

Process Implementation: Worth the Reward



Improve Performance.
Drive Revenue.

About The Naro Group

The Naro Group specializes in helping technology companies capitalize on their investment in sales process and sales training. Contact Jim Naro, President, by email at: jnaro@TheNaroGroup.com.

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By Jim Naro, President of The Naro Group

You're back in your office, having just returned from a morale building, fist-pumping session of sales training with your entire sales team. The question now becomes this: how do you build on the momentum you achieved during the training, ensure that the tactics are used successfully, the new sales process is followed and get a good return on your investment?


While sales process implementation is not a simple task and may require more of your time now than you'd like to attribute to it, the rewards justify your investment and payback comes much sooner than you would think.

The proof is in the numbers.

After training his team on one of the top ten sales methodologies/process, I spoke with a colleague who I have worked with in the past and who has implemented sales process several times. He is currently the Senior Vice President, Sales & Marketing at an information services company in New York City. Here's a sampling of the results he achieved after six months of implementation:

- When he first joined the company, his sales team was at 60% of quota. After implementing his sales training program and new sales process, the team's productivity rose to 95% of quota.
- His pipeline (in dollars) grew by 68% and the number of deals grew by 100%, much of which he attributes to his new sales process.
- His top performers were at 75% and 88% of quota initially - that increased to 124% and 122%, respectfully.
- 90% of his team improved their productivity.

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His philosophy is that unless a company continues to train and manage their business according to the sales methodology and process they choose, the initial investment in the training is wasted. The sales force won't accept it as standard operating procedure, they won't use it, and there is no derived benefit.

Since he had such great success with sales training methodologies, I asked him what he thought the biggest benefits of implementation are for sales managers. Here are some of his thoughts:

Once the sales process is in place, the entire organization is speaking the same language, from sales to marketing to operations to executives. Both sales person and manager speak the same language, providing you with a common ground that allows you to manage more effectively.


As a manager, you gain much more control over forecasting and sales cycles than you ever had before. You can identify more readily when something will close and your forecasting accuracy increases immensely.

You can also manage your pipeline better, for both short-term and long-term opportunities. The process that you follow will help your sales people qualify better and focus on deals that are "winnable" so the ratio of wins to losses increases.

Once your sales process has been implemented, a sales manager now has the tools to recognize and head off potential performance issues. If a sales person isn't filling a pipeline 90 days out, you can easily recognize that and you won't have any surprises as the sales cycle proceeds. You'll be able to work with the under-performing sales person and head off potential problems.

You can also determine where your sellers are most productive - whether it's prospecting, qualification, negotiation, proof steps, or closing. My colleague discovered by looking at a pipeline report that someone on his team didn't have any experience with closing. The sales person built a great pipeline, but had just passed leads before. The sales manager was able to work with the sales person to increase their close rate.

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My colleague told me that implementing a sales process greatly contributed to the success of his company's revenue growth and that tools and processes such as pipeline management, sales process management, sequence of events letters, and action plans are key. Simply put, he said, "It's all about controlling the sales cycle and making it more predictable."

I asked my colleague what advice he would give fellow sales executives who had just put their people through formal selling training based on a structured methodology and it was this: be relentless! Relentlessly manage your people using the methodology, because if you don't believe in it and if you don't manage your people to the process, they are not going to adopt it. He also added that while implementing might be a time consuming task to start, it's well worth it once you're up and running. Moreover, his numbers certainly support that statement.

He also wanted to pass along this thought: make sure you have executive support because things might be worse before they get better. You're going to use a sales methodology to relentlessly clear out your pipeline and you're going to get a real wake up call. You'll find that there are things in the pipeline that shouldn't be there, but then, you already know that, don't you?

Remember how his pipeline grew? It's almost impossible to achieve those results without full implementation of a sales methodology. It's worth it in the end and the proof is in the numbers.

1. Territory Reviews.

Start scheduling weekly individual "Territory Reviews" and do this for at least 90 days. Make this an event that no one is exempt from. This is your opportunity to coach your sales people on the "how" to do in order to be successful and not just the "what" to do.

2. Pipeline Analysis.

Have your sales people grade their existing pipeline according to the sales process steps you are asking them to adopt. Make sure they take an honest, hard, realistic view. Remember that this is not about being right or wrong, it's about everyone using the same process for selling. This is your opportunity to get them started on speaking a common language.

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3. Identify the Top Opportunities.

Mutually identify the top 5 - 10 opportunities and have your sales people prepare tactical plans to convert them to a status in which decision-makers have agreed to evaluate your products and/or services. Use role plays here to help sellers be prepared to ask good questions to identify prospects goals, problems and needs, and obtain necessary measurements and metrics.

4. Document the Process.

Ask your sales people to document the results of their sales calls in a letter they can share with their buyers and a preliminary evaluation plan. This provides them with a powerful communication tool for keeping in alignment with prospects and gives you something objective to review when coaching the seller on the opportunity.

5. Create a Development Plan.

Determine the health of each salesperson's pipeline and help them create a business development plan to fill their pipeline to obtain revenue goals. Help them calculate how many new opportunities they need to put in their pipeline each week and help them develop a prospecting plan to reach that level of activity.



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