



Whitepaper | b2b Sales Outsourcing

The way to realize increasing and more predictable business revenue

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Sales, a world of challenges

Sales has become an increasingly complex and demanding trade. On all levels from lead generation and customer service to cross selling and upselling, the possibilities and corresponding processes have evolved. This means that B2B sales organizations require a broader and deeper expertise to achieve their sales targets and stay ahead of the competition.

Incredible technological evolution has delivered digital data and communications channels that we couldn't have imagined ten years ago. This has kickstarted a number of trends that many companies and their sales departments haven't been able to keep up with.

Many company owners and sales directors have lost control of their sales, causing stress and unmet revenue targets. Do you feel the same? Well, in this whitepaper you'll read how you can relieve this stress.

From personal to digital

If you ask sales experts about what's essential for successful selling, you're bound to get an answer along the lines of 'personal contact is crucial for our prospects and clients'. And maybe that was true ten years ago

– but times have changed. Research by McKinsey¹ shows that a third of all decision makers and advisors to large corporates consider themselves 'digitally savvy' and actually prefer to communicate digitally during the customer decision journey. A third again prefers a combination of digital and human contact. This means that only for a small minority, human contact is a priority.

An effective sales strategy therefore requires smart use of digital experience tools, mixed with the human touch. And that combination needs to be tailored to every prospect and client in order to be able to serve them based on their needs and requirements, with fully customized information and content. To achieve that, however, you need to have very diverse expertise in different areas:

Technology: machine learning, omni channel strategies, data analytics, marketing automation, artificial intelligence – they all sound familiar and many companies are already actively working on one or more (maybe your organization as well). But chances are that you don't have all the required expertise in house. More importantly, these areas evolve so quickly that only dedicated specialists can stay fully up-to-date. If you want to reach the right audience the right way, based on

¹ McKinsey - how digital is powering the next wave of growth in key account management



the right data and the right insights – and measure your efforts to be able to improve on them – smart use of all abovementioned technological capabilities is a must. And that is craftsmanship.

Market intelligence and data analysis: increasingly more data and information is readily available. The possibilities of getting to know your prospect before even reaching out to them are endless, but at the same time very complex. All available data needs to be extracted with a clear focus on the right audience to make sure you reach your best fit target group. Unfortunately, most CRM systems lack crucial functionality required to run good analyses – and they definitely aren't capable of translating analyses into insights into an entire market. This is why a large number of marketing and sales teams don't have a clear view of their target audience and their market. And that's a problem, considering the modern buyer is very well informed and usually goes through a large part of their buying process independently before even getting in touch with a sales department. If you want to generate leads using relevant and tailored campaigns, thorough knowledge of your audience is key.

Internal collaboration: the line between marketing and sales is beginning to disappear. Especially in the B2B market, collaboration between sales and marketing



has become more valuable than ever. And yet we still see strictly separated siloes with most companies we visit. These siloes limit shared marketing and sales goals, definitions and priorities. Marketing efforts are usually not specifically focused on supporting the sales process and sales executives are found creating their own collateral without any strategic advice from marketing. Good collaboration is necessary to increase revenue, support existing clients and win prospects. An integral approach to the lead and sales funnel ensures full insight into the marketing to sales process. This is essential for continuous improvement and to be able to focus on the most profitable target groups.




Attracting sales talent: in the current tight labor market it's proven to be difficult to hire the right candidates to execute your sales strategy. Online jobsites are filled with openings for account managers, customer service employees and sales hunters. Every job not filled with the right talent – or not filled at all – puts a brake on the growth of the company.

The taboo on outsourcing

Have you ever wondered why our colleges and universities don't offer a sales degree? There's a bachelor for most business related fields, except for sales. This proves that sales is still the odd one out – and that is confirmed from most businesses' perspectives as well. It's completely normal to outsource all areas of business operations, but sales is the area with an apparent taboo on outsourcing.

Sales – the department tasked with generating revenue for your company – usually have to fend for themselves. This whitepaper tells you how things could work differently and how sales outsourcing can help your company increase and better predict revenue.



- 
- How do I realize stable growth and predictable revenue?
 - How do I successfully launch a new product?
 - How do I modernize my sales organization?

Just a few of the challenges that companies - like your own - struggle with when it comes to sales.



You can't do everything yourself

When we ask CEOs or business managers what differentiates their company, we always get the same answer: “We deliver amazing products and services.” Which makes sense, because that aspect is in their company’s DNA. But during a period of growth, they develop a need for additional services to support their growing business, which are normally partially or sometimes entirely outsourced. The marketing team works with a creative agency, IT is in charge of outsourcing the technically challenging work and even in finance and accounts a growing number of processes are carried out by external partners.

The sales department, however, is still alone. This is quite remarkable, considering the key role of the department in company growth and the complex expertise required to do so. This key position has become even more important in the last decade, because the quality of your product or service is no longer sufficient to sustain growth. In fact, we’ll go as far to say that, today, a company with a mediocre product and a strong sales strategy and execution will be more successful than a company with a strong product lacking a modern sales strategy and execution.

Need for expertise, predictability, scalability and cost efficiency

Companies still face sales challenges they struggle to overcome. These challenges are mostly related to lack of expertise, scalability and cost efficiency. In our longstanding collaborations with sales managers, we’ve come across many issues. A couple of examples:

“I’ll meet sales targets one year, but then can’t the next. No matter what I do, I can’t seem to make revenue predictable in order to realize stable growth.”





As we've said before: regardless of the quality of your product or service, selling it is the key to growth. This is why it's crucial to set and achieve ambitious and realistic sales targets. And that specific challenge requires using all sales expertise, from the strategic creation of the right international structure to full sales execution. And few companies have all the required expertise, and if they do they have a hard time executing it.

Are you working with the right messaging and is this pushed consistently across different channels and messages? Have you turned available data into relevant and correct insights? Are you using the right channels to communicate with your target audience?

"I want to launch a new product, but I don't know how to do it next to my daily operations with my present customers and normal way of working."

Whether you're launching a new product, introducing a new service in an existing market or want to enter a new market with your existing offering – it's an exciting time that puts a lot of pressure on your organization. A launch has to be executed well and needs to follow a tight schedule – two things that normally don't go well



together. On top of that, most company structures aren't set up to enable these things and key people are too distracted by their daily responsibilities to put enough focus into preparing the launch. And sometimes the right knowledge just isn't there or isn't up-to-date. How much do you know about the industry or region you are trying to expand to?

A product launch or market expansion is about creating and maintaining momentum, which requires focus, time and therefore money. Who doesn't succeed, exposes their organization to large financial risk.



“My sales organization is outdated. I would like to restructure and optimize our sales processes, but I simply don’t know where to start.”

How many companies really have a well-structured and well-documented sales process? And how many of those actually know how to measure and improve on the sales execution? From our experience, not very many. Things are done the way they’re done because “we’ve always done it that way”. A sales organization runs from day to day and from target to target. Any improvements

made are usually based on gut feeling and are often unsubstantial, short term changes, without addressing the root of the problem: the entire sales structure.

And that is the most important, but also most demanding and complicated challenge. Especially for the internal team, because even your most valued employees have a certain form of tunnel vision. This is why challenging the status quo – not just within the sales department, but across all departments contributing to sales – is best done by an external expert. Together you can then come to a modern sales structure that will optimize your company’s sales performance. Because if there’s one thing we know, it’s that, even if we believe in the Four Spheres Model™ as the basis of the future sales structure, there’s no one size fits all structure for sales.

“Neither our organization or myself personally are keeping up with modern day developments. Everything related to data, reporting, tools for digital communications – the growing fragmentation and complexity of systems and expertise is impossible to keep up with.”





Successful organizations haven't just 'gone digital'. They use all digital capabilities effectively to offer their customers the best possible buying experience and to maximize the impact of their sales effort.

To stay competitive, you have to embrace big data, machine learning, data analytics, artificial intelligence and other digital revolutions – and use them well. But how? And how can your sales organization manage these new areas while they're still responsible for their current activities? Let alone integrate all these solutions? You're right – that's (nearly) impossible. But thankfully they don't have to.

There are specialists in the field who work with these new solutions on a daily basis and can advise according to your business needs. They can even assist with a part or the full execution.

“I am not able to find the right resources and lack flexibility in scheduling them. Especially in peak periods I'm missing out on revenue that is pretty much up for grabs.”

Potentially one of the biggest frustrations for sales directors: even with a solid sales strategy and structure, you might lose money because your execution is slowed down due to lack of fire power. A lot of companies are dealing with a structural shortage of good sales executives caused by the tight labor market. Especially in industries going from peak period to peak period, lack of flexibility is a bottleneck for the business.

Missed revenue is the most visible and painful short term result, but there's also potential long term damage to be aware of. Sales people can get overworked, for example. The quality they offer prospects and clients will be a lot lower when they're under time pressure and have a lack of motivation. And as we all know – it's hard to build trust, but easy to lose it.

Numerous challenges

There is a large number of other concerns adding to the above. 'How do I price my services?', 'How do I shorten the sales cycle so I can decrease finance cost?', 'How do I decrease cost per lead?', and 'How can I leverage fixed costs to variable costs?'. Sales outsourcing also has an answer to these questions.



Dealing with your sales challenges and turning sales stress into a flow of predictable revenue:
that's what sales outsourcing can do for you.



The way to improving sales

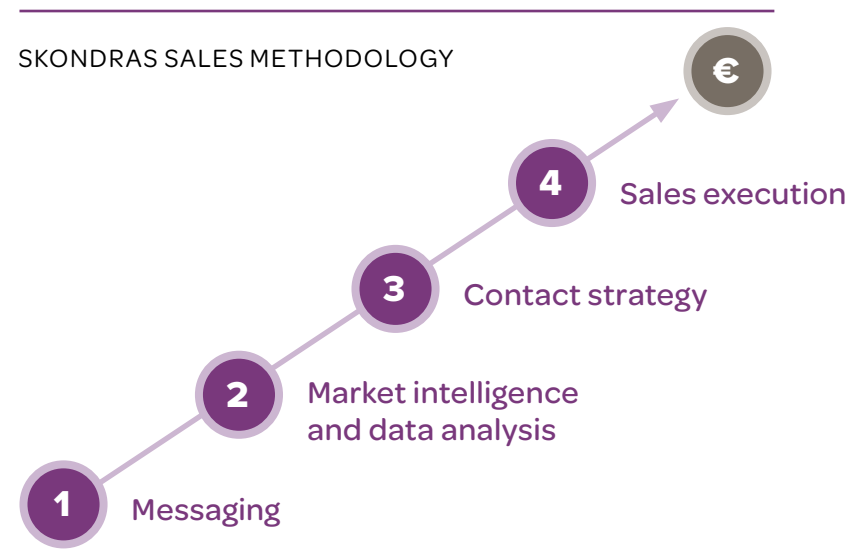
Sales outsourcing means partial or complete outsourcing of your sales process to external specialists. Sales outsourcing can add value to your company in numerous ways. Business wise, sales outsourcing is a good option when your company needs a scalable and flexible way to run sales activities, allowing you to change fixed costs into variable costs. You can add support to existing teams that simply don't have time for the extra work involved with a new product launch or an expansion plan to different regions or industries. But sales outsourcing is also a good option when your organization lacks sales talent with specific expertise such a lead generation, sales development, lead qualification or the closing process. The possibilities are endless, but sales outsourcing is all about one thing: dealing with sales challenges and turning sales stress into a flow of predictable revenue.

Together, we create the right sales structure

To determine how you can change your sales and for which phases you can best profit from sales outsourcing, you can assess your organization based on the Skondras Four Spheres Model™. This is a proven sales approach based on what we have seen at companies considered to have the best-in-class sales

organizations, like Oracle, SAP, Pepsi-co and Pfizer. None of these companies are perfect, but we have combined what we have seen there, which works with our own expertise which has resulted in blue-prints and best practices for how best-in-class sales organizations should be built and executed. In the blue-print of the ideal sales organization we see four big focus areas that impact sales results which you could tweak: messaging, market intelligence and data analysis, contract strategy and sales execution.

Recognizing and embracing the truth of this blue-print is the first step towards simplifying sales in order to start creating predictable revenue without stress.





1 Messaging

This is the basis for your sales strategy – and yet for many companies an undervalued aspect, resulting in messaging that does not trigger or inspire a customer to do business with you. In the modern multi-channel era, that risk is bigger than ever. Messaging doesn't just cover your product or service but also includes company values and an inspiring vision. Companies considered to be thought leaders in their field have an inspiring vision on their market – and does not mention the products or services you want to sell. Account managers and sales executives who can engage customers that way have a distinctive advantage. The customer views them as the trusted advisor that can lead the way, which transcends the product or service.

The idea that emotions play an increasing role in consumer purchases and that corporate buying decisions would be purely rational, is still a popular misconception. Research proves that especially senior management in companies make buying decisions partly based on emotional aspects first, then followed by ratio.

Building a strong, balanced company story with sufficient emotion, vision and of course rationality, is the foundation of any sales strategy. And that story



has to be structured: messaging isn't just a story, but a science that also separates your sales and the branding marketing message. At the end of the day, an above-the-line marketing campaign and a direct sales action are two very different disciplines and require tailored messaging.

You can have the smartest strategy and hire all the sales executives in the world – if you don't have the right engaging messaging, those efforts won't amount to anything and can make sales more difficult than necessary.



2 Market intelligence and data analysis

Sales has become an increasingly data driven field and the importance of relevant data has only grown in the digital age. Big data enables you to focus on your target audience better than ever, but the amount of available data also makes it more difficult than ever. Especially turning big data into useful insights can prove to be challenging. Even though most sales organizations think they've got everything mapped, they're usually limited to just owning data and don't have any actionable information or insights. True market intelligence is able to predict which companies are intrinsically right for your

product or service without contacting or visiting them. That saves huge effort, time and cost.

Jumping on the newest sales trends is very difficult when you're running your daily sales operations. How do you not only follow but also execute these trends when it comes to suspect to lead management solutions, big data analysis, market intelligence, sales maturity scans and research into the best fit target audience? Perhaps it takes an external party to implement and execute these new trends while you are running your sales operations.

3 Contact strategy

Your contact strategy includes all touchpoints with your audience, both prospects and clients. You want to make sure your clients are happy and want to spot opportunities for cross sell and upsell. And even when it comes to contact strategies, things are changing rapidly. Customers no longer expect weekly onsite visits and the right mix of digital touch points (newsletters, chat, email) and human touch points (phone calls, meetings, events) is essential for creating the perfect buyer's journey. This multichannel approach requires a whole new way of interacting with your audience.





Companies that know which touch points their target audience requires and how they can connect those points smoothly, have a very big head start compared to the competition. They grow their relationships with prospects step by step, creating a predictable and high quality funnel.

Creating a good contact strategy isn't easy. What is my goal? Which leading KPI's do I have to follow? Who do I need to approach? And which channels can I best use to ? Usually these are all the questions asked – and that's a shame. Think about which IT expertise and resources you need to achieve your goals, which departments and colleagues need to be involved and which processes need to be put in place. They're just a number of questions you will need to answer to come to a successful strategy: questions a sales outsourcing partner will help you answer.

4 Sales execution

The war for talent is raging in the sales industry as well. But the right people in the right position are still crucial to getting results from your efforts towards messaging, market intelligence and your contact strategy. The portfolio of profiles required and the demands for these roles have become more extensive than ever due to the complexity of the modern sales trade.



If you've found the right people, you need to get them up and running as soon as possible to see them generate revenue. In a lot of companies, the onboarding process comes to a halt quite quickly because sales training is very time consuming. A sales outsourcing company has different sales specialists on offer – hunters, account managers, sales support and business development reps who can start pretty much immediately for both short term assignments and as extra support for peak periods. And the sales talent you do hire directly will be up and running a lot quicker when trained by an external, dedicated specialist. That way, your existing sales team is no longer responsible for training new colleagues and they can stay focused on doing what they do best: generating revenue.



Conclusion

You don't have to do it yourself

How has your own behavior as a customer changed over the last decade? Chances are that twenty years ago, you would go through the Yellow Pages for an important company purchase, visit a trade show or you asked a peer. You would then contact local vendors and make a decision based on the visit from their sales guy. Today, you are one click away from information from companies across the globe and, with all relevant information in hand, you only reach out to partner(s) that have convinced you most – not just with their product, but with their full business proposition.

This new level playing field between buyer and seller, the new transparency and increased (global) competition, requires a new modern sales approach from you as a supplier.

As we've clearly indicated at the start of this whitepaper – sales has grown to become such a comprehensive field that your company, unless it's very big, simply can't do everything by itself.

The good news? You don't have to do everything yourself. An external expert can simplify complex sales to make your sales easy and manageable and will provide you with the right resources and experts for execution. All with the aim of creating a flow in sales and making your revenue predictable.



Want to know more about how sales outsourcing can help your company?

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