DATANYZE & HUBSPOT PRESENT

The Sales Development Playbook Written by SDRs

Strategies on effective account development, prospecting, outreach and objection handling from successful SDRs.

Datanyze HubSpot

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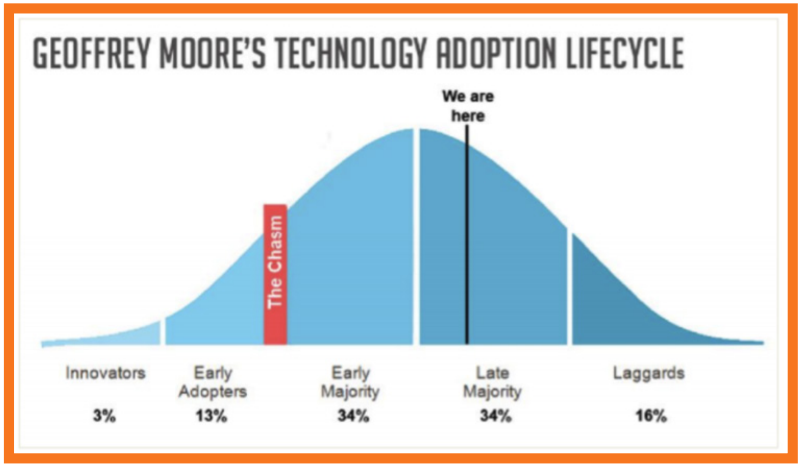
Introduction

Pioneered by technology companies like Salesforce and Oracle, the concept of sales development has since emerged as a proven tactic for reaching key decision makers and penetrating target accounts. According to a 2015 Bridge Group survey of 303 B2B companies, 63% of respondents reported having created a dedicated sales development team to front-end their closing reps with qualified opportunities. According to the study, this specialized approach to acquiring new logos has now entered the late majority phase of adoption and shows no signs of slowing down.

Aaron Ross, the bestselling author and consultant who helped Salesforce grow from $5m to $100m ARR, has been very outspoken as to why companies need to get on board with this type of thinking. He says specialized roles within SDR teams create “true experts...not dabblers,” allow more “teamwork and collaboration.” and ultimately generate “a structure for repeatable success.”



Why Does the SDR Role Exist, and What Makes a Great SDR?

Why does it exist? Because sales is so much more than a numbers game. Gone are the days of mindless prospecting, spray-and-pray marketing, and antiquated list buying. Buyers have evolved and so should sellers. Sales development represents a new middle ground between meticulous targeting and automated volume.

It’s certainly true that you need personalization and research to be successful. A quick glance around LinkedIn will show just how many different companies and opportunities people are involved with. Great research requires attention to detail, creativity, and time.
Deeply important to the role is also the timesaving, cost-cutting, and effective mindset of automation and volume. This ebook focuses on reaching as many people as possible in the shortest amount of time. These two mentalities may seem incompatible, and in a very real sense, they are. But here’s the thing: each of these mindsets is essential to you -- the sales development rep, and your success in the role.

Meet the SDRs

The goal of this ebook is to let the SDRs do the talking. We connected with several top-producing reps across the US, asking them to describe how they approach each aspect of their job. We drilled deep into each major SDR task by combining meticulous research from leading industry blogs and thought leaders, with anecdotal evidence from those working in the field. This ebook is a comprehensive boiling down of insight, advice, and best practices for newcomers and seasoned sales reps alike.

Leo Cardenas
InsightPool

Leo started as a former college football player turned personal trainer that decided to make the jump into sales. His sales career started with the NBA Atlanta Hawks which led to becoming the first business development rep at Insightpool. He's now responsible for overseeing all business development and the successful coaching/ training of the team.

James Daltas
SkyTap

James started his sales career as an outside sales rep via the E&J Gallo Management Development program. After witnessing the rapid tech industry growth in Seattle, he made a move into sales development for Skytap. James is always looking to connect with fellow technology sales reps to compare strategies and best practices.

Dylan Rushe
InsightSquared

Dylan has been selling BI software from InsightSquared since 2014. He originally hails from Ireland, but has also lived on the West Coast, and now proudly calls himself a Bostonian. Before his sales career Dylan was an All-American football player at Endicott College, where he received his BBA in Management.

Eric Gonzales
Glassdoor

Eric is a Senior Manager of Sales Development at Glassdoor. He began at Glassdoor as an Account Executive in sales and was promoted to Sr Account Executive before beginning his current role leading the SDR team. In the past two years, Eric, with the help of his awesome team of SDR leaders, has grown the SDR organization from a team of three to thirty three.

Alex Nunez
Gigya

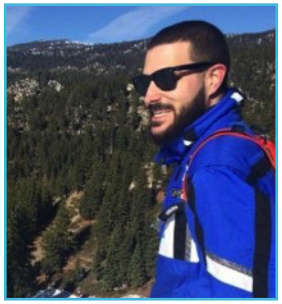
Alex has successfully worked in sales development at Gigya across three geographic regions and in two languages. Passionate about the tech sector, he looks forward to a fruitful career in sales.

Meet the SDRs, cont'd.

Alex Lentz
TechValidate

Alex has been working at TechValidate as a Client Research Analyst since November of 2014. He previously lived in Boston and worked in the hospitality industry. In his spare time, Alex can be found watching or playing soccer.

Josh O'Brien
Datanyze



Josh O'Brien is a world traveler, sales extraordinaire, culinary guru, part-time day trader, and pitbull advocate.

Michael Thomas
High Five

Michael Thomas is the founder of SimpleData a lead generation outsourcing company. Formerly he was the Sales Development Manager at Highfive.

Kieran Quinn
HubSpot

Kieran Quinn is an Associate Inbound Marketing Specialist at HubSpot in Cambridge, Massachusetts. When he's not following up with hot, inbound leads, he enjoys quoting The Simpsons and watching Derrick Rose try to not break every bone in his body.

Gentry Smith
Ambition

Gentry Smith is the premiere SDR for Ambition, where he is responsible for outbound lead generation, prospecting and nurturing leads, and devising/maintaining the "Ambition SDR Playbook." Gentry has additional years of SDR and Account Executive experience at Professional Sports Publications.

Caitlin Richmond
TinderBox

Caitlin is currently a SDR at TinderBox. She have previous experience at CareerBuilder in sales, account management and sales development and at Echo Global Logistics gaining experience in logistics sales.

Section 1: Account Development, Research & Prospecting

Account Development

If you're part of a more established sales development team, you may already be provided with what's called a "named account list." In this case, your goal is not to source new accounts, but rather to figure out a process that allows you to best prioritize these accounts. If this is the case, skip on ahead to section two.

If you're part of a younger, less formalized sales development team, you may be tasked with creating your own named account list from scratch. This process will first involve identifying your ideal customer profile (ICP), and figuring out a way to compile a list of companies that match it. The better you are able to define your ideal buyer, the faster this process will come together. As an SDR, how can you even begin to wrap your head around what's out there? Which companies should you approach first? Below we provide a strategy for building targeted account lists, without falling victim to list buys and other outdated tactics.

You know your market better than anyone else, so spend a day or two concretely defining it.

Alex Lentz
TechValidate

"When looking for companies to approach, I first create what I like to call the "golden circle" for our product. This circle represents the traits of our perfect client – in other words, the company that would buy our product no matter what the cost. (Here at TechValidate, we solve for the challenges of creating marketing content, as well as getting customers to speak publicly, so the characteristics of our golden circle are quite specific.)

From here, I use account development tools like LinkedIn and Datanyze to quickly look for medium to large companies that work with sensitive clients and have an established, but not overly large, marketing team. Using the "golden circle" (example to the right), you can easily forumate the perfect buyer persona and use tools like LinkedIn and Datanyze even more effectively."

Outsourced Account Development

If you prefer to spend less time finding new accounts and more time engaging with prospects, you may be a good candidate for an outsourced account development solution like Upwork, TaskUs, or LeadGenius. In this case, you'll still want to build out your ICP, but the research will be taken care of by someone else for a relatively small fee. Going this route will get you a similar amount of new accounts and, in some cases new contacts. But you will likely see a slight dip in quality, as outsourcers often take on many clients at once and are less familiar with your product.

Research & Prospecting

To be an effective SDR, understand your prospects before you reach out to them. Let's fully explore creating a comprehensive research and prospecting program with tips from successful SDRs. In particular, we'll cover how to find the right contact within an account, and how to uncover contact information for key decision makers.

A complete, targeted research program involves three tasks. Before you reach out to anyone:

1. Understand the product you're selling and identify challenges your product can solve.
2. Find the types of organizations that are most likely to purchase your product.
3. Find the types of individuals within those organizations who will be the most likely to purchase your product.

Once you've built a list of target accounts to pursue, it's time to start looking for the right contacts within each account. On the next few pages, learn tips on finding, learning, and researching the right contacts.

Michael Thomas
High Five

There's nothing more critical to a sales development team's success than understanding who the ideal buyer is. Building this foundation ensures your team is as efficient as possible. It's the difference between working hard and working smart (and hard). When building out and learning about your buyer personas, ask ourselves the following questions:

- What is the job title of my ideal prospect?
- Who do they report to?
- Where is this person "hanging out" online?
- How much experience does this person have?
- What current challenges does this person face?
- What are their larger vision goals?
- What technologies do they use to get the job done?

Be aware that your buyer personas are bound to be incomplete; the world is simply too messy to fit into quaint little boxes, and industries are constantly evolving to incorporate new technologies and buying trends. Do your best to get as much information as you can on your buyer and go from there.

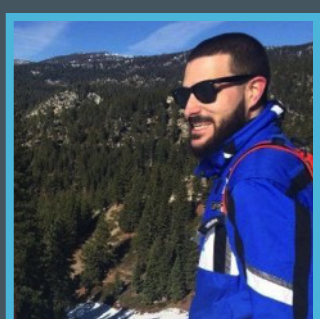
Eric Gonzales
Glassdoor

"Titles matter: Look on Linkedin for prospects with titles that indicate a certain level of seniority or authorized budget, then do what you can to find their manager or anyone senior to them. This can all be done rather easily through LinkedIn people search. Try targeting as high as you can with the expectation that responses from c-level executives will be much fewer and far between, but way more valuable.

Length of service: Try to target prospects who have been at the company for a while. In most cases, someone who has been in a role for less than 6 months does not have the power to get a deal done, unless that person held a senior title at their previous company.

Linkedin profile completeness: Always give more weight to prospects that take care of their Linkedin profile. Have they updated it recently? Are they in groups? Does their picture look professional? You can often able to identify an early adopter by how savvy they are on Linkedin.

Function/Department/Location: Strive to get in touch with many parts of an organization. If the US headquarters isn't getting you where you need to go, look for the appropriate contact at the UK office and go from there. In some cases, they may be able to make an introduction to a buyer in the US who was previously ignoring your emails. Also take note that titles in the UK or abroad will be different than in the US. For example, "Manager" is actually a very high level in the UK."



Josh O'Brien
Datanyze

"Use quotations: wrapping titles or keywords in quotation marks will allow you to search for an exact phrase "VP of Sales" and filter out all undesired results.

Be parenthetical: use parentheses for more complex searches when you want to combine an exact phrase with a broader search term. Say you're looking for a BDR or SDR: enter (business OR sales) AND "representative." Use AND, OR, NOT to return exactly what you want. These terms must be capitalized."

Getting Contact Info

Many higher up executives (like the ones you want to get in touch with) will not be as easy to reach as you might like. Below are Eric's tips on finding hidden contact info, including how to use an email finding service in conjunction with LinkedIn and your CRM.

Eric Gonzales
Glassdoor

"There are a lot of services that can help you find an email address. There's LinkedIn to first find the right buyer, and then your company CRM to see if someone else has already found the prospect's email.

If you can't find your contact's email address, try to find someone else's email at the company, then try different permutations of email addresses in email verification services until you have the right one.

Section 2: Outreach

You know about companies and individuals that are a good fit for your product. You understand prospects' challenges and desires. You've utilized software to generate tailored quantity wherever it made sense. Now, you actually need to talk to someone and convince them to take a meeting with one of your closers. But how are you going to connect? And how persistent should you be? What about your tone and strategy? Should you innocently offer up help or push hard for the sale? Are there any tools to help you out with this? There's a lot to think about, and a ton of conflicting information out there. Let's set the record straight.

Cold Emailing

The goal of a cold email should be to come off as a human being. Seek to make a connection and pull insights from your prospecting efforts whenever possible. Kieran Quinn of HubSpot poses this question: *How do you actually break through the clutter to stand out among the tens, if not thousands, of cold emails that are clogging up your prospect's inbox?* His answer:

Kieran Quinn
HubSpot

"It's not too difficult to get a prospect to open my email. The key is getting them engaged enough to warrant a response. Here are the steps I take to get more responses:

1. Conduct research to understand the company and individual you're contacting. Understand their product, and formulate your value proposition. To do this, find commonalities between the person you're about to approach and yourself. Check out the prospect's LinkedIn, Twitter, and/or Facebook profiles, and always let your personality/humor color your writing.

2. Bring value to the table, but be quick about it. Answer the following questions in every email you send: Who am I? What does my company do? In what specific ways can my company help the prospect? How has my product helped similar prospects in the past? Always attach resources that demonstrate this.

3. Solidify next steps. End with a close: "If this is of interest to you, when would be a good time to connect next week?"

4. Send a follow up LinkedIn request. It helps put a face to my name.

5. Follow up if you don't hear back after a few days. A simple "Hey Jared- I just wanted to follow up on my email above in case it got buried the other day." will work wonders in an email or call. Seeking to help your prospects solve a problem first, and sealing the deal later is an effective way of framing any conversation. Top SDRs are able to subvert their thinking from: "I need to make that quota" and "I want that extra cash" to "let me see how I can support this other person in achieving their wants, needs, and desires".

This human touch (nested inside an actionable game plan) is a recipe that will give you the best shot at getting email responses.

Calling Tips

Despite what you may have heard, cold calling is not dead – it has just changed a bit. Sure, things are more difficult now, because prospects are conditioned to immediately dismiss unknown phone calls, but that doesn't mean you're completely out of luck. You just need to be ready to break the ice when your prospect picks up. Read below how James Daltas uses modern calling tips in his outreach strategy.

James Daltas
SkyTap

"One thing that my team and I have implemented into our c-level cold calling strategy has been the adoption of MJ Hoffman's "Why you, why you now" approach.

Instead of following the traditional:

Hi this is James calling from Skytap, how are you today?"

and hoping that they stay on the line long enough to allow for an elevator pitch, I'll be a bit more direct and honest with my messaging:

Hi [prospect], you and I have not spoken before, but I was doing some research and came across a recent press release on your website stating that your team will be doubling the IT budget in 2016. I was curious as to what sort of changes you're going to make within application development. Is right now a bad time to chat?"

C-level executives hardly have enough time to answer the phone as it is, so when they do finally pick up, it's important to be respectful of their time by being direct and less "buddy-buddy." This strategy puts more purpose behind the call, and allows my messaging to resonate at a higher level.

Whereas cold emailing gives you relatively ample time to respond, there's significantly more pressure to react in real-time when cold calling. Having a written or mental guide that reflects how you envision the call will go, along with testing out some well-validated techniques, will help you tremendously."

Call Mapping

If calling is your main outreach strategy, and you're in need of more direct dials, read what Caitlin Richmond of TinderBox has to say about conducting "mapping calls" below.

Caitlin Richmond
TinderBox

"I like to treat the first phone call as a mapping call, and not jump right into the pitch. This helps eliminate calling multiple people in the organization, while giving me helpful information, referrals, and eventually the right person on the phone.

If you get a gatekeeper on the phone, simply ask for the appropriate person. When conducting a mapping call, feel free to admit that you haven't talked to this person before and want to confirm they are the correct contact. This will usually get you the right person, who can provide insightful information into the company's current processes. This can be extremely helpful going into a call.

Mapping works even better when you get a C-level contact to refer you to the correct C-level. Why? Because now you know the intrest is there and have a reliable referral to work with."

Objection Handling

Your life as an SDR would be much easier if prospects were fighting tooth and nail to answer your call. Unfortunately, it doesn't work that way. Common objections you're bound to -- no, definitely will encounter, should be dealt with by addressing and acknowledging the concern, then looking for ways to add value. Alex Nunez takes a tactful approach to objection handling below.

Alex Nunez
Gigya

"During my time as an SDR, I've focused on developing listening skills that help me spot, internalize, and process objections as opposed to using scripted, reactive responses meant to lessen the unpredictability.

Being able to quickly internalize objections helps maintain a natural flow to your conversations rather than breaking things up with an "If prospect says X, then say Y" canned response. Using scripted, robotic answers signals to your prospect that you do not truly understand their needs and will end in a hang up.

The key to handling objections is keeping these scripts in the back of your mind, but not actually using them verbatim. Listening to your prospects, accepting moments when you get roughed up on the phone, and taking in those lessons/experiences will help you develop a finer understanding of selling situations and the logic behind them."

[Author's note: for an in-depth look at a few templates Alex uses to overcome objections like budget and timing, check out the appendix.]

Similar to Alex, Gentry Smith of Ambition finds that that overcoming objections is all about how you listen, not what you say.

Gentry Smith
Ambition

"In my mind, we have two ears and one mouth for a reason and you're not selling until you've heard your first no. Once I encounter an objection on the phone, I do my best to shift the conversation back to the prospect using a three-step process:

1. Address the objection in as few words as possible.

2. Give a very quick ROI point that supports my counterargument.

3. Ask a pointed question to shift the focus back on the prospect and their challenges.

Example exchange:
Prospect: Thanks for the call, but we're just not in the market for new software right now, we've got a couple other things we need to see through. Reach back out in 6 months.

SDR: [Name], completely understand that it's never a good time to entertain new projects. We've actually seen X increase in Y with clients utilizing our software. Just out of curiosity, what other initiatives are you in the middle of now?

Always have a short list of ROI statements readily available and be sure to use one that is pertinent to your potential buyer. Simple questions will redirect the conversation, because my prospect's answer will more than likely steer us towards a specific pain point that I can then sell towards. Believe in your product, call with confidence, and listen to the prospect. If they slam you, there's always someone else you can pursue.

Section 3: Reporting

The life of an SDR involves more than just researching and trying to set up initial meetings. For example, you may also do inbound qualification tasks, and more globally, you represent the brand of your company. You are going to be judged on more than how often you book demos. Team managers will have creative and holistic ways of measuring your behavior and overall performance. Your employers are going to be tracking numerous ratios and percentages about you and your group. These metrics can be related to activity, effectiveness, pipeline generation, and (of course) results. All of these ultimately boil down to revenue. Here's how Leo Cardenas of InsightPool measures his sales development team and how Dylan Rushe assesses his performance at InsightSquared.

Leo Cardenas
InsightPool

"As a sales development manager, I strive to manage behaviors -- not attitudes. The right behavior will lead to the right attitude. Therefore, I keep metrics like emails sent, new leads added, calls made, and demos scheduled, but I reward based on what matters: demos completed, opportunities sourced, opportunity to close ratio, and wider team goals.

As for optimization, we're constantly testing email copy and outreach strategies. Every prospect is different, and there isn't one magic bullet. We're always running A/B tests to see what sticks and when. Once one campaign goes stale, we install a new process to keep things fresh and make it easier to penetrate accounts that have already been touched in the past."

Dylan Rushe
InsightSquared

"When it comes to measuring my success as an SDR, it's not enough to count the number of opportunities I sourced or the volume of meetings I booked. For me, opportunity quality is extremely important in measuring the value of my efforts.

Two leading indicators of quality are opportunity velocity and level of authority engaged. You can be clever about leveraging the data you're already putting into a CRM; use these metrics in your next performance review.: call to connect ratio, connect to meetings booked ratio, and opportunity conversion rates over time.

At InsightSquared, we track these metrics team-wide, but ratios per employee are also readily available so that managers can quickly identify which SDRs are the most effective. It's easy to drive yourself crazy ruminating on all of these ratios and percentages. And it's true that at a certain point, you have to just forget about all of this and do your best. Keep these numbers in mind, because when the time comes to advance in the organization, you'll understand the metrics by which your performance is being measured."

Conclusion

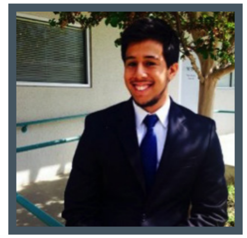
Onward and Upward

A major part of being an SDR includes constantly and creatively tweaking your approach to each of the sections discussed in this ebook. SDRs in various types of industries across the globe may find this a great start point to molding their own best practices, while others in the same industries can use these exact tactics to close prospects. At the end of the day, figuring out what is working for you and going with it may prove to be the most fruitful lesson learned from this ebook.

We've included guidelines, tips, best practices, and examples of what successful SDRs are using right now to excel in their roles. The business landscape constantly changes; slowly in some ways, quickly in others- and it's your job to be on top of it all if you want to excel.

Appendix

OVERCOMING OBJECTIVES: TIPS FROM ALEX NUNEZ



Not interested/No:
File this one under "invalid reason." Usually this is more of an emotional response to pesky salespeople taking up precious time. When you hear this, the prospect is dismissive, and probably did not listen to what was being said. A very terse objection, this one can be the most difficult objection for newer SDRs to overcome.

However, you have a good reason for calling the prospect and you already know exactly why the prospect should be interested. Tackling this objection requires asking questions to understand why the prospect is really objecting as well as maintaining composure in dealing with someone who clearly would rather not be talking to you.

Example: Thank you Mrs. Prospect, I understand why you may feel that this is not of any interest to you, however, I can assure you that marketing director at CLIENT X told me the exact same thing and now he is using our solution to do N, L, and C. I understand that improving N, L, and C are important KPI's for you and your business as well-- can you share with me why improving these metrics is not of any interest to you at this time?

Asking this question gets the prospect to think about your product and/or value proposition in the context of their business and role and also helps you move beyond the initial resistance-- usually into another objection. While it may seem undesirable to move from "not interested" to yet another objection, usually these secondary objections are of a more rational nature such as budgetary or timing concerns.

TIP: Speak slowly and clearly. Sometimes the prospect is not interested because he literally has no idea what you said. Also, "not interested" is just another way of saying "I don't want to listen." Sometimes people will not want to listen to you.

Budget:

If the prospect has never been in contact with your company and reactively claims that they can not afford your solution, then this is just another way of brushing you off a la “not interested” (see above).

The more reasonable budget objection occurs when the prospect has never evaluated your solution but is working with a boot-strap budget where every penny of the year is already accounted for (“....management slashed my budget in half, I honestly couldn’t buy your product even if I wanted to”). Sometimes, the prospect will say this to brush you off, but in most instances, it is a genuine concern. Again, it is up to the SDRs discretion, keen judgment, and SDR instincts to determine if the prospect is being sincere. In this situation, it helps to keep in mind that your solution’s ROI could very well lead to a better budget for the prospect in the long run.

Example:

Thank you for the insight Mr. Prospect. I understand why you may be hesitant to open up some budget for a solution you have no experience with. The reason I am calling you however is to open up some initial dialogue-- CLIENTS X and Y implemented our tool to solve Z and K and I understand that these are also problems for your business. Even if you do not purchase our solution, it would be prudent for us to connect and discuss the benefits for you when budget does open up.

The other budget objection results from the prospect having already evaluated the solution through previous meetings and concluding that it was not worth the cost. In this case if not enough time has lapsed since the discussions, it will prove very difficult to convince the prospect that you have an additional value proposition outside of a sizeable discount. If a few months have passed, be sure to reference any new clients, product updates, or use cases to demonstrate added value.

Example:

Ms. Prospect, since the last time we connected, we have improved our solution’s UE and expanded integration offerings. These updates are the reason CLIENT X just signed with us last month to increase T and R. Since you mentioned T and R as problems the last time we spoke, it would be great to reconnect and discuss the added value these improvements offer your business.

Working with competitor/Already doing it:

While it may be tempting to try and overcome this objection by attacking or devaluing the prospect's current solution, all too often the people we speak to were the same people responsible for completing the project we are hoping to replace. In these instances, implying that you somehow know better than your prospects or being outright rude and negative will be deal breakers.

In this instance, it is advisable to affirm the value of your prospect's solution and offer additional value. Additionally, if the prospect is already in the market for your services, it is his duty and best interest to be absolutely sure that the current solution is in fact the best for the business.

Example:

I'm glad to hear that you are already working with an online provider-- this confirms that you see the value in using such a solution to increase P and B. I am calling you because in addition to increasing P and B, we've worked with companies like CLIENT X to boost J as well.

Discussing the matter for 15 minutes sometime this week will either help you confirm that your current solution is the best choice for your business, or give you some insights into potential opportunities.

Timing:

This objection comes up because the prospect is preoccupied with other responsibilities and cannot envision making your solution a priority. Whatever reason your prospect gives for not being able to analyze your solution now, there are ways to add value on the other side of their objection.

Examples:

- Prospect: "We are too busy preparing for the Holiday Season." SDR: "Great, we can help you improve your checkout flow and guarantee smoother customer experiences during the busy season."

- Prospect: "We are waiting for the new manager to start and we will call you then. Asking your new hire to abruptly switch solutions after he starts can hamper productivity." SDR: "Buying now will help the hire develop familiarity with our solution and guarantees consistency in productivity."

- Prospect: "We are too busy implementing SOLUTION V." SDR: "Great, clients like H and D found that SOLUTION V works better when it operates in tandem to ours. Acting now will ensure that you can capture this added value immediately."

The take-away here is that there is usually a way to frame acting now vs later as a way for the prospect to get more done rather than as a way of slowing him down with yet another project.