



# How to prevent deals from slipping through the Sales Execution Gap

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# The trillion-dollar problem for revenue organizations.

As a sales manager, you want to do more to help your team win every opportunity and prevent losses. You know that helping your team reach peak performance, in turn, helps you and your organization do the same. If all of your sellers performed like your top sellers, your team would exceed its revenue goals every quarter. That would increase morale, revenue, and your chances of getting promoted. To reach that next level, you need a top-performing team.

How can you help your sellers perform to their full potential? By closing the Sales Execution Gap.

Every revenue team suffers from a Sales Execution Gap — the gap between an organization's potential and actual revenue. This disconnect isn't caused by sellers. It's because most teams lack a single source of truth. They use too many disconnected apps and lack the tools to execute the right selling steps, at the right time. Inefficient technology causes your team to lose opportunities they may have otherwise won.



# There are three root causes for the Sales Execution Gap:

## **Inefficient prospecting.**

Administrative tasks reduce the amount of time sellers have to sell. In fact, sales reps spend less than 36 percent of their time actually selling.<sup>1</sup> What are they doing instead? Manually updating the CRM with prospect details and sending managers email updates to fill in any information gaps. Full-cycle sellers will prioritize deal management closing activities over prospecting. If they're getting leads from other teams, they may still hit their numbers for a while. However, when that luck inevitably runs out, they won't reach quota, creating job insecurity for both the seller and manager.

## **Inconsistent deal management.**

Consistently effective deal management requires more than just "knowing your product." It requires sellers to take the right actions at the right time with the right people. When sellers don't have the tools and blueprints for proper sales execution, they waste time taking the wrong actions with prospects who don't have the authority to sign off on the deal.

## **Inaccurate revenue forecasting.**

Without a unified process and technology to support it, sellers store key deal details in separate documents and spreadsheets that don't funnel into the CRM. As a result, sales managers have a limited view of deal data. To validate or adjust their team's revenue projections, they must rely on past performance and guesswork. Best guesses using limited data eventually leads to guessing wrong. It's also impossible to diagnose at-risk deals and intervene to ensure actual revenue matches projected revenue.

Over time, inefficient technology throughout the deal cycle results in more losses, fewer wins, lost revenue opportunities, and a severe drop in morale, which is critical to a sales team's success.

## **How do you motivate your team to win, so you can close the Sales Execution Gap together?**

It starts by understanding what motivates your sellers — and then investing in the right technology to help them reach their full potential.

# How managers can motivate sellers to close the Sales Execution Gap.

Understanding what motivates your sellers to perform is essential to being a good manager. It also helps increase employee engagement. When employees are engaged at work, they have decreased absenteeism, lower turnover, greater productivity and sales, increased customer loyalty, and the entire business unit is more profitable.<sup>2</sup>

To find out what motivates sellers to perform to their potential, we asked them.

## Here's what they said.

### The top 5 ways to motivate your team:

#### 1. Customers

Sellers want to help their customers solve problems, knowing it leads to wins. One seller put it this way, "If I do right by customers, my business grows." To do right by customers, sellers need to be active listeners on prospect calls. Listening to customers and establishing a shared understanding of needs and challenges is critical to deal management.

**The barriers:** Sellers often feel overwhelmed capturing all the information customers and internal stakeholders need. They try to take detailed notes during calls, update data in sales systems, and address action items after the meeting, all while following the best practices managers expect. Manual processes and disconnected apps take precious time away from focusing on the customer — and they still don't provide managers with a complete picture of how reps are working a deal and what needs to happen next.

**What they need from managers to overcome it:** Reps need you to empower them with technology that can automate administrative tasks, like meeting transcriptions and action items. This allows sellers to be consultative versus reactive, aligning their products or solutions to customers' needs.

## 2. Credibility

Whether personal or economic, relationships are built on trust. In fact, 71 percent of respondents said they'd buy from a salesperson they trusted over one who gave them the lowest price.<sup>3</sup> Experienced sellers know you have to sell a customer on you before you can sell them on a product. Buyer confidence is established through your sellers' product, feature, pricing, and competitive comparison knowledge. Earning a customer's trust also entails doing what you say you'll do, when you say you'll do it.

**The barriers:** Sellers are expected to have all the answers, all the time. That's an impossible expectation to live up to when training happened during onboarding — and products, competitors, and messaging have changed several times since then. It's also not easy to recall every last detail after the fact, especially when you're put on the spot. Studies show that most people forget about 60 percent of the information they have just learned in the first 20 minutes.<sup>4</sup> Without the right technology and processes, sellers will give a wrong answer or miss a key action item at some point since we're all human. Unfortunately, this can erode credibility and cost you the deal.

**What they need from managers to overcome it:** To earn buyer trust, sellers need to answer questions accurately and effectively during calls. You need to make sure they have those correct answers readily available within your sales tech stack. An intelligent virtual assistant can surface the right messaging about products, services, pricing, and competitors so your reps deliver it confidently to customers in real time.



### 3. Collaboration

Sellers want to be in alignment with buyers throughout the entire deal cycle. When sellers and buyers are on the same page, everyone is clear on next steps and milestones. This helps ensure the buyer moves seamlessly through the sales funnel without any hiccups. Managers also need to be able to see where their help is needed to avoid unexpected deal loss.

**The barriers:** Close plan software gets everyone on the same page with a clearly defined process. However, if your close plan software isn't customer-facing, your buyers aren't operating with the same insight. When customers don't have a clear understanding of the process and managers don't have visibility into the deal, the unfortunate outcome is often a surprise loss. Every seller has a horror story about missing their number because the buyer "ghosted" them at the finish line. Ghosting is not an unnatural phenomenon. It happens when sellers don't have clear alignment or milestones with the buyer, leading to lost deals. Every loss hurts, but none more than "Closed Loss - Disengaged." When sellers get ghosted, managers are left questioning their projections and scrambling to reconfigure them at the last minute.

**What they need from managers to overcome it:** Your team needs one platform that sellers and buyers can both access so they stay on the same page about the process and who should be involved in the conversation. Sales technology like this saves everyone time, improves deal management, and increases confidence to close. It also prevents sellers from having to track insights across several disparate spreadsheets and documents and regularly send managers updated versions. Managers can then spot signals that a deal is at-risk — and provide strategic coaching to get things back on track.



## 4. Compensation

Compensation and financial incentives in sales are table stakes, a minimum entry requirement for the business arrangement. However, contrary to Hollywood movie stereotypes, salespeople aren't swindlers in a boiler room trying to say whatever they can to make money. They take pride in their job, and they want to do right by customers while working in a positive workplace environment. At the same time, they rely on their base salary and commission for their livelihood – and they want a manager who will help them cash in on the chips they bet on themselves.

**The barriers:** What prevents sellers from cashing in on the bet they placed on themselves? Manual, non-selling tasks like drafting emails, taking meeting notes, and updating disparate documents. That makes it difficult for anyone to predictably hit their on-target earning goals. Let's say a salesperson's salary is \$75,000, but they were promised \$150,000 in on-target earnings. If they don't have time to do what it takes to hit their number due to manual busy work, they're going to quit (or be fired) at high rates. Each time a salesperson leaves, it costs companies one-third of that worker's annual earnings to replace them<sup>5</sup> – and it's that much harder on the rest of the team to hit the company quota short-handed.

**What they need from managers to overcome it:** Managers can help sellers cash in their chips by automating "busywork." Automated prospecting makes it easy for sellers to quickly find the right people and engage them through proven playbooks and messaging. For example, if one of your top sellers has the perfect opening question to spark a conversation or the perfect reply to a common buyer objection, you could take that messaging and scale it across your team. A virtual assistant could then surface that talking point during a prospect call or a ready-to-customize email response in the team's playbook. The result is increased productivity and predictable deals.



## 5. Competition

By nature, sales is competitive. Whether it's a Request for Proposal or the No. 1 spot in a President's Club, sellers want to win. Why? Beyond compensation, social comparison is one of the biggest motivators in any workplace. We evaluate our abilities in relation to those of others.<sup>6</sup> Sellers are competitive within their own team and with outside companies that offer comparable products or services. Businesses in niche markets with no known competitors (yet) are still trying to win over buyers. When a seller is victorious, it's invigorating. Each win brings an incredible feeling of validation.

**The barriers:** Cobbled together point solutions make it difficult to get work done efficiently. When your workflow is clunky, you spend more time on non-selling tasks and less time selling. For sellers, disjointed systems make it impossible to see or measure what's working, in order to repeat success. Without visibility, managers also can't scale successes across their team by making proven sales motions part of everyone's workflow. Managers also can't see where their guidance is needed to help sellers win every winnable deal.

**What they need from managers to overcome it:** Sellers need guidance on the next best actions to generate revenue in real-time and at scale. AI-guided insights can help sellers consistently make decisions that lead to closed deals. When managers can see the outcome of those decisions, they can scale successes and make them part of winning workflows that maximize revenue growth. This lets you support low performers without micromanaging them. It also saves you time that can be better spent growing new opportunities for the company.





# Motivating your team to its full potential.

By focusing on what motivates sellers to win, you can narrow the Sales Execution Gap that causes profits to slip away year after year.

## This results in:

### Increased win rates.

All the right stakeholders are involved as part of the buying team. Sellers are informed, in real time, on how engaged each of the stakeholders are during meetings and throughout the process. The buying team has all the information they need about the deal in a central place. All teams clearly understand each other's goals, interactions, and requirements for driving long-term success. This creates an unparalleled buying experience throughout the entire selling process. Sellers can close any qualified lead when they understand which accounts they should be working and the next best action to take to efficiently move deals forward. Managers have visibility and a framework for holding sellers accountable to best practices and effectively coach sellers to course correct when a deal has gone off track, leading to higher win rates.

### Shorter sales cycle.

Sales managers can standardize consistent sales motions and hold sellers accountable to best practices that lead to faster deal velocity. Along the way, sales managers and reps stay in lock step on how to best manage the deal to the next stage and coach more reps to success. Internal stakeholders are also brought along on the journey to ensure expectations are met and the organization is ready to deliver on the win.

### Greater productivity and efficiency.

Sellers can painlessly and consistently build their own pipeline by using proven playbooks and messaging. They also have more time to sell because they don't have to update multiple systems and keep customer and internal stakeholders updated on next steps. Repeatable actions are scaled, allowing sellers to focus on high-value activities that close deals. Activity is automatically synced back to the CRM, saving time and reducing overhead. No time and effort are wasted because sellers are prioritizing the right opportunities and selling to the right person. They can finally take control of their own destiny, have consistent pipeline coverage, and meet their performance goals.

And when sellers win, so do you.

## Drive efficient, predictable growth with Outreach.

Sales teams that use Outreach achieve better performance and talent retention because they give sellers more time to work and close deals by scaling effective sales motions.

Discover how you can achieve winning outcomes across your entire revenue cycle with **Outreach Guide**.

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## Outreach

Outreach is the largest and fastest-growing sales execution platform provider that helps companies dramatically increase productivity and drive smarter, more insightful engagement with their customers. Outreach is the only solution provider to integrate sales engagement, conversation intelligence, and revenue intelligence into one platform. The only sales execution platform to make the Forbes Cloud 100, Outreach was also the fastest-growing vendor in the category on the Deloitte Technology Fast 500. More than 5,300 companies such as Adobe, Tableau, Okta, Splunk, DocuSign, and SAP depend on Outreach's enterprise-scale, unparalleled customer adoption, and robust AI-powered innovation. Outreach is a privately held company based in Seattle, Washington. To learn more, please visit [www.outreach.io](http://www.outreach.io).

