

Have You Defined Your B2B Sales Roles to Achieve the Best Results?

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The Four Sales Roles

Inbound and outbound business development representatives (BDRs) are responsible for the top of the sales funnel. They ensure a lead is qualified — worth the time for an account executive to pursue it. Once the BDR qualifies a lead, he or she manages the handoff to the account executive, who is responsible for closing the sale. After that, an account manager is assigned to retain and grow the customer.

Below is more detail on the four roles necessary to implement this sales process.

- **The Lead Farmers: Inbound BDRs**

Inbound BDRs are responsible for *qualifying* leads that come from incoming

calls and from those who fill in forms on your website. Their job is to ensure these leads are interested in solving a problem which fits with the company's expertise, have a budget to invest in the solution, the authority to make the decision and the urgency to take action. Once they qualify the leads, BDRs set up appointments with them for your account executives.

Because a quick response to incoming leads significantly increases the chance of qualification, the inbound rep must follow up rapidly — within five minutes of a phone call and 30 minutes of a content download. Sometimes BDRs can qualify leads immediately. In many cases, however, the BDR needs to nurture the lead via email, content and phone calls. As nurturers, they are the farmers of the sales and marketing process along with the marketing team that may supplement their efforts by sending automated emails.

Once a lead score is high enough to indicate they are ready to talk with an account executive, the inbound rep ensures all background notes about them are clear, summarizes next steps and either introduces the two parties by email or makes a phone appointment or arranges an online meeting.

When looking for inbound reps, seek professionals with the competencies similar to those of customer service reps. They must have excellent communication and active listening skills, be quick learners and possess a customer-first attitude. Also, because they need to react quickly to new leads, they must have a sense of urgency.

- **The Bloodhounds: Outbound BDRs**

Outbound BDRs are the bloodhounds of sales who have to track down their leads on LinkedIn, market intelligence software, business directories and more. Then they doggedly pursue them via emails, social media and cold calls. Once they qualify leads, like inbound BDRs, they are responsible for handing them off to the account executives.

Note that the research and cold outreach make the outbound rep's job more challenging than that of the inbound rep. However, because these reps can target businesses that are the best fit for the company, and who otherwise might not find your organization, the rewards from their work may be more significant. If you do not separate inbound and outbound business

development, reps are likely to gravitate toward the low-hanging fruit — the leads handed to them on a platter. Since the juiciest fruit may be dangling from the highest branches that only outbound reps can reach, it's beneficial to separate these functions.

Outbound BDRs are hunters — good researchers who can engage in a conversation about your product or solution with someone who may know little or nothing about your organization. They enjoy selling, think out of the box, want some flexibility in their sales approach and have strong communication skills.

- **The Deal Makers: Account Executives**

Account executives close the sales. They usually have their areas of specialization, such as by geography, product or industry. As such, they can talk in depth about how your solution can help an organization, educating prospects on the benefits, overcoming objections and negotiating the deal.

These individuals are competitive, persistent, persuasive and results-oriented. Also, they have empathy for buyers, are good listeners and can think on their feet.

- **The Customer Cultivators: Account Managers**

Landing an account is one thing. Keeping that customer and expanding your company's sales to them is another. An account manager who is responsible for cultivating the account can handle this task. They do so by making sure the customer gains the highest value from your product or solution and by introducing them to other products and services that can help. Account managers build relationships, serve as the customer's advocate within your organization and keep their ears to the ground for new opportunities.

As with all sales roles, your account managers should have effective communication skills. They also must be good organizers, relationship builders and strategic thinkers. Finally, they must be willing to push clients beyond their comfort zones and have the credibility to do so due to their depth of experience.

Separating sales roles helps make your sales organization more productive, plus it

enables you to search for people with the right skills, knowledge and experience for each position.

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