TIME MANAGEMENT for Sales

Sales Reps Spend 36.6% of Time Actually Selling. Only 18.0% of Their Time is Spent in CRM

Research performed by Ken Krogue, Gabe Larsen, and Bryan Parry of InsideSales.com Labs
Sales requires many different skills to be successful, but the most basic and potentially the most important of them all is time management. InsideSales.com Labs recently completed a study with nearly 200 sales reps including a dozen in-depth interviews to determine where reps are spending their time on sales tasks and sales systems.

SALES TASKS

Time Spent

Only 28.0% of sales reps report following a structured time management philosophy. The analysis showed there are twelve main tasks sales reps do during a typical week. Oddly, revenue generating activities only make up 36.6% percent of reps’ activities, while 63.4% of time is spent on non-revenue generating activities.

Reps who reported following a structured time management system spent an average of 40.1% of their time selling compared with those who didn’t follow any time management system who only spent 30.4% of their time on revenue-generating activities.

Field reps were more effective than any other role at focusing their time on selling activities while inside sales reps were the worst (17.5% more time spent selling for field reps than inside sales reps).

Activities such as customer meetings and customer interactions had the highest time spent (15.7%). Administrative tasks such as dealing with internal policies and approvals (12.8%) and researching target accounts and contacts (12.0%) were the activities that had the next highest amount of time dedicated to them.

Effectiveness

Sales reps reported that time spent on Facebook and catching up with colleagues was 7% more effective than internal meetings and dealing with internal policies. The most effective activities for sales reps were planning (93.2%) and following up on sales calls (90.8%) while core activities such as running prospect meetings (80.8%) and prospecting (80.4%) were rated toward the bottom. Administrative tasks were ranked the least effective of all sales activities (66.7%).

Time and Effectiveness

When combining both time spent and effectiveness, account and contact research (12.0% of time, 74.8% effective) as well as administrative tasks (12.8% of time, 66.7% effective) were identified as the biggest time wasters - tasks taking the most time and producing the least amount of results.

Account planning (5.7% of time, 93.2% effective), general sales follow up (9.4% of time, 90.8% effective) and pipeline management and forecasting (3.9% of time, 86.7% effective) were the three biggest areas of opportunity - tasks that reps spent the least amount of time on but were the most effective.
SALES SYSTEMS

Time Spent

The study revealed 17 systems that had over 10% usage among those surveyed. Surprisingly, sales reps spend only 18.0% of their time in CRM, the foundational system for sales teams. The majority of sales reps' time is spent in sales technology (61.7%) with email for sales related purposes taking the most time (33.2%) and tools to gather sales intelligence taking the least. (0.4%).

Effectiveness

Because of the inefficiency of CRM, sales reps report that 9.7% of their time (over half the amount of time spent in CRM) is spent in spreadsheets trying to more effectively manage CRM related tasks. In terms of valuable systems, CRM was rated lowest and was explicitly called out as the most frustrating or not directly valuable to a sales reps objectives. Prospecting tools that provide email and phone in a sales cadence and content management systems that provide storage for useful sales documents were rated the highest and most valuable.

Time and Effectiveness

When combining both time and effectiveness, behaviors showed if a system was not effective then the system was not adopted. Prospecting technologies that provide sales cadence capabilities are one of the most effective technologies (80.0% effective) but they are also one of the most underutilized (only used 1.9% of time).

Conference technologies are the next most underutilized tools with a 72.7% effectiveness rating and only 8.8% of time spent using it.

CONCLUSION

Sales is a complicated profession and with many competing tasks that distract from revenue generating activities, it is no surprise that quota attainment numbers have decreased significantly across the entire sales industry over the past decade.

In order for companies to win, they must find a way to partner with sales reps and empower them to sell by eliminating time spent on administrative tasks and dealing with unfriendly company policies. Rather than just asking, "how easy are we to work with" from a customer's perspective, organizations should also ask, “how easy are we to work with” from a sales rep perspective.

Sales technologies can have a multiplying effect on sales results but reps know what works and doesn't work and their tolerance for failure is small. CRM has reached a tipping point in frustration and sales reps are finding anyway possible to not have to spend time in a system they find to provide the least value of any active system they use. CRM is a necessary system as a record keeping mechanism, but look to sales technologies that help reps sell more as the predominant area where reps see value and therefore spend their time.