

Sales Management Through the Covid Crisis - Processes

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This series: **Sales Management Through the Covid Crisis** has been developed by GXS Partners and Sales Dragon. We have combined our extensive experience in sales management and business transformation, to highlight key insights, in collaboration with senior executives across the region.

This article is the third in a series on how companies in the Asia Pacific region are responding to the Covid crisis. You can catch up with the story so far in the preceding reports on the problems senior executives have shared with us and strategies that are working – available at [GXS Partners](#) and also at [Sales Dragon Consulting](#). Now we turn attention to effective sales processes that support strategy and drive revenue. Executives reported the importance of considering new methods of engagement as well as paying attention to sales pipeline management. Critical to both is having the appropriate supporting technology.



Sales Process Design

From our conversations with clients across a broad range of industries, we see that sales people in companies which have clearly defined sales processes are better able to consistently and effectively advance opportunities to the next step in the sales cycle. This also assists with engaging and involving support across the organisation. For some companies, Covid has highlighted the need to align processes, not only with client-facing activities, but behind the scenes as well. Here are some further points to consider:

Adopt New Methods of Engagement

With fewer face-to-face meetings, companies noticed that their salespeople were less able to rely on a “winning personality” to develop and manage client relationships and secure business. Alternative methods that take Covid-related restrictions into account and engage with clients are being brainstormed and tried out. How companies are doing this varies. Many clients interviewed have increased the use of “insight selling” techniques, providing valuable information to clients, often supported by webinars, thought leadership and social media posts. Other companies are investing in account-based marketing (ABM) techniques to provide the sales team with qualified leads.

Sales Pipeline Management

The Covid crisis has really forced some companies to examine their structures and protocols with regards to the sales cycle. One manager told us that he had introduced strict reporting of key indicators at each step of the sales process from lead generation to deal closing so that employees across the organisation could get a good understanding of where the deals were in the sales cycle. Furthermore, inter-stage metrics were calculated and maintained to highlight bottlenecks and areas requiring additional training and support. In a Covid-era environment of fewer opportunities and longer sales cycles, enhancing pipeline management effectiveness is key to improving win rates and increasing sales. The value being improved visibility and ensuring appropriate allocation of scarce resources.

Commercial Management

Executives reported the increased importance of ensuring sales teams have clear targets and the know-how to evaluate deal profitability. This is especially important to ensure enough insight to evaluate where to invest more effort in profitable segments and clients. Some respondents hinted that yet more training was needed in this area. Having clear targets aligned to cash flow objectives helps to communicate priorities to sales staff, especially in light of reduced administrative support. Though these measures were in some cases already in place before Covid, for some it has taken this crisis to become focused on making the most of the benefits.



Technology



Can you imagine going through the Covid crisis without social media platforms, Google and Zoom? Technology can be an incredibly powerful enabler, helping organisations close sales quickly and efficiently. For most of the people we interviewed, technology has really helped sales teams and wider organisations to keep functioning. Though some, such as one education provider, described a steep learning curve to move their service to an online format, the experience has ultimately left them able to offer a broader range of courses than ever before.

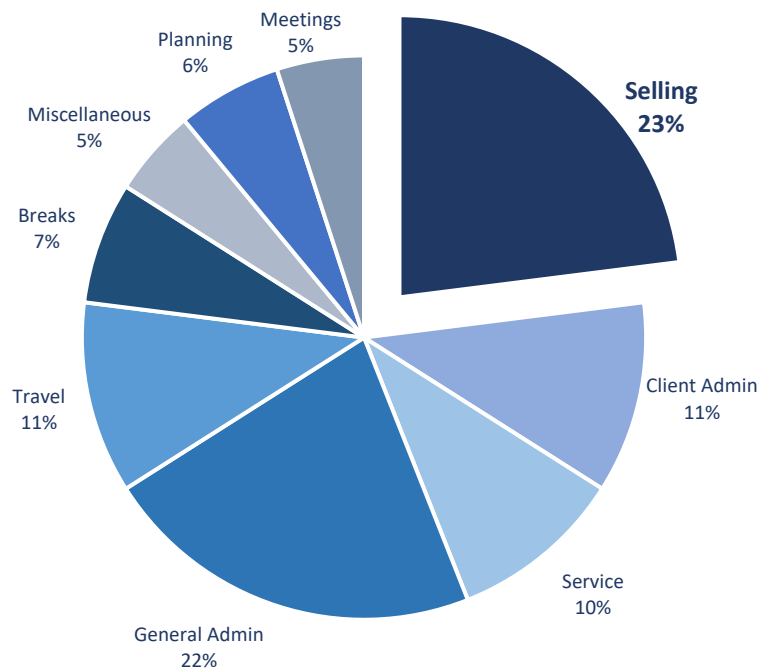
Exploiting Existing Value

Some executives reported initially that Covid had been very disruptive, but that the disruption actually forced them to re-evaluate their systems. *Salesforce.com* indicates that about 70 percent of CRM data “goes bad” or becomes obsolete annually. Companies reported updating CRM data as well as experimenting with automated contact database software to link stale contacts to their new roles. They further advised that the latter has been an incredibly powerful tool which has helped them generate new leads and reduce the time needed to prospect.

Streamlining and Automation

Research indicates that in any given week, sales-focused activities only account for approximately 23 percent of a salespersons' time* (see Figure 1). The rest is spent on internal processes – such as researching prospects, communicating internally, calculating pricing, preparing proposals, etc. Executives reported that, especially in the time of Covid and increasingly scarce administrative and support resources, minimising, streamlining or automating these processes to help free up time for sales-focused and more value-add activities has been a key priority.

Figure 1: Salesperson Time per Week



Focus on Value

Executives reported that in the midst of the seemingly endless options of technology solutions for problems brought on or exacerbated by Covid, it is critical to evaluate and clearly identify precisely what value a solution will add. Before making any investments, executives stressed needing to prioritise investment efforts, only pursuing and implementing what facilitates sales in line with the strategy and goals of the organisation.

* Source: Businesswire (2017)

This report has focused on some of the processes companies have been using to help them survive, or even thrive, during the Covid crisis. Our next article, will examine how companies are deploying their human capital to good effect at this time.

We are grateful for the input to these articles from our friends across a broad range of industries. You can also contribute to the discussion by contacting any of the authors or, if you would like to discuss how best to steer your business through the Covid crisis and beyond, we would be happy to talk to you.

Not sure where to start? Call any one of us and we will help you figure it out.

GXS Partners is an independent strategic consulting firm specialising in devising effective interventions for competitive advantage.

The name GXS is derived from the Chinese initials of “Gong Xin Shi” or 拱心石, meaning keystone; the element in construction which holds everything together, or in other words, the link between strategy and operations. We are trusted by business owners, directors and senior leaders to define the right strategic priorities and transformative solutions to have them realised.

With an Asia Pacific focus, we combine in-depth understanding of Greater China and the Asia Pacific region with our global experience. We have held senior executive positions ourselves, delivering market growth, running effective operations and transforming organisations to create value. We work with many of the world’s leading organisations in their sectors, as well as high growth enterprises and ambitious innovators.

Sales Dragon Consulting is a sales-focused management consulting and training firm dedicated to helping companies grow.

Sales Dragon Consulting brings 25 years of experience executing and managing sales and business development strategies across APAC. We’ve developed highly effective and proven sales methods working with top-level sales teams and winning thousands of mandates from major corporations throughout the region. We create experts in sales and sales management – we create Sales Dragons!

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