ACHIEVE A BELIEVABLE
SALES FORECAST

In 5 Simple Steps

SuMo
motivate success

RING A BELL...?

Many sales leaders and business owners are frustrated with the quality of the information they are able to glean from their CRM system. Poor user adoption and low levels of data quality are preventing them from accurately forecasting what's due to close.

Often they are confronted with late stage deals that lack any depth of information and appear on the face of it to be poorly qualified. Or, miraculously, deals appear out of nowhere that weren't previously on the radar at all.

The result is a total lack of belief in the sales forecast.

This lack of visibility into the health of the pipeline can see the forecast quickly vanish without many of the deals being realised. A scramble then begins to give away discounts in an attempt to accelerate deals to closure or worse still a rush to invest valuable resources in trials or pilots, just to "get something going". Sound familiar?

The simple truth is that many of us are flying blind, forced to make important investment decisions without the supporting data we really need.

Is it any wonder we have lost faith in our pipeline and forecast reports?

However despairing this thought may seem, the good news is that you're not alone. What's more, you are in fact on the first step of the journey towards creating a motivated and engaged sales environment that will deliver a much clearer picture of the believability of your pipeline and health of your business.

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The first hurdle is to recognise that you don't have a technology issue but a behavioural issue; and that it needs attention.

It doesn't matter how many mandatory fields you place onto an opportunity record in your CRM system or how many times you beat sales with a stick, both approaches are actually only serving to make the real problem much worse.

At the end of the day a CRM system is only as useful as the quality of data that is entered into it. If you have low user adoption coupled with poor user engagement, do you really expect to be able to provide an accurate sales forecast?

FORECAST ACCURACY IN JUST 5 STEPS.

STEP 1 CRM-CENTRIC SALES PROCESS.

OK, so you know you have a behavioural issue to solve but what's the first thing you should aim to achieve to guarantee CRM success?

As long-term survivors in the CRM marketplace, this is a question that we get asked all the time and here is our candid response:

1. Immediately request that your sales managers perform deal reviews with their reps from within the CRM system. Every deal due to close this quarter should have experienced multiple reviews, conducted using the information held within the CRM system. This will ensure that the deal meets the minimum health criteria required to get anywhere near your precious forecast.

2. Tell the sales reps "If it isn't in the CRM system, then it doesn't exist" and see point 1. If a deal closes that wasn't on your forecast or that doesn't meet the health criteria, then the rep doesn't get paid.

3. Conduct regular reviews with your sales managers and let them know the same applies to them as it does to the reps. Any deal that closes without it being on the forecast or that didn't meet the health criteria does not count towards their quota attainment either.

STEP 2
NO SKINNY
LEADS ON THE
FORECAST.

We have made it clear to our teams that it is vital for them to manage deals carefully and with rigour, using the CRM system as the single source of truth. But what are the criteria an opportunity must pass to enable it to appear on the forecast?

Every deal on your forecast should, as a bare minimum, include the following information. We understand that there'll be times when capturing this data isn't possible but in those instances we recommend you don't consider it in your forecast:

1. The basic opportunity information correctly filled out (for example, close date, amount, stage, account, compelling event)

2. Multiple contacts identified, showing that the coverage is good and healthy across the account.

3. C-Level contacts have been identified and engaged where possible.

4. Multiple activities should have been logged over time, showing the navigation around the account and providing a history of the deal interaction to date.

5. Decision maker(s) identified and qualified that they have the authority to purchase.

6. Influencers identified and clearly marked.

7. Business sponsors identified and energised to support the deal.

8. Budget holder identified and the budget ring-fenced.

9. Clear next step identified with scheduled date/time as an open activity.

10. Competition identified and addressed.

11. Products we are selling clearly logged.

12.Clear understanding of the "value" and the business case and/or return-on-investment specific for this customer.

13. Close plan mapped out.

14. Clear understanding of procurement process & timelines (i.e. once the indication is given to proceed, what is the process to get through procurement to actually get the deal done?)

STEP 3 GET MORE OUT OF YOUR CRM.

Great, now we've rigorously reviewed our deal and have a clear picture of what constitutes a healthy opportunity we have solved the problem, right? Not quite.

Next you need to make sure your CRM system is as easy-to-use as possible and apply every technique available to motivate your users to get engaged and stay engaged with it. Here are some tips we find work well:

Rethink Mandatory Fields:

Don't get over zealous when it comes to setting mandatory fields, as reps can't always fulfil all the requirements immediately. Upping the number of compulsory fields only frustrates and discourages the user from the very behaviour you were hoping to stimulate in the first place. Keep in mind users will often not have all of the information up-front, so give them room to build the picture over time. Rather than demand a complete report first time around, reward them every time they return to fill out additional information.

De-clutter:

Resist the temptation to try and capture every last imaginable detail. Just collect what you really need, no more.
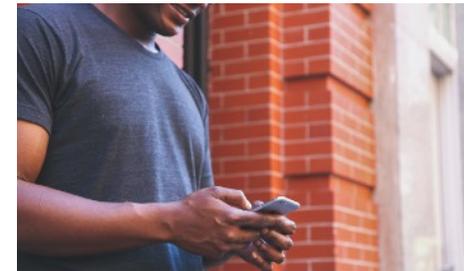
Make it Fun:

Let's face it; entering data isn't the most interesting part of the day, so if you can find ways to alleviate the chore, go ahead and use them! Motivational techniques, like frequently rewarding behaviours, will deliver a very quick boost in engagement and will make sure the health check data you need is accurately captured.
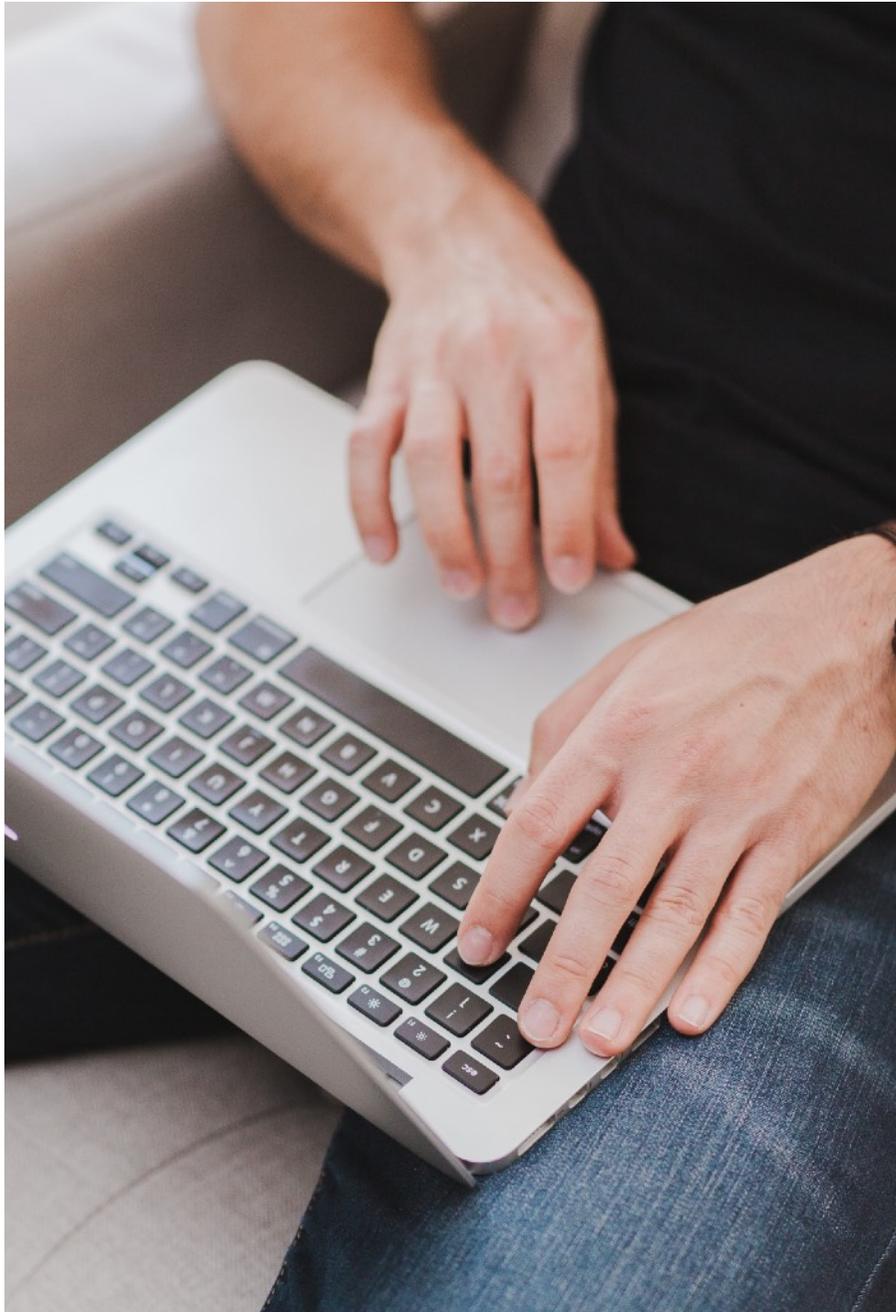
EASE OF USE IS CRITICAL TO ON-GOING ENGAGEMENT.

STEP 4 UNCOVER YOUR WINNING WAY

This is where you create a collection of your team's best practices and golden behaviours that separate the effective from the stragglers, distilling out exactly what it is that makes your top sales people successful. But how do we find this? Here's where you need an external helping hand. It is virtually impossible to analyse the patterns that drive success from the data you are currently capturing in your CRM system. It seems your CRM is working against you on this one!

Uncovering these patterns requires the help of behavioural motivation platforms (we of course recommend SuMo!) that not only track the journey of your users but also reward them for each spot-on behaviour they undertake and at the precise moment they undertake it.

Soon, you will have a clear view of what success looks like and a platform to nudge and motivate the same behaviour across all of your teams. Congratulations, you are now proactively driving the right behaviours!

STEP 5 ESTABLISH A SALES CADENCE

There is one more step you need to take before you reach the promised land of forecast accuracy and CRM success. What you really need is visibility of the cadence and timing of your success behaviours.

For example, if you knew that following up a lead within 48 hours increases its chance of turning into a pre-pipe opportunity by 80%, you would make sure this happened for every lead, right? If you knew that it takes on average 30 activities to reach a decision maker you would set this pace at every account, wouldn't you? If you knew that the deals that ultimately close all got to the proposal stage within 45 days wouldn't you consistently drive that very behaviour?

This behavioural cadence and timing insight is exactly what motivation engines like SuMo are able to bring and are precisely why they will deliver you forecast accuracy and pipeline visibility.

CONTINUE READING

Are you looking to build a cleaner and healthier sales pipeline? This next white paper includes 4 steps that will improve pipeline health, 33 careless sales behaviours that are likely to be costing you deals and the questions you should ask to determine the true health of a deal.