrive's past. I got my start in sales in a summer job selling educational books door to door in San Jose, California. It didn't start out well for me. As you might expect, I got a lot of rejections. Often, the prospective customer would slam the door in my face before I even got into my demonstration.

One thing I noticed early on was that the Hispanic families in the area were much friendlier. They'd at least let me finish my demo before they said no. It was easy to see how a lot of time could be wasted on trying to sell to customers who weren't buying. Sound familiar? To succeed, I had to make a difficult choice. I could spend a lot of time talking to the nice families. I'd feel comfortable while not selling very much, or I could bite the bullet.

So I made the hard choice. I avoided the friendly streets and focused my efforts in the areas where I got more rejections. But I made more sales and became a better salesman in the process.

SALES SUCCESS IS THE HARD CHOICE

If you're in sales, you must face this choice as well. An unavoidable part of sales is rejection and our natural tendency to avoid rejection.

Our fear of rejection goes back millions of years. If our ancestors made the wrong choice when faced with a fight-or-flight situation, it might have been the last choice they ever made. Ironically, you still have to face a fear of rejection because your ancestors made the right choice.

LEARN TO OVERCOME YOUR FEARS

It's natural for us to form habits that reduce our exposure to rejection. It's unnatural for us to do otherwise. If you want to succeed in sales, you have to do the unnatural until it becomes natural.

You may, for example, find that selling to mid-level managers is less stressful. These folks are easier to reach and more pleasant to deal with. However, you'll also find that they're not the decision makers.

MAKE UNPLEASANTNESS YOUR ROUTINE

It's true in life — and most definitely true in sales pipeline management — that you have to do a lot of things that you may find unpleasant. What's worse, you continually have to do them until they become habits.

The more you stick to this, the less unpleasant these things become. There will come a time, believe it or not, when the fear of rejection will go away or become so mild you don't even notice it anymore.

To quote Albert Gray again:

"Any resolution or decision you make today has to be made again tomorrow, and the next day, and the next, and the next, and so on. If you continue the process of making it each morning and keeping it each day, you will finally wake up some morning a different man in a different world, and you will wonder what has happened to you and the world you used to live in."

WHAT IS YOUR WHY?

One of the best ways to stick to the tough habits is to figure out what your real reason for doing them is. Why are you a salesperson in the first place?

Don't simply use your desired commission — everybody wants that. Figure out a deeper reason. Perhaps you want to make a mark on the universe before you leave it. Maybe you want your kids to have a better life. Perhaps you don't want to live with the regret of "What if...?" Maybe all of these and more.

Everyone likes pleasant activities. What separates the successful person is that he or she craves pleasant results. The real trick of sales is that it's full of unpleasant activities that lead to pleasant results.

Homework



- 1 Make sure you know how many new conversations you need to add to your pipeline each week, and set yourself a goal for this.
- 2 Keep it going, no matter how you feel. Don't break the chain.
- 3 Read "[The Common Denominator of Success](#)" by Albert E. N. Gray.

Chapter 11

Keep Track

LESSON #11

Measure Your Pipeline Progress

CONGRATULATIONS! YOU'VE NEARLY REACHED THE END OF SALES PIPELINE ACADEMY.

Now you know what a sales pipeline is and have been given tools and techniques to help you get more out of it. Before you go and start landing those deals, there is one more tool we'd like to offer you: keeping track of your efforts.

WHY TRACKING YOUR PROGRESS IS IMPORTANT TO YOUR SUCCESS

Certainly, if you're consistently exceeding your sales goals, you might not need to set up sales pipeline tracking. (Or maybe it's time to raise the bar?)

On the other hand, if you feel that you have room to grow, then setting up tracking for your activities is really useful. With proper tracking in place, you can identify what's not working, where you have hidden potential and deal with any issues early on.

WHAT SHOULD YOU TRACK?

Remember the four levers we discussed? The number of deals in your pipeline, size of the deals, your success rate and the speed at which deals are closed are the four best things to track.

That said, if you track too many things at once, you're less likely to get the most from that information, so it's a good idea to focus. Try deciding on one to three things to track at any given time.

Start tracking the kinds of things that you've seen having the biggest impact on your sales result — bottlenecks, if you will. If, for example, not enough deals are being added

into the pipeline, tracking the number of deals added per day or week is a good place to begin.

In many cases, the number of meetings/demos and the number of deals added are important to track at companies that are growing aggressively. For other types of businesses, tracking repeat sales or the amount of upselling being done can be crucial.

HOW TO TRACK ACCURATELY

When tracking your pipeline, it's important to be specific. You may want to track not only the number of new deals being added every day or every week, but also the number and value of deals in key stages of your pipeline.

You'll get more out of your tracking efforts if you begin with clear definitions. For example:

- Product demos — are these with new prospects only or do follow-up meetings qualify too?
- Does a call that results in a call back for next week count as a call?

HOW TO GO ABOUT TRACKING YOUR PROGRESS

When you're on your own or in a small team, you can really track things however you want. Writing down your activities on a spreadsheet or even drawing Xs on a whiteboard will do the trick.

As you grow, however, you'll probably want to use a [sales pipeline software](#) to help with tracking. It should come with built-in metrics, reporting and analysis that are vital for sales management of any serious organization.

No matter what the method, continually use it. If you wait until the end of the week, it's going to be harder to remember exactly how many sales calls were made.



TIME TO PUT THE SALES PIPELINE ACADEMY TO USE!

You've now come to the end of the course and are well-prepared for astounding sales success.

You've learned what a sales pipeline is, how to put deals in, move them along and close them in good time. You know what to concentrate your efforts on, and how to keep track of everything you're doing.

Thank you for reading this book and congratulations for taking this step to better sales results! If you have any questions, suggestions or comments, please get in touch.

If you enjoyed reading this book, please share it with a friend. Every sales associate, sales manager or entrepreneur out there who's working hard would appreciate some effective and totally free advice, right?

Homework



- 1 Decide which of the four pipeline metrics is most critical to your success, and start tracking it.
- 2 Set a reminder for 90 days from now to measure the progress of your tracking efforts. This will help you decide whether to stick with that metric or try something else.

**SEE THE NEXT PAGE FOR ONE FINAL LESSON -
TRUST ME, IT'S GOOD.**

Chapter 12

Software Matters

ONE LAST LESSON:

The Near-perfect Tool for Pipeline Management

Having reached the end of the book, I hope you found the tools and techniques we described useful.

There's one more thing I'd like to tell you about. This book grew out of our 10-plus years of work in sales. As sales managers and trainers, we experienced an increasing amount of pain with different CRM software over the years.

After we had found that our \$50,000 purchase of a big-name CRM platform had been a waste of money back in 2010, we decided to try to build a better tool.

The screenshot displays the Pipedrive CRM interface. At the top, there's a navigation bar with the Pipedrive logo, a search bar, and icons for Deals, Mail, Activities, Contacts, and Statistics. Below this is a sub-navigation bar with a menu icon, a clock icon, an 'Add deal' button, and dropdowns for 'Pipeline' and '(My deals)'. The main area shows a pipeline with five stages, each with a total value and number of deals. Deals are listed in rows, with columns for deal name, value, and company. Some deals are highlighted in green, indicating they are 'WON'.

Untouched contact	Contact made	Qualified	Proposal presented	In Negotiation
\$223,000.60 24 deals	\$136,280.10 11 deals	\$30,600.50 7 deals	\$104,500.80 5 deals	\$41,800.00
Best Solutions Deal \$17,000 Audience Measurement	New logotype \$10,000 Smart Language Ltd	Android app \$36,000 Games Central Ltd	New website \$32,000 CollaborativeLab WON	Online shop design \$27,060 iSalestore
SEO optimization \$42,000 BeautyInLaw Shop	Book launch \$37,000 Ministry of Education	Facebook campaign \$3,900 Mayan Design	Consulting \$4,600 GreatShoes Factory	Landing page \$4,600 Dealplus WON
Adwords campaign \$15,900 Shopper	Native iOS app \$23,350 Bright Mind Publishing	Rebranding \$45,200 Beauty Booth	Blog design \$8,900 Pharnalux	Campaign site \$7,600 SmartCall Ltd
Integration \$43,250 Papersand	Social media strategy \$5,800 CheapShoes4U	Digital trends workshop \$43,250 Academy of Design	Email template \$1,600 FMCG Bread Co.	
New webpage \$7,400 Abc medicals	SEO optimization deal \$4,500 Metrics Group	Animated intro \$12,200 Pharmatics Group	iOS app \$57,400 Edwin's Kitchen	
Landing page project \$3,200 Dealplus	Campaign site \$3,200 SmartCall Ltd	Brand guidelines \$7,600 Dealplus		
Software development	Online shop design			

Pipedrive is a near perfect tool for managing a sales pipeline. If the Sales Pipeline Academy made sense to you, you'll probably love [Pipedrive](#). Many of the things we've covered, like setting activity goals and being able to see the numbers game of sales, are firmly built in to the software.

HERE'S THE SALES PITCH FOR PIPEDRIVE

- It gives you a clear overview of your pipeline and helps to forecast sales.
- You can set activity goals and easily measure progress.
- It keeps track of the four pipeline levers we discussed: the number and size of deals, conversion rate and deal velocity.
- It's priced reasonably, and there's a 14-day free trial.
- Plus, the usual things like ease of use, mobile apps and integrations with other business tools.

OFFER YOU SHOULDN'T REFUSE

Get 2 months of Pipedrive free

Did the above make you curious? [Sign up for a free trial!](#) You'll get extra free time when you use the promo code **coffeeforclosersonly**.

HAPPY CLOSING!



About the Authors



Timo Rein



Urmas Purde

Timo Rein and Urmas Purde, co-founders of Pipedrive, met early in their career when they joined Vain & Partners, a sales training company.

Before Urmas turned 20, he sold newspaper ads, software, wine, copy machines, computers and insurance. Meanwhile, Timo started his career in recruiting and had a knack for reading people.

After joining forces at Vain & Partners, they trained tens of thousands of sales professionals with clientele like PwC, Coca-Cola and Nissan. They went on to become partners and helped build Vain into a leading sales training company in the Baltics. Together, Timo and Urmas have a combined 40 years of experience and have generated millions in sales throughout their careers.

They put that sales experience to use as the architects of [Pipedrive](#), an activity-based pipeline tool that helps motivated sales professionals get more organized, focus on the right deals, and drive better sales results.

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