Coach to Win

Using Data-Informed Management
to Transform Sales Teams

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Introduction

The numbers don't lie.

In sales, turnover is at an estimated 27 percent annually with a dismal average tenure of less than two years in many industries, forcing a collective $15B yearly spend to train new staff -- plus "another $800B in incentives" to support retention.

It's a rare sales manager who hasn't experienced this issue firsthand. Most know the pain of frequent attrition and the costly, time-consuming cycle that follows: recruitment, replacement, training, and retention measures to prevent it from happening again. There is no doubt that attrition happens for various reasons -- but it's equally true that salespeople tend to stick with high-performing teams and with good managers.

In our previous ebook, we discussed how exactly sales managers can use data to manage deals more effectively and reliably generate winning outcomes. This involves harnessing the very data that already exists within organizations -- from the potential buyers reps are contacting to the type and frequency of that contact. With real-time insights at their fingertips, managers can quickly step in to ensure reps seize opportunities that might otherwise have gone overlooked -- or course correct if a deal appears to be going off the rails.

In the pages that follow, we'll explore how managers can get the best from their teams every step of the way. This comprehensive guide covers it all: whether it's ramping up to the winning behaviors that should be your team's north star, using data to manage accounts and opportunities, or embracing the performance management process that ensures you can generate results.

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Let's Ramp Up Already

If it feels like it takes forever to ramp up a new salesperson to maximize productivity, there's a reason: it does. It takes between an estimated three and nine months for new reps to get where they need to be. That doesn't even touch the attrition measures required to keep people motivated and steady, whether it's a bonus, a SPIFF incentive, trips for high performers, etc.

So how can managers shorten the ramp path to save time and money? It comes down to frankly evaluating the data that exists within organizations so that smart predictions can be made and executed on. This includes:

• Looking at historical data on the behaviors and track records of reps who are ramping up. What did they spend time on, how long did they engage in these activities, and -- most crucially -- how effective were they?

• Leveraging closed-won/loss data. This makes it simpler for managers to build customizable targets and appropriately assign them to both experienced reps and those still ramping up.

The Next 3 Steps: Track, Compare, Coach

Once sales reps are onboarded and officially in the ramp-up process, the next three steps are crucial to fast-track them to maximum productivity.

Track	Compare	Coach
Track total number of activity hours, activity type (e.g., conference calls, onsite visits, email), contact engagement, and the mix of client contacts (e.g., by department and seniority).	Compare the data tracked with the type and volume of activity against team benchmarks -- and see exactly how well reps are ramping up.	Armed with these insights, there is now a real opportunity to coach reps who aren't quite on track -- and to reinforce the effective behaviors of those who are doing well.

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Leadership Through Performance Benchmarks

Once your sales teams are in a solid working rhythm, what are the winning behaviors that turn them from one-trick ponies into enduring Triple Crown studs? Any good manager understands the importance of making a clear, direct connection between the activities conducted by reps and the outcomes that result. After all, if sales reps know with certainty that a specific activity type, for example, has consistently resulted in getting to the next level with a prospect, they will absolutely do it. Part of outstanding management includes bringing reps along by demonstrating the value of the effort required -- to the organization and to them.

The Power of Managing with Leading Indicators

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But getting there requires leading with leading indicators, those behaviors and activities that allow managers to forecast accurately and adjust behaviors accordingly. Unfortunately, this is too often not the norm for most sales teams. According to research conducted by CSO Insights, 64 percent of sales organizations rely on lagging metrics -- revenue, new account revenue, quota attainment, deals lost and won, average deal length and size, and margins -- to measure performance. But leading indicators -- such as seller engagement and retention, client retention, and forecast accuracy -- are far more instructive and useful because you can take immediate action.

If you harness the leading indicators unique to your organization -- discoverable through tracking the activities of top reps and using them as your benchmark -- you can make an impact by:

• Identifying gaps in rep performance

• Run strategic coaching sessions

• Drive higher win rates

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Helping Zoom Accelerate Bookings Using Leading Indicators

Hypergrowth is a good problem to have -- and in a time of an abrupt acceleration to widespread remote work, virtual conferencing giant Zoom experienced it in spades. But with this massive growth came a distinct challenge: finding a scalable way to digest, analyze, and act on all this data -- including sales benchmarks -- that was now newly accessible to them.

Although the Zoom team was a believer in managing with leading indicators, their challenges were compounded by a reliance on manually updated spreadsheets. So they turned to People.ai's platform to uncover the secrets of their top reps. What did they do differently to earn their top slots? Using the activity data of more than 600+ reps, People.ai was able to determine that the most successful reps had 40 customer meetings a month.

With this, and other insights, in hand, the Zoom leadership team was able to achieve big gains in a short time:

• Increasing rep bookings by 42 percent

• Expanding pipeline by 43 percent quarter over quarter

• Upping the average meeting per rep by 37 percent

• $6M+ more in bookings year over year

By definitively connecting behaviors with outcomes, identifying key metrics, and building accurate benchmarks around the right criteria, Zoom was able to substantially increase pipeline and bookings.

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People.ai is a crucial GTM partner that's helping us shape our future, not simply react to it. It's played a key role in our sales team's success.

Ryan Azus
Chief Revenue Officer at Zoom

How Zoom used People.ai to Increase Rep Bookings by 42%

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Using Data to Get Deals over the Finish Line

Technologies once thought futuristic -- artificial intelligence and machine learning -- are actively in use today, with the power to act as accelerants for the sales engine. If you knew exactly what was working plus what was diminishing performance, you could teach, encourage, and -- ultimately -- turbocharge each sales rep by both inspiring them to bring their best every day and showing them precisely how to get to the win.

4 Ways to Win Deals (Plus Smart Coaching Tips)

In an analysis of more than half a million deals, the issues -- and their answers -- were crystal clear.

Insight #1
Deals that are eventually lost drag on 38 percent longer than deals that are won -- about 57 days on average. It takes about 151 days to win a sale; 208 days to lose one.

> **Coaching Tip:** That 57-day period in between a win and loss is the perfect time to have reps increase communication through email or in-person interactions.

Insight #2
Deal sizes greater than $1M typically close around Day 220.

Coaching tip: Have reps ramp up client contact between the 170- and 190-day mark.

Insight #3
Overall, compared to lost deals, winning ones have 29 percent more email communication; for deals over $25K, that email percentage skyrockets to 45 percent. The average winning deal included a total of 141 emails between the account and sales teams.

> **Coaching Tip:** Check in on your reps early and often to see how email communication is going -- is the volume and substance there?

Insight #4
For deals more than $100K, the odds of winning improve by 53 percent if you have more than 10 meetings. Lost deals only conducted seven meetings on average. And each additional person engaged on the account increases the win rate by 4.5 percent. In fact, deals that included two to 24 external participants were 400 percent more likely to be won.

> **Coaching tip:** Set meeting targets for reps -- and encourage them to visually map the deal's influencers to see relationship connections more easily.

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Coach to Maximize Opportunity

Relationships matter. But in the crush of trying to cover a territory with 10 accounts, each of which has an average of, say, 20 stakeholders to manage, it can be difficult -- if not impossible -- for reps to track how these influencers interact and connect with one another.

That's a problem for account and opportunity planning.

But with the use of data to automatically support relationship mapping, everything gets much easier. Now reps have instant access to must-have insights: who's moved on, who was promoted, who they talked to last, how they all fit and work together. As a manager, seeing these lines of influence allows you to plan more effectively and respond much faster as things shift. And being able to pivot in real time is literally the life-or-death difference in a deal won or lost.

Is the current champion of your deal under pressure from a different stakeholder in the organization? A detractor in one department seems to be softening under the influence of the CIO? Free from the issues of an error-prone, out-of-date manual process, an automated relationship map -- built through data your team is already generating -- gives you the power to have influence at the exact moment it will yield the best results.

And it opens up new opportunities to coach staff differently -- and more effectively.

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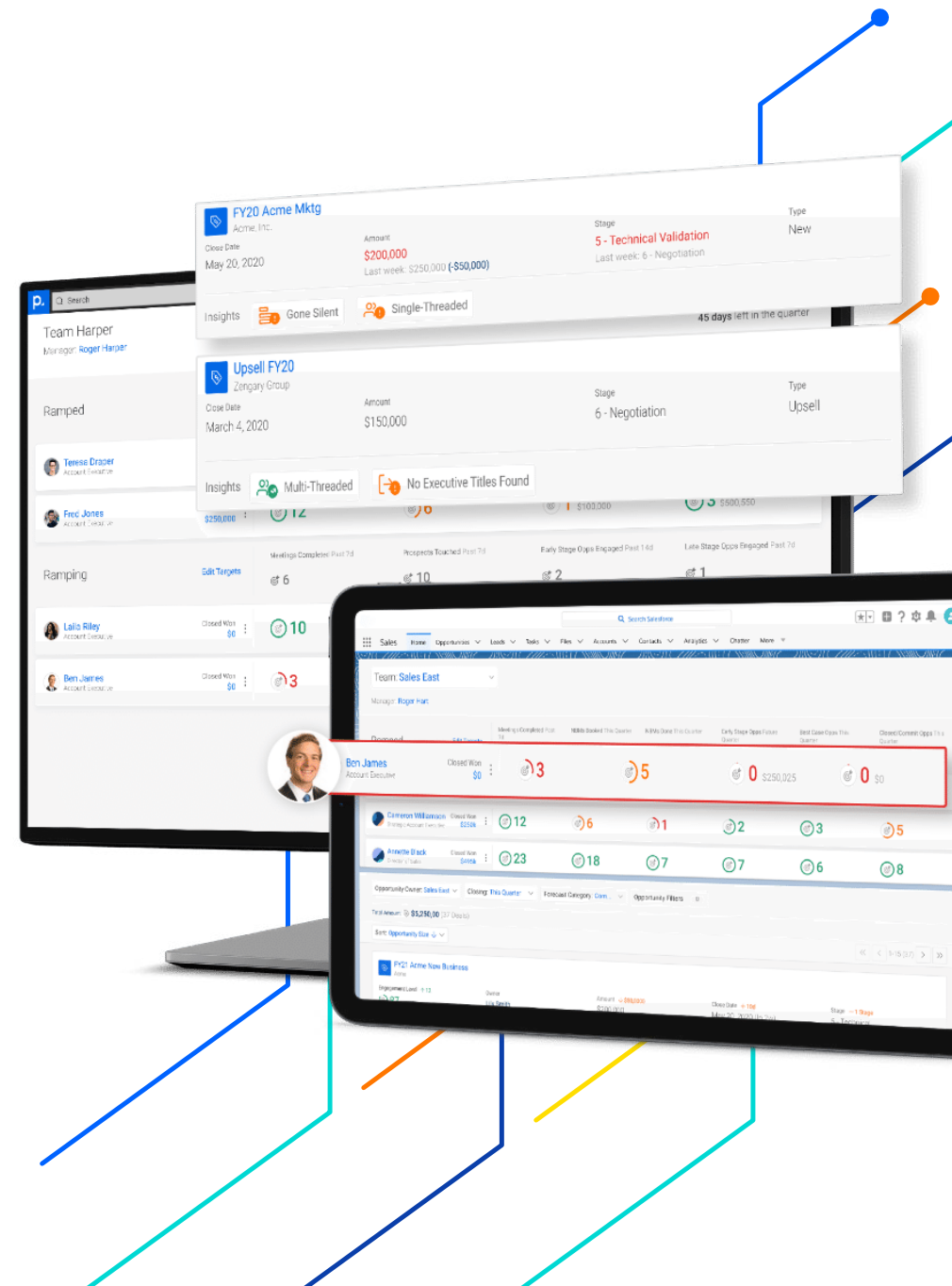
Use Org Charts that Map Relationships to Up the Quality of Your Team Huddle

Relationship maps provide great fuel for managers to up their game when it comes to team and individual "huddles" -- those meetings meant to inform, clarify, and provide direction.

### #1 Reinforce that although gut is good, data is better.

Too often, sales organizations rely on the gut instincts of their reps. Although having a feel for prospects is undoubtedly a sales rep's superpower, decisions need to be guided by data. Teach reps all they can do with an effective, automatically updated relationship map.

#2 Provide concrete suggestions

Sometimes team members need coaching on exactly how to maximize the insights from the relationship map. Ask them what they see as next steps with an account based on what the map is telling you -- and then give feedback. Perhaps it's asking for a warm intro to someone else in the account ecosystem. Maybe it's time for a demo -- or simply a lunch out to reinforce the existing relationship. Help your teams use the map to orient toward the actions that will have the biggest impact on the deal.

#3 Check back in

It's easy in the crush of daily responsibilities to forgo follow-up but just as it's crucial for reps to stay in touch with clients, it's equally critical for managers to keep tightly connected with their teams. Assess the outcomes of their efforts as they happen so you can continue to be supportive and effective.
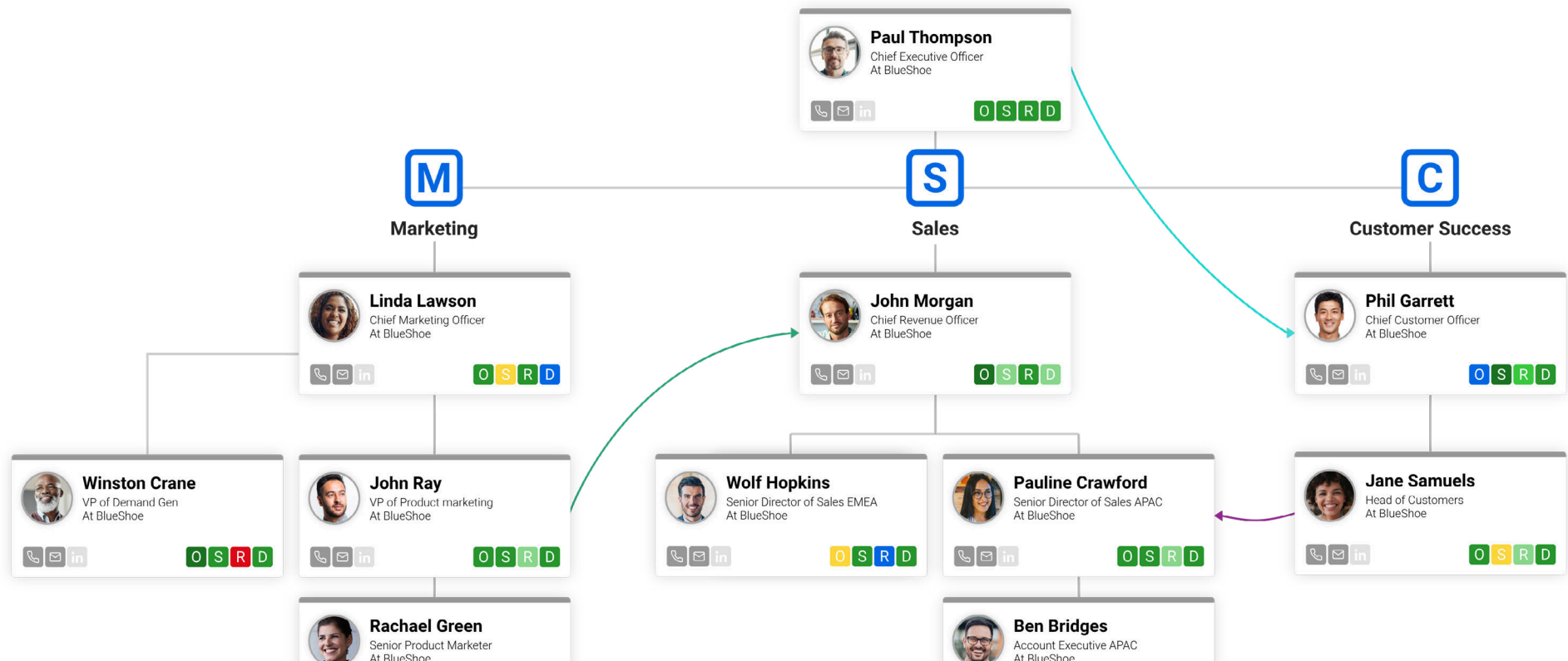
Data to Drive Sales Performance Management

What is sales performance management? In a nutshell, it's an active process that uses data to continuously monitor and iterate on the performance of your sales pipeline -- and grow sales revenue.

The catch? For this highly effective process to work, your sales teams need to be bought in -- because it involves assessing sales targets and strategies on an ongoing basis, analyzing leading indicators to stay a step ahead, forecasting trends and outcomes accurately, and incentivizing reps in a meaningful way.

That's where you, as a leader, are absolutely core to success. Your teams look to you for guidance, support, direction and -- fundamentally -- information. When you show them how this process will make them successful and set expectations accordingly, you can bring them along effectively.

Ultimately, a great manager can be the difference between a rep walking away or sticking it out. As leaders, you have the influence to motivate and empower your sales teams -- and with data to help support you, you can help them be more efficient, focused on the right things, and more effective. With a data-driven management approach, reps can find new levels of professional satisfaction -- and organizations will see improvements to attrition and the bottom line.

4 Reasons to Embrace Sales Performance Management

#1 Shorter sales cycles
Imagine sales cycles that are fast, furious and -- above all -- short. The shorter the cycle, the easier it is for teams to meet their quotas. Look for ways to embed tools that promote transparency and share performance data as a means of empowering reps.

#2 Create more predictable revenue
Reorienting teams to focus on the right leading indicators to drive the right activities, and suddenly it becomes so much simpler and easier to predict each quarter's sales outcomes.

#3 Stop wasting time
Any rep will tell you, if it's not an activity that supports a sale or customer satisfaction, it's not worth doing. Sales performance management makes it possible to pinpoint actions that are wasted effort so you can double down on what is making a real difference.

#4 Accelerate rep velocity
By looking at what top performers are getting right time and again, you can write sales playbooks that will deliver on their promises, set benchmarks for activities that will genuinely move the needle, and coach reps in a way that resonates. After all, most reps want to spend their time on what will produce results.

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Use Good Data-Driven Tools to Help You Check These Boxes

Ramp up reps

- Track activities
- Compare performance
- Coach to success

Lead through leading indicators

- Identify gaps in rep performance
- Run strategic coaching sessions
- Drive higher win rates

Strike when the iron is hot

- Use data to check in at the precise right time in the sales cycle
- Engage more stakeholders within each account
- Check in with reps on what they're doing

Embrace sales performance management

- Shorten sales cycles
- Drive predictable revenue
- Stop wasting time
- Accelerate rep velocity

Are You Ready to Meet Your New Revenue Co-pilot?

Learn more about how People.ai's Sales Solution can transform the productivity and culture of your sales teams.

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