CRIBWORKS LLC

HOW YOUR SALES TEAM CAN MAXIMIZE YOUR

CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT TOOL

HOW TO DRIVE EFFECTIVE GROWTH TO YOUR ORGANIZATION TO HAVE A HEALTHY AND STRUCTURED SALES PIPELINE

As your business grows, there is a need for taking control of your overall sales pipeline to ensure growth while having an effective management tool to help you manage your customers is critical for long-term success. What all goes into a sales pipeline? It combines elements from key activities, tracking opportunities, hitting quotas, managing performance, balancing various tools to pull a sales pipeline together, all while trying to be as effective as possible with the data that is in the pipeline to make data driven decisions.

In the Business to Business (B2B) and Business to Government (B2G), organizations need to have a strong handle on the continuous growth of their sales pipelines. You want to know how many leads you have coming from various inbound sources, meetings that are being taken place, to proposals, and deals won, closed, or lost. Whether you are a Sales Representative, Marketing Manager, Sales Leader, or Owner of a company, understanding your customer's journey, and where you are in it (path to procurement), is critical for your sales pipeline health.

In this ebook I break down the importance of a CRM, what should be in it, and expectations at each stage and how you can position your CRM to become much more effective in how you use it, saving you both time and money.

Let's do it!

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Whitney Stowell is the CEO and Founder of Cribworks, a sales and business development advisory firm based in Washington, DC. For over 14 years, Whitney has worked in marketing, business development, corporate strategy, and government affairs for several firms, including Signify (formerly Philips Lighting), Major League Rugby (MLR) franchise Old Glory DC, Royal Philips, Elbit Systems of America, Chenega Corporation, and the Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs within the United States Senate.

Whitney sits on the Board of Directors for the Society of American Military Engineers (SAME) DC Post in Washington DC, a non-profit organization that collaborates with both government and private sector on national security infrastructure challenges. Whitney is active in various organizations throughout the Washington DC area, such as the Washington Irish and local youth rugby clubs, Smart Cities Group, Association for United States Army (AUSA), USA Rugby, and others.

Whitney holds a B.A. from Bates College in Maine and Certifications from Shipley University in Business Development and Capture Management

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WHY A CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIPS MANAGEMENT TOOL?

A customer relationship management (CRM) tool is important in organizations for several reasons:

1. **Centralized customer data:** CRM tools help sales teams collect and store all customer data in one central location. It provides a comprehensive view of customer interactions, purchase history, preferences, and contact information.
   - Easy access to this information allows sales reps to better understand customers, tailor their approach, and deliver a personalized experience.
2. **Improved sales efficiency:** CRM tools simplify sales management by automating various tasks and workflows. They enable sales teams to manage leads, track opportunities, and prioritize sales activities effectively.
   - By automating business tasks, such as data entry and reporting, CRM tools free up sales team to focus on selling, managing relationships, and closing deals.

3. **Enhanced lead management:** CRM tools help sales teams manage leads more efficiently. They enable you to capture leads from various sources, such as websites, email campaigns, or social media, making it easy to qualify and follow leads.
    - With an effective CRM, sales reps can prioritize leads based on pre-defined criteria, ensuring focus on the most promising opportunities, and avoiding lost potential sales.
4. **Sales Flow Visibility:** CRM tools provide real-time visibility into the sales pipeline, allowing sales managers to track and monitor the progress of transactions at any stage
    - These visualizations enable accurate prediction, they see challenges and dynamic decisions. Sales managers can allocate resources, provide targeted training, and take actions necessary to meet sales goals.
5. **Improved productivity and communication:** CRM tools encourage collaboration and communication within sales teams. They enable the sharing of customer information, quotes, and activities, allowing sales representatives to work together seamlessly.
    - This collaboration enables knowledge sharing, reduces duplication of effort, and ensures consistent messaging and customer experience across the sales team.
6. **Customer insights and analytics:** CRM tools provide valuable insights into customer behaviors, trends, and buying patterns.
    - By analyzing data in a CRM, sales teams can identify international or upsell opportunities, understand customer preferences, and adapt their sales strategies accordingly
    - That insight helps build strong customer relationships, anticipate customer needs, and improve sales performance.

7. **Customer retention and relationship building:** CRM tools enable sales teams to communicate with customers faster, build long-term relationships, and increase customer satisfaction.
    - With access to historical customer data, sales reps can understand past interactions, preferences, and pain points, allowing them to better address customer concerns Sales teams can increase customer loyalty and retention by fostering relationships and providing personalized experiences.

CRM tools are essential in sales as they centralize customer profiles, increase sales effectiveness, improve lead management, identify pipelines, enhance collaboration, provide valuable insights value, and support customer retention and relationship building. Through effectively leveraging a CRM, this allows sales teams to streamline their processes, increase productivity and increase revenue.

DATE-DRIVEN DECISIONS AND FORECASTING

CRMs are built on several core elements, data, the input of data, who inputs the data, the communication of the data, the ability to report and analyze the data, and the centralization of the data.

According to the ***LinkedIn Global State of Sales Report***, almost half (46%) of sales said their biggest challenge was incomplete data.

In the ***HubSpot 2023 Sales Trend Report*** When sales, technical, marketing, and executive teams are misaligned, 52% of sales leaders say revenue goals are missed, 36% report a prevention of goals being missed, and 33% find that when sales and marketing aren't aligned, it wastes marketing budget.

CUSTOMER JOURNEY

Take the guesswork out of where you are in your business, without a clearly defined sales pipeline, you run a risk of missing opportunities, hitting short and long-term targets, and winning deals.

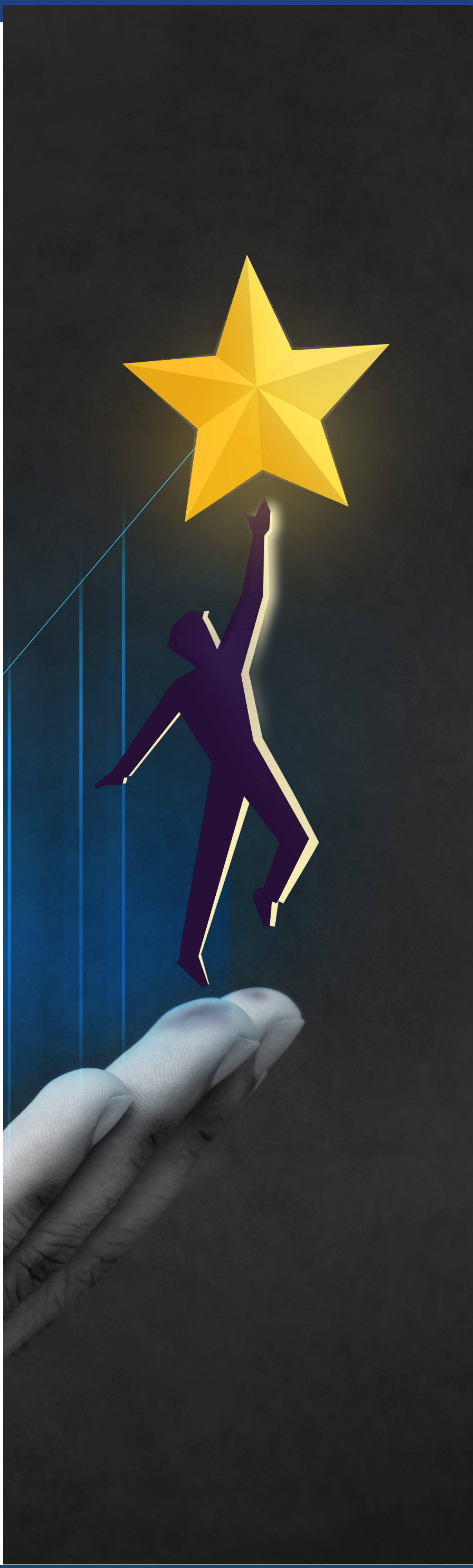
Setting up your preferred pipeline stages can help you update your opportunities based on where you are in your customer journey. Below is a recommended outline on how to make sure you can constructively name and identify your opportunities.

OPPORTUNITIES

- New Opportunities need to be entered by:
  - Opportunity Overview
  - Type of Project (i.e., Retrofit, New Construction, etc.)
- Opportunity name should provide what the customer is looking for
  - i.e., LED lighting upgrades OR Parking Lot LED Lighting Retrofit

MULTIPLE OPPORTUNITIES

- If there are multiple opportunities with a specific client, enter each opportunity/deal as their own opportunity/deal
  - Classify each opportunity as a Phase (i.e., Phase 1, Phase 2, Phase 3, etc.) unless otherwise specified by the client on how each stage/phase of the project is going to be built out



CUSTOMER NAME

Customer Name should be what you will refer to this specific Customer in the proposal and/or price quote. Their official name (no shortcuts)

- i.e., Smith Auto Dealership

If the Customer is a Public Sector Customer, include the full name (examples below):

- **City of Pittsburgh**
- **Fort Benning - U.S. Army**
- **Washington State University**
- **Loudoun County Public Schools**
- **Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA)**

If Customer is a federal installation, include what branch (i.e., U.S. Army, U.S. Marine Corps, General Services Administration, etc.), do NOT just say "military base or military, government, etc." Add specificity to it.

ACCOUNTS & PARENT ACCOUNTS

- If an existing business, account management MUST reference an existing account
- If an existing business is nationwide with more than one location, a PARENT Account must be established

PARENT ACCOUNT

- If the company/customer has more than one location, enter Parent Account in HubSpot of the primary Headquarters office
- All locations must reference specific customer locations in detail, including local contact information
  - If shipping and billing information is different than Parent Account, enter the proper information
- **Example:**
  - ***Parent Account: XYZ Consultants – St. Paul Minnesota***
    - Account – XYZ Consultants - Gainesville, FL
    - Account - XYZ Consultants - Syracuse, NY
    - Account - XYZ Consultants - Wilmington, CA

ACCOUNT TYPE*

Enter the type of business you will be entering into with this client on this specific opportunity. If this is a NEW opportunity, enter as NEW BUSINESS. If the opportunity is part of an ongoing business transaction (i.e., change order, new project) enter as EXISTING BUSINESS.

**This depends on the type of CRM you have (i.e., Salesforce, HubSpot, Zoho, etc.)*

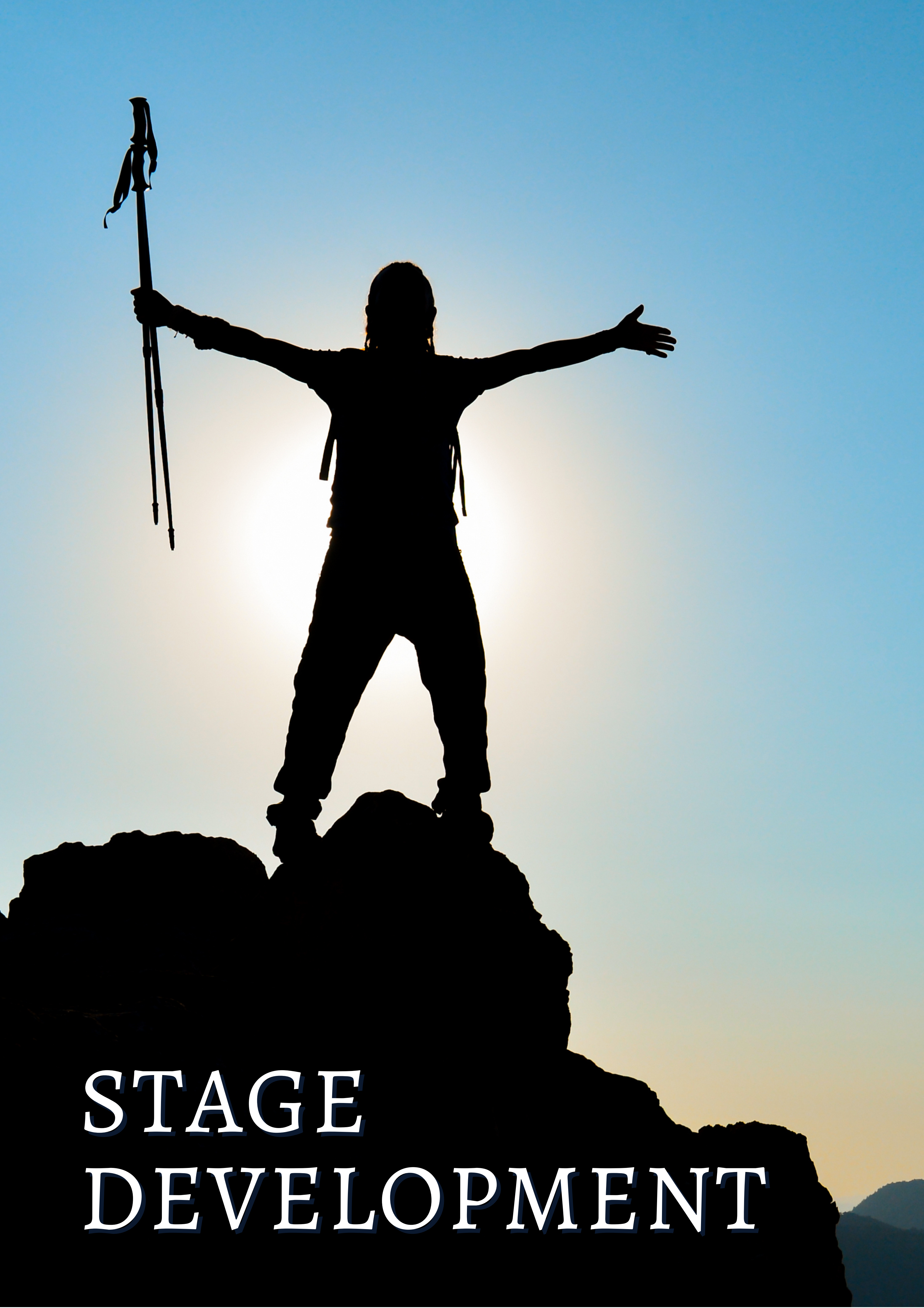
CLOSE DATE

The close date should be when we best anticipate the opportunity will close. Close date should be changed and updated through every stage of the CRM to best reflect the close date of the project and if you are awarded the project when a contract will be issued.

If your CRM can include proposal/price quote due dates, include these dates that would best reflect when you and your company need to respond to customer requests.

STAGE

Stage is the current reflection of where you and you and your organization are in the sales AND buying process with the Customer. Opportunity stage should actively reflect customer interactions with each customer. It is critical to keep each stage up to date.



STAGE DEVELOPMENT

STAGE DEVELOPMENT

The sales pipeline is a sequence of stages that the potential customer passes through to become an actual customer. At each stage, more information is gathered from both parties, whether that detail is on project size and scope, capabilities, timing, the list goes on. There are a series of questions and recommendations that each stage should require before moving onto the next stage. For example, you want to qualify a prospective lead that comes in via your website to determine if it is a viable lead to move forward it.

Below is a list of recommended stages:

CRM STAGES

- Prospecting
- Lead Qualification
- Demo/Meeting
- Proposal/Price Quote Submitted
- Negotiation/Review
- Opportunity Won
- Closed Won
- Closed Lost
- No Go/ Not Pursuing

DEFINITION OF EACH STAGE

- PROSPECTING

  a. *Lead Generation from events, your website, advertising, and marketing efforts*
     1. If little information is gathered, reach out to potential clients to gauge their level of interest in your product/services to see what they are looking for
     2. Basic Targeting - Understand the clients you wish to target and evaluate where you can find such leads.
     3. Sales Channels - Determine the most appropriate sales channel to fetch leads.

  b. *This is where you vet the opportunities based on your buyer persona, target audience, product and/or service offerings*
     1. Further due diligence can be done at the Lead Qualification stage

- LEAD QUALIFICATION

  A. Often, the customer has not yet identified a budget or committed to a timescale. The Close Date is uncertain and can be many months in the future

  B. Qualification stage's primary outcome is deciding whether to spend more time, effort, and resources working on this opportunity.

     a. *If the answer is that it is worth it, move to the next opportunity stage. If not, remove the deal from the pipeline.*

        i. To determine this, ask these four questions:
           1. Is there an opportunity?
           2. Can we win it?
           3. Is it worth winning?
           4. Do we want to win it?
           5. To what degree can we go after this opportunity?

  C. Financial breakdown - You should have an elementary understanding of:

     a. *Size of the project*
     b. *$ Value and what is the preliminary value to your company*

- DEMO/MEETING

  a. *At this Stage, the customer (whether it is the End Client, Partner, Vendor, etc.) has agreed to a meeting with you and your company for a specific date*

  b. *You will be discussing their requirements and making sure your offer will help the customer to meet their needs.*

  c. *At this point, you want to evaluate if there is a strong business case for the lead to receive a proposal.*

  d. *More information might be needed for the prospect, and additional meeting(s) might be needed*

  e. *Financial breakdown - You should have a basic understanding of the size and scope of the project ($ value), and you should be able to get a first overview of*

     i. Dollar value
     ii. What is in it for our company
     iii. When will the project start

- PROPOSAL/PRICE QUOTE SUBMITTED

  a. *There is an interest from your customer for a formal proposal or price quote for their specific needs. Here you address the specific solutions, prices, and requirements*

  b. *The CRM opportunity should include all necessary information related to the project for all parties involved in the company should have a strong understanding of the project.*

  c. *Financial breakdown - You should have an advanced understanding of the size and scope of the project ($ value), be able to understand the needs within the proposal of*

  d. *Price Quote - Include:*

     i. specific partners
     ii. workshare breakdown
     iii. percentage of work provided (if known)
     iv. dollar amount of the proposal
     v. contract (if known), and any additional information that would be helpful

- NEGOTIATION/REVIEW

  a. *Stage at which customer has expressed interest in purchasing your solutions from you. Negotiations will start to finalize any pre-contract award based on the proposal/price quote that has been submitted*
  b. *Any legal aspects of the contract will be discussed. Negotiations can involve multiple parties, including the customer, executives, sales team, finance, and legal department, as well as any partners for the project*
  c. *Financial breakdown - based on conversations out of this stage, pricing might fluctuate depending on how your negotiations go*

- OPPORTUNITY WON

  a. *This is the written (or verbal) communication that the deal has been won, however, the contract has not been sent to you.*
     i. For example, you receive communication from the customer that you have won the contract, and you should be receiving the contract soon. There are a range of factors that can be dependent on receiving the contract (i.e., final signoffs, Prime Contract holders sending out the orders, waiting until the new Fiscal/Calendar Year, etc.)
     ii. Sign any contractual agreements with your customer-to-be

- CLOSED WON

  a. *Written contract has been received in your inbox so you can move to order fulfillment*

- CLOSED LOST

  a. *If you have lost the opportunity*
     i. Provide the reason(s) why you lost the amount (short reason why)
        1. More specificity is better

- NO GO/ NOT PURSUING

  a. *If you have decided to not pursue a specific opportunity, discuss why:*
     i. Include any specific reasons why

OTHER FACTORS TO CONSIDER THROUGHOUT YOUR PIPELINE

There will be moments where you jump from one stage to another, and skip a specific stage due to the customer's needs and based on conversations, requirements, etc.

- Keep track of the age of your deals to determine if any have surpassed the length of your sales cycle.
  - Prioritize them; if not, move them to your "No Go/ Not Pursuing" list.
- Establish a regular cadence to review opportunities
- Track lost deals as well, we want to see the metrics behind this
- Track the Partners you work with and how well you perform

Fine-tuning your pipeline can improve your speed at which you acquire new customers, reduce your costs, have a better understanding of the health of your pipeline, and setting expectations of what each person that uses the CRM should be held accountable for.

BREAKING DOWN EXPECTATIONS

Setting expectations of what is needed withing your CRM can help eliminate any confusion among stakeholders internally. From what sales managers are required, to what the CEO wants to see in the pipeline. If the CRM is the "One Source of Truth" then state that all opportunities need to be in the pipeline. Manage expectations throughout your organization on what you want with your CRM. Below are a few more examples of what to do at various levels throughout an organization for working with a CRM:

Sales Manager/Representative/Etc.

- Make a concentrated effort to continuous review your pipeline on a regular basis
  - Schedule time weekly to do this (aka block time on your calendar) to make sure updates on done
- Communicate with your senior leadership on what expectations on with using the CRM across your organization

Sales Leader/Vice President/Etc.

- Set expectations with your team on what is required for them by using a CRM
- Hold weekly meetings to review pipeline with your team
- Hold monthly meetings (or quarterly) with Senior Leadership to review pipeline
- Ask your marketing point of contact to make sure all inbound leads are integrated into your CRM. From websites, newsletters, chatbots, tradeshows, etc., make sure all of them are uploaded so you can manage them. Your CRM is your one source of truth.
- Setup automations for your CRM works with Sales and Marketing, including any type of social selling
- If you do not take the CRM seriously, the team that reports to you will not either. Manage expectations

CEO

- Reinforce the importance of why you have a CRM (senior leadership buy in), expectations of a sales process
- Align with your Sales Leaders on Clients, Account Plans, and overall growth expectations
- Make sure your stages are properly weighted by discussing it with your finance team so you can forecast revenue and cash flow
- Make sure you have reports setup to reflect your organization, accounts, and any metrics you want to track
- If you do not take the CRM seriously, the team that reports to you will not either. Manage expectations

METRICS TO BE LOOKING AT:

You cannot measure things you do not track. If you have not started yet, it is the perfect time to start! Here are a few metrics to look at:

- **Average deal size:** This is the amount of money consumers spend on a product or service. It is calculated by adding the total revenue for the specified period and dividing it by the number of closed winning opportunities in the timeline. Break this number down by individual, team, account if it best applies to your organization
- **Win Rate:** This represents the ratio of successful deals to total opportunities closed.
- **Average sales cycle length:** This is the time that elapses from first contact with a prospect to closing.
- **Sales Velocity:** This measures the speed at which sales move through your pipeline to generate revenue
- **Lead Response Time:** This is the average time it takes a salesperson or agency to follow up on a lead.
- **Sales Pipeline Value:** This is the value of all qualified opportunities that enter your pipeline
- **Sales KPIs -** From Deals closed, opportunities (by stage and value), meetings, demos, quotes (including value)

Having a visualization of your pipeline, with effective sales data and expectations, can improve your pipeline health, increase your efficiency, and help you grow better.

CONCLUSION

We hope these tips, tricks, and pieces of advice have given you some knowledge and inspiration to power your CRM. It is critical to track your sales metrics to ensure your team is heading in the right direction. Prioritizing how you structure your pipeline, what each stage of your pipeline should look like can put you ahead of the competition. Analyze your progress, set expectations, and build for both and short and long-term.

Now that you are equipped to take your CRM and your organization to the next level, it's time to execute on it. Start to implement these changes, ask questions, provide feedback at all levels of your organization so you can consistently grow. You can always update your CRM to ensure positive results. Stay updated with the latest technology, AI, and automations to make sure your organization is running at 100%.

Want to learn more about how we can help drive your business to the next level? Do not leave anything to chance, your customers and team are the lifeblood of your business. Building short- and long-term goals will help you achieve success for your business.

Choose a partner who combines an innovative approach, a track record of success as well as listens to what your goals are while working alongside of you every step of the way.

Book at meeting with us today: Book a Meeting

Reach out to us here at: https://cribworks.co/contact/

THANK YOU!

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