



STRATEGIC STEPS

for
**THE UNEXPECTED
SALES MANAGER**

9

1

Learn About Sales

Your passion about your business may have been enough for ***you*** to bring new customers to your company. But when you are trying to accomplish those same goals through other people, you need more structure.

Learn the components of a successful sales cycle, and how to create a sales model that works for your business. Learn what your specific value proposition is and how to effectively communicate it in such a way that people actually want to listen to your salesperson.

Learn how to hold salespeople accountable for doing the job by leading them instead of pushing them.

2

Clearly Identify Sales Leads and What Qualifies Them To Be Your Customers

You must be able to point your salesperson in the general... and then very specific direction of where your customers live and breathe.

Build a profile of your ideal customer.

As you began your business, where did you find your first customers? What did your product do for them? Where do they exist now? Is your product or service ideally sold in homes or businesses? Who makes the decision to buy from your company? What parameters make that person the decision maker?

3

Determine the
answer to,
*“What’s so great
about that?”*

If your prospect were to take a look at your product or service and ask, *“What’s so great about that?”... the answer to that question would be your **value proposition**.*

Teach your salespeople to understand that your product or service is **not** important to your customer because of what it does. It is **not** important to them because of how great it is made or how well you deliver it.

Your product or service is important to your customer because of *why it specifically makes their life better when they own it.*

4

Create a Value Conversation for Prospecting.

A ***value conversation*** is simply a conversation that focuses on the value received by the person you are talking with... when they do what you are asking them to do.

Create specific value conversations that would be applicable for the various people involved in your sales model.

1. Get their attention
2. Direct that attention to your value proposition (*their* value from *your* proposition).
3. Take them off the hook
4. Ask them to take action

5

Create a Value Conversation for Making The Sale.

For a meeting with a final decision-maker, your salespeople need to have a specific value conversation that contains three phases.

Rapport Phase: questions that build the initial relationship between the decision-maker, your salesperson and your company.

Discovery Phase: questions that result in the decision-maker discussing their needs which can be solved by your product or service.

Recommendation Phase: details the specific products or services you offer that would solve the needs they expressed during the discovery phase, and results in their decision to become your customer.

6

Choose a Fair Pay Structure Based on Your Profits

Decide what percentage of your profit you would be willing to share with a salesperson for bringing ***new business*** into your company. Then choose a pay plan within that budget.

Commission Only: The salesperson's only compensation is a percentage of the gross sale, or the gross profit from the sale.

Draw Against Commission: This is still a commission-based pay plan, but the salesperson is paid a regular income that would be deducted from their future commissions.

Delayed Commission: The current quarter's commissions are delayed and paid over 13 equal paychecks during the following quarter.

Salary Plus Commission: The salesperson receives a modest salary with commissions paid additionally.

I recommend avoiding paying a salesperson a straight salary. There is too much risk for you and not enough incentive for the salesperson.

7

Hire Well

Look for candidates that have a more stable job history. Try to find people who have been at their previous employer for at least three years. I've usually found that my best salespeople were actually recruited from their current employer - rather than unemployed.

In the interview process, let them know that you always call previous employers. Ask them to tell you what they think their previous employers will say about them. Follow through and make those phone calls. Most employers will avoid telling you anything unflattering about a previous employee. But they will normally only say good things about their job performance when it is true.

8

Hold Your Salespeople Accountable - For *Their* Benefit

Holding your sales team accountable for activity and results makes sense from a business perspective. Doing so helps reduce your risk.

Holding salespeople accountable for their activity makes sense from their business perspective as well. It helps you coach them. They will be more productive for both of you when they report their activity each week. In essence, *their* value from *your* proposition is that they have a much greater chance of becoming successful when they are reporting to you.

9

Find a Mentor

Adding salespeople and leading them to succeed with your company is too important to simply *“hire and hope for the best.”*

You need a sounding board with whom you can speak openly about issues you are dealing with and potential solutions. You probably already have friends who are in sales. If so, AND if they are both professional and successful, have lunch with them on a regular basis.



Jeff C. West has been a quoted source for the National Federation of Independent Business, Peak Sales Recruiting and a guest blogger for Best Selling Authors such as Bob Burg and Susan Solovic, THE Small Business Expert. His book, *The Unexpected Tour Guide*, is the recipient of The Bronze Award in the Business Fable Category from the 2015 Axiom Business Awards.

[Watch the book trailer for The Unexpected Tour Guide by clicking here.](#)

Wrap Up

I hope you enjoyed this information. I know it is only a high level view. I will send you additional tools soon to answer other questions that you have.

In the meantime, get that sales education.

9 Strategic Steps for The Unexpected Sales Manager

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[5 Prospecting Hacks - Draw a Decision-Maker to Want Your Visit](#)

You are an entrepreneur now!

Your business has grown from a wonderful wish, that you ***used*** to have, into a viable dream that provides well for you and your family. As a matter of fact, you even have a few employees now. So you also enjoy the satisfaction that comes along with knowing that there are actually others for whom your dream provides an income. And so, in many ways, you play a part in making their lives better too.

Life is grand now! Right? Yaaaa-hooooo!

But you have also realized that you may have unintentionally boxed yourself into a corner.

You've always been the one who had the magic. You had the idea. You had the business plan. You put it all together and spent countless hours bringing what was once just a thought, into the tangible business asset that it is today.

And now, with the growth you have experienced, you find that you may not have the time to wear as many hats as you did before. Between production and service issues, healthcare and employee issues, and the political landscape... there are times when you almost want to pull your hair out!

Another challenge you now find is that you have always been the one who brought in the new clients. And that thing which drives growth in your business—*SALES*—is taking a back seat to other *more immediate* issues.

The result?

You are considering the idea of adding a salesperson to your team.

The challenge?

You have never *really* been in sales nor considered yourself a salesperson. And you have absolutely no clue how to manage one of those things... you know... *a salesperson*.

Well, in truth, you have been a salesperson... every small business owner does that job on a regular basis. Your excitement and knowledge about your product or service makes you the perfect salesperson. You know it better than anyone. You know why it is important. And you know why your prospects should become your customers.

But hiring, managing and developing a successful salesperson when you have little or no professional sales experience can be a daunting task.

You are what I refer to as, “The Unexpected Sales Manager”.

The good news is that there is a step-by-step process that will guide you through the maze of hiring, managing and developing a successful salesperson... and eventually a successful sales team.

Over these five visits together, we are going to discuss what I call, *9 Strategic Steps for The Unexpected Sales Manager*. If you follow these steps, it will guide you through the decisions you have to make and help you to grow your business.

Why should what I think matter?

Because I have been in your shoes... **and** the shoes of the successful salesperson. For over 25 years, I have done both jobs. These are steps that I have learned over three decades of being in the trenches.

Plus, I'm the guy who still thanks a soldier for their service when I see them, and the one who gets teary-eyed when I hear anyone sing an incredible rendition of our national anthem. Small businesses are what keeps this country moving. Helping you actually helps all of us.

So, let's dive into the first step.

Step 1: Educate Yourself About Sales.

That seems simple enough, doesn't it?

But the truth is that most small business owners have a tendency to wing it, rather than use a step-by-step process that moves a lead into a prospect... and eventually into a customer.

Your passion about your business may be enough for *you* to attract new customers, but when you are trying to accomplish that same goal through other people you need to have more structure.

Learn the components of a successful sales cycle, and how to create a sales model that works for your business. Learn what your specific value proposition is and how to effectively communicate it in such a way that people actually want to listen to your salesperson. Learn how to hold salespeople accountable for doing the job by leading them instead of pushing them.

There are many resources out there. It is easy to get that education. And even though you may not plan to ever go out and make sales calls yourself, that education will make you much more effective in hiring and leading a sales team that will continue growing your business.

Step 2: Clearly Identify Sales Leads and What Qualifies Them To Be Your Customers

Where do you want to send your salesperson?

If you are like me, a funny answer just came to mind that had a destination that may not be very pleasant?

But seriously, the first thing that The Unexpected Sales Manager must do is be able to point your salesperson in the general... and then *very* specific direction of where your customers live and breathe.

For most businesses, not everyone is a prospect. Some people or businesses may look like prospects, but they don't actually have the specific needs that your product or service satisfies. In that sense, they are *suspects* instead of prospects.

As the leader of the sales team... even if that team is only one person... you need to give them a clear understanding of the *suspects* in your marketplace, and a method to see if those potentials have the qualifications needed in order to become your customers.

That process is known as identifying leads and qualifying prospects.

To build that process, you must begin with a description of your ideal customer. Take a couple of minutes to jot down some notes.

As you began your business, where did you find your first customers? What did your product do for them? Where do they exist now? Is your product or service ideally sold in homes or businesses? Who makes the decision to buy from your company? What parameters make that person the decision maker?

Also consider where your ideal customer may have a social media presence. Could they be found on FaceBook, LinkedIn or Twitter? Are there other places where they could be consistently found?

Give your salesperson a solid profile of your ideal customers and where to find them.

Once you have that clear picture, you need to develop a methodology that your salespeople can use to qualify prospects. That will save them time and create a more efficient sales model for you.

How that should be done will vary based on your business. In many cases, it may be that your prospects can easily be determined by trade resources that indicate business types. In others, it may be that you need census information that estimates household incomes. Whatever your particular business model; there is probably a list of 3-5 questions that anyone could ask a *suspect* to determine if they qualify to become a prospect.

Write down the specific questions, resources or other parameters that could be used to qualify prospects for your sales team. Make going over that list a part of your sales training.

Having a transferrable system for identifying where your sales leads exist, and then having a clear method for obtaining the information you need to determine if those leads are qualified prospects, will give your salespeople valuable direction that will produce new customers for your business.

In our next section, we will discuss how to equip your sales team to feel a passion behind your product or service, and why it is so great for your customers. More importantly, we will discuss how to get your prospects to feel the same way.

Here's a hint. It is not about you, your company or your product...

Step 3: Determine the answer to, “*What’s so great about that?*”

If your prospect were to take a look at your product or service and ask, “*What’s so great about that?*” ... the answer to that question would be your ***value proposition***.

Why is your product or service important to your customer?

Teach your salespeople to understand that your product or service is ***not*** important to your customer because of what it does. It is ***not*** important to them because of how great it is made or how well you deliver it. And it is ***not*** even important to them because of how awesome you and your company truly are.

Sorry.

Your product or service is important to your customer because of *why it specifically makes their life better when they own it*.

Your value proposition is actually *their* value... from *your* proposition.

A grill is not important to a family because it is made well... although it can be disastrous if it is made poorly. It is important to the family because they will have countless hours of family fun and make tons of memories as they enjoy the food, laugh, and spend time with each other.

How is your customer’s world improved when they own your product or service? Does their business run smoother – making the work environment better for them? Does that also equate to a better home-life?

Take a little time to clearly understand and write down your value proposition.

Step 4: Create a Value Conversation for Prospecting.

A **value conversation** is simply a conversation that focuses on the value received by the person you are talking with... when they do what you are asking them to do.

Create specific value conversations that would be applicable for the various people involved in your sales model.

For example, during prospecting, a value conversation with a “*Key-holder*” would be different than a value conversation with a final decision-maker. (By the way, I choose to call a receptionist a “*Key-holder*” instead of a “*Gatekeeper*” – Gatekeepers keep people out. Key-holders can get you access to the kingdom if they like you).

If your product or service is going to make the Key-holder’s life better, then your value conversation that gains their help in meeting the final decision-maker should draw **their** attention to **their** value.

When your prospecting value conversation is with the actual final decision-maker, then I would suggest a few simple components.

1. Get their attention
2. Direct that attention to your value proposition (*their* value from *your* proposition).
3. Take them off the hook
4. Ask them to take action

Example:

“(1) I wanted to provide a free analysis to see if your company qualifies for

(2) a program that takes money you are currently spending on labor costs and redirects it back to your bottom line profit.

(3) There's no obligation on your part because I am not even sure yet that you would qualify.

(4) But you and I could make that determination over about 17 minutes on Tuesday morning - Is that time good for you, or would it be better to meet right now?"

Jot down some specific phrases for those conversations. Salespeople LOVE scripts! Just kidding, of course. But go ahead and equip them with specific value conversations for prospecting.

Step 5: Create a Value Conversation for Making The Sale.

For a meeting with a final decision-maker, your salespeople need to have a specific value conversation that contains three phases.

Rapport Phase: questions that build the initial relationship between the decision-maker, your salesperson and your company.

Discovery Phase: questions that result in the decision-maker discussing their needs which can be solved by your product or service.

Recommendation Phase: details the specific products or services you offer that would solve the needs they expressed during the discovery phase, and results in their decision to become your customer.

The rapport and discovery phases are accomplished through asking great questions.

In the **rappport phase**, craft questions that get the decision-maker talking about their life. If your are in a B2B environment, the questions should also focus on their business - but do a little research first.

For example:

“From what I’ve read, I know {....} about your company. But what is your favorite reason to brag about your company that I would never find by research?”

In the **discovery phase**, craft great questions that get the decision-maker talking about specific needs they have which may be satisfied by your product or service. Think back. What is *their* value from *your* proposition? Construct questions that get them to thinking about and openly expressing those needs for which you have the solution?

Your salesperson *could* point out that your prospect has a specific need and your company has the perfect solution. But in the mind of your prospect, they are a “*saaaaalesperson*”. And as such, their premise may not be readily accepted.

If the salesperson says it, it may be *suspect*. But if the prospect says it, it is the gospel truth.

Thus, your goal in the discovery phase is to get *the decision-maker to say what the decision-maker needs to hear*. You want them to be the one to bring up their issues that you can solve.

You do that with great questions.

In the **recommendation phase**, you detail specific products or services based on the needs your prospect expressed.

Use the 4 R's to make the connections between *their* value from *your* proposition:

Rewind: Remind them what they said.

“Earlier, you said that you had issues with...”

Reveal: Present your specific solution to their issue.

“Our company has a solution for that. It is...”

Revalue: Focus on what they gain from a solution.

“From what you told me, that would mean that you would be able to...”

Rekindle: Direct them toward an emotional context.

“How would you feel to finally have a solution to that?”

Finally, teach your salespeople to close the sale by asking a closed-ended questions which would normally be answered with yes/no replies. This gets the process moving forward toward delivery.

One of my favorite closing questions was actually to get the prospect to say, “No.” Prospects love to say “no” to salespeople.

I would ask, *“Do you see any reason we shouldn't move forward and get the paperwork started?”*

In our next section, I'll give you some tips on pay structures, and hiring.

Step 6: Choose a Fair Pay Structure Based on Your Profits

We salespeople are very unique animals. We want to be well compensated, we are incentive driven, and we want our ego stroked on a regular basis.

We small business owners are quite unique as well. We are risk-takers, we are self-motivated, and we have to make a fair profit in order to provide jobs and take care of our families.

I find that the same motivators for small business owners also work quite well as motivators for their sales teams.

The first step in developing a pay structure for your sales team is to decide what percentage of your profit you would be willing to share with a salesperson for bringing *new business* into your company. That choice will provide the cap of the gross earnings in their pay structure. It will also limit your risk because it is only a share of the money coming from new revenues.

After that decision is made, consider the following options that work best in keeping a salesperson motivated toward bringing in the next sale.

Commission Only:

The salesperson's only compensation is a percentage of the gross sale, or the gross profit from the sale. This puts the entire risk for success into the hands of the salesperson. It will appeal to the most entrepreneurial driven people. It works great for those who are self-motivated.

Pros: There risk to the owner is less, and the income to a good salesperson is usually very motivating.

Cons: Many salespeople are hesitant to accept a commission only position if they are new in sales or new to your industry.

Draw Against Commission:

This is still a commission-based pay plan, but the salesperson is paid a regular income that would be deducted from their future commissions. Then at some point, a “settle-up” occurs. The difference in commissions earned and the actual draw is accounted for and paid. The risk for success is shared by the owner and the salesperson. You must be careful with this plan. It will help you to hire more easily, but can be a disaster if you hire the wrong salesperson.

Pros: Reasonable risk for the owner and still motivating to the salesperson.

Cons: If you hire poorly, you will pay draws and never see a return on your investment.

Delayed Commission:

This is a commission only pay structure. However, you agree to pay a modest salary during the first full quarter of the salesperson’s time with you – similar to “paid training”. During that time, the salesperson must still make sales. The commissions that will be earned from those sales would then be delayed until the following quarter and paid in equal paychecks over 13 weeks. That same process is repeated each quarter; i.e. the current quarter’s sales generate the next quarter’s income.

Pros: Provides both motivation and stability in your sales force. They get regular paychecks, which provide a more stable financial picture for them. And they are motivated to sell more in order to raise the pay they receive during the next quarter.

Cons: The owner risks 100% of the salesperson’s income during the first quarter they are employed.

Salary Plus Commission:

This is also a shared risk pay structure. The salesperson receives a modest salary, with commissions paid as an additional income. This is similar to a draw against commission, except the salary is always at the risk of the owner.

Pros: There is incentive for the salesperson to sell more, and it is easier to hire a salesperson when a salary is involved.

Cons: The owner is risking the monies paid in that salary.

If you utilize a draw against commission, delayed commission, or salary plus commission – I strongly urge you to require proof of activity in the form of detailed call reports, as a condition of the salesperson receiving the part of their income that you are risking.

You will notice I did not mention putting a salesperson on a salary. Salaries provide the most risk for the owner and the least incentive for the salesperson.

Incentives:

Salespeople love to be recognized for a job well done. If you want to use cash as an incentive, I would recommend that you develop a graduated commission structure that pays a higher percentage based on their sales average. The top commission percentage would still need to be capped by the amount of profits you are willing to share.

Choose a lower level commission percentage that is paid at the minimum sales expectation. Choose an intermediate level for a good performance. And then choose your highest payout for excellence. Make sure that all levels are well communicated and use that structure to encourage everyone hitting the highest commission level.

Also, I recommend that you give your salespeople “experiences” rather than huge bonuses. I have had salespeople come to me years later and say, “That was the best trip my wife and I have ever been on! Thank you for doing that!” But I have never had anyone say, “That was the best cash bonus ever! Thank you!”

Step 7: Hire Well:

There is high turnover in sales. That is usually due to one of three factors.

First, the salesperson has never really gotten the sales education that would make them successful when they go out into the field. Second, there is no clear structure in place to insure that what is supposed to happen in the field is indeed happening. And third, the salesperson should have never been hired in the first place.

Look for candidates that have a more stable job history. Try to find people who have been at their previous employer for at least three years. I’ve usually found that my best salespeople were actually recruited from their current employer - rather than unemployed.

There are exceptions however – I am one of them. I had a period of unemployment just prior to my first commission-only sales position, and I went on to become very successful.

In the interview process, let them know that you always call previous employers. Ask them to tell you what they think their previous employers will say about them. Follow through and make those phone calls. Most employers will avoid telling you anything unflattering about a previous employee. But they will normally only say good things about their job performance when it is true.

If they are currently employed and “quietly” looking around, ask them for newsletters or awards that indicate their level of success. Also ask for personal references, in lieu of calling a current employer.

Checking references can take a little extra time on the front-end, but save you time and money on the other side of hiring.

In our final section, we will discuss how you can hold your sales team accountable by leading them instead of pushing them. And I will help you find an ally to coach you about your salespeople.

Step 8: Hold Your Salespeople Accountable - For *Their* Benefit

Balancing the risk and reward in salespeople is an interesting proposition. You have to risk something in order to bring them on board. But that risk is offset by the reward you receive when they bring new customers to your table. And since you are only risking a percentage of your profits from new business they bring (see post #4), a successful salesperson is great for your business.

Holding your sales team accountable for activity and results makes sense from a business perspective. Doing so helps reduce your risk.

But holding salespeople accountable for their activity makes sense from their business perspective as well. As a matter of fact, that accountability is part of your value proposition for them.

When you have them report prospecting activities, value conversations with final decision makers, and sales closed it gives you the opportunity to insure that their activity level is high enough to succeed. But more importantly, it gives you the opportunity to coach them in specific areas where their skill set is not up to par.

For example, if they aren't having enough value conversations with final decision makers, you know that you must coach them on what they are saying while prospecting. Or if they are having plenty of value conversations with final decision-makers, but are not closing sales - you coach them on their value conversations and closing strategies.

So lead them into being accountable rather than push them.

They will be more productive for both of you when they report their activity each week. In essence, *their* value from *your* proposition is that they have a much greater chance of becoming successful when they are reporting to you.

Step 9: Find a Mentor

The last tip I want to give you is that you should not do this alone.

Adding salespeople and leading them to succeed with your company is too important to simply "*hire and hope for the best.*" You need a sounding board with whom you can speak openly about issues you are dealing with and potential solutions. You probably already have friends who are in sales. If so, AND if they are both professional and successful, have lunch with them on a regular basis. "Pick their brains."

Eventually, when it makes business sense, you may want to hire a sales manager. But until then, learn all you can, get a sales structure in place, and find a good mentor to help you through the process.

Of course, I can coach you or your team in this process, but I have limited availability. Reach out to me if that is something that interests you. But in the meantime, take advantage of the free coaching emails I will be sending to you.

I wish you all the best. If you need me, visit www.jeffcwest.com