

THE INTERNATIONAL

Journal of Sales Transformation

NEW LARGER EDITION 15 PAGES OF RESEARCH-BASED INSIGHT, INCLUDING:

TRUST AND CONFLICT IN B2B RELATIONSHIPS... CAN THE CONCEPT OF MARGINAL GAINS BE APPLIED TO SALES?
+ SALES RESEARCH ROUND-UP

DIVERSITY AND SALES

Women who lead p6 / Claire Edmunds' personal journey as a CEO p8 / Our View p9

What it takes to succeed as a woman sales leader p42 / European Women in Sales Awards – selected winner interviews p62



P16 INSIGHT

**NO SUCH THING
AS NATURAL
SALESPEOPLE**

Prof Nick Lee

P18 REFLECTION

**HIGH-PERFORMER
BUT LOW
ETHICS?**

Prof Mark Johnston

P22 MY JOURNEY

**AWARD-WINNING
ACCOUNT DIRECTOR
SARAH EDGE**

Nick de Cent

P38 TALENT

**ACCELERATING
NEW TALENT**

*Dr Beth Rogers
& Bryan McCrae*

👁️ Bob Apollo on Building Scalable Businesses

The critical combination: focus, process and people

✍️ Bob Apollo

What can businesses do to ensure that they establish the platform for predictable, reliable and sustainable revenue and market share growth? I'm going to assume that you have a product or service that people want to buy. But that's clearly not enough.

I want to highlight three critical (and timeless) principles that have always seemed to me to be particularly important in laying the foundations for success in complex, high-value sales B2B environments.

1: Focus

First, and at the risk of being accused of stating the obvious, your sales and marketing activities must be focused on identifying and qualifying opportunities that are likely to want to buy from you. It sounds like a simple principle, but I never cease to be amazed by the amount of time, energy and money that organisations are capable of wasting pursuing "opportunities" they have little chance of closing.

Focusing on the right issues involves identifying problems or opportunities that – once they recognise them – your prospects will be forced to address, and for which you have a demonstrably superior solution. Focusing on the right organisations involves much more than basic demographics: it requires a deep understanding of the common structural and situational characteristics of your most promising prospects.

And focusing on the right stakeholder roles involves identifying and targeting the people who are most likely to act as catalysts for change (also known as "mobilisers") within these target organisations.

2: Process

You can't leave sales success to chance.

That's why today's most effective sales organisations have defined dynamic sales processes that mirror the way their prospects make buying decisions. These processes reflect the winning habits of top sales performers, and offer a constructive guide to all salespeople as to what they need to know, do, use and share at each stage of the buyer's journey.

This emphasis on the buying decision process is critical: it forces the salesperson to think about what the prospect needs to achieve in order to achieve consensus around the need for change. The best of these processes offer flexible frameworks rather than rigid guidelines, and they continuously evolve to reflect the latest learning about how sales success is best achieved.

It's hard to overstate the importance of having an effective sales process: it can help to dramatically reduce the performance gap between the best and the rest, and ensure that new hires become productive quickly.

3: People

This leads neatly to the third key principle: no matter how clear your market focus, and no matter how effective your sales process, you can never achieve your full potential without the right people on board.

It's disturbing to observe how often new hires with apparently highly relevant experience fail to make their mark in their new organisation. It's particularly apparent when people get hired out of large corporates into start-ups or expansion-phase companies; the cultural differences often prove to be unbridgeably wide.

Hiring for experience alone clearly isn't enough. In fact there's a wealth of evidence to suggest that, faced with a choice between hiring for aptitude,



About the author

Bob Apollo is the CEO of UK-based Inflexion-Point Strategy Partners, the sales and marketing performance improvement specialists. Following an eventful corporate career, Bob now works with a growing client base of UK and European-headquartered B2B-focused expansion-phase technology companies, helping them to find ways of systematically accelerating their revenue growth.

attitude or experience, experience is the least reliable predictor of future success.

In fact, aptitude and attitude turn out to be so important that they simply cannot be left to chance, and this explains the dramatic rise in assessment solutions for both hiring and employee development.

Eliminating avoidable error

When you think about it, these three principles are less to do with striving for perfection than they are about eliminating avoidable error: they are about not pursuing opportunities that are a bad fit; they are about not doing things that fail to facilitate the prospect's decision process; and they are about eliminating poor hiring or staff development decisions.

Striving for perfection may be an inspirational goal – but eliminating avoidable error is usually a far more practical (and effective) strategy.