

# Sales Management Through the Covid Crisis - Actions

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This is the fifth and final article in our series on how companies in Asia Pacific are responding to the Covid crisis. You can catch up with the story so far in the preceding articles on the challenges senior executives have shared with us, the strategies that are working, the processes that are helping to drive revenue, and tips for people management, even in difficult times – available at [GXS Partners](#) and also at [Sales Dragon Consulting](#).

For this final article, we illustrate how sales organisations can adopt a systematic approach to deliver sustainable improvements to the way they work. Throughout their interviews, our clients shared that successfully confronting the challenges brought on by the pandemic and seizing emerging opportunities relied on evaluating and adjusting their practices in three key areas: strategy, processes and people, each of which has a primary focus that is helpful to keep in mind (see Figure 1).



Figure 1

While it is useful to consider each of these independently, in practice they are inexorably linked. No changes can be made in a silo. For example, a strategy targeting large B2B customers will require personnel who understand how to develop and close opportunities in that environment. That could involve account-based marketing techniques, more complex sales processes and collaboration activities, taking a consultative approach with clients, and understanding how to qualify your services and products, especially for new accounts.

So for any proposed change in sales approach, you can expect to have to consider the impact in all three of these areas. Given such complex interdependencies, utilising a straightforward three-step process of Diagnose, Design, Deploy can provide clarity and ensure that any and all actions taken support the overall strategy and will bolster competitive advantage in a joined-up way.





# Diagnose

Making positive changes within an organisation requires a thorough understanding of where the problems or issues lie. There is no “one-size-fits-all” diagnostic approach that can be applied universally. However, using a structured framework evaluating strategy, process and people can help ensure a holistic view of what may be holding back sales teams from being even more effective, highlight what works well and uncover interdependencies across multiple functions.

This in turn can guide the prioritised use of more targeted diagnostic tools. For example, we can take the question, “how can I know what sales activities are actually driving revenue?” as a starting point. One way to address this broad question is to choose a single area to diagnose, such as the “probability of a win” metric. Many organisations find this metric a key difficulty in sales pipeline management given its frequent lack of transparency. All too often when asked about the chance of winning a specific deal, many salespeople typically pick a number without a clear rationale when challenged, which is not necessarily a good basis for driving sales success. Using a well-structured but practical diagnostic tool allows sales teams to devise an appropriate means to establish what constitutes a certain likelihood of a win. This can help companies quantify this often nebulous number and gain insight into what is driving sales, and even forecast more effectively. One such example is provided below in Figure 2:

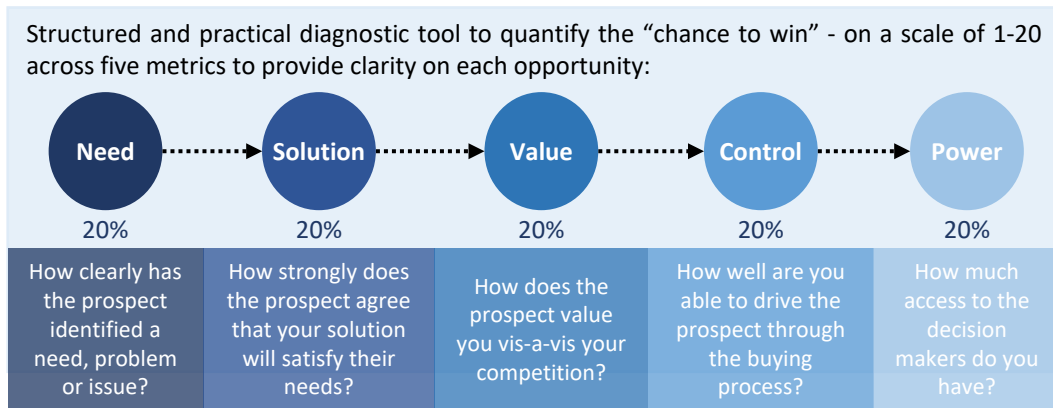


Figure 2

The findings of this initial diagnosis can reveal new areas for exploration. As iterative investigations unfold, an increasingly nuanced answer to the initial question emerges.

# Design

Once the problem has been diagnosed, sales organisations can design or select appropriate solutions. Key factors here include ensuring fit-for-purpose solutions (too simple or too sophisticated may not work), solutions clearly addressing the identified rationale in diagnostics, and a suite of solutions that can fit well together and into existing set ups.

To continue our example above, let’s presume that various diagnostics have revealed which activities at different stages of the sales cycle actually drive revenue. In order to better focus on beneficial activities and hence improve pipeline management, one possible solution would be to adopt the principles of transparency and tracking across the sales cycle. With the right level of transparency consistency applied, sales organisations can identify what actually drives prospects to complete specified sales. It is beneficial to formulate clearly defined metrics that are universally understood and reported. This provides organisations with the opportunity to analyse metrics on a regular basis to determine what is working and adjust the sales approach as needed.

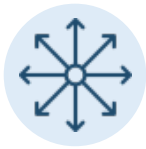
For example, taking a typical sales cycle as below (Figure 3), we can consider some relevant quantitative or qualitative metrics at each stage. These can be tailored to focus on specific issues, or areas of greatest importance to the business.



Figure 3

This model can be complicated or simplified as needed to fit the organisation and harmonise with other solutions. It can go a long way to developing a continuous improvement mindset.





# Deploy

Change can be difficult in the best of times. In a crisis many of the challenges associated with calmly trying something new or rolling out a different way of working are compounded given the additional pressures and the need to more rapidly address emerging challenges effectively. Successfully deploying practical solutions in sales management requires both effective project management and a clear focus on the people aspects, such as ensuring stakeholder needs are addressed. Key to overcoming these challenges is thoughtful deployment of any solution – clearly defining what changes are being made, when they are being implemented, who should be involved and where they are occurring. This can be addressed through a straightforward three level approach outlined in Figure 4:

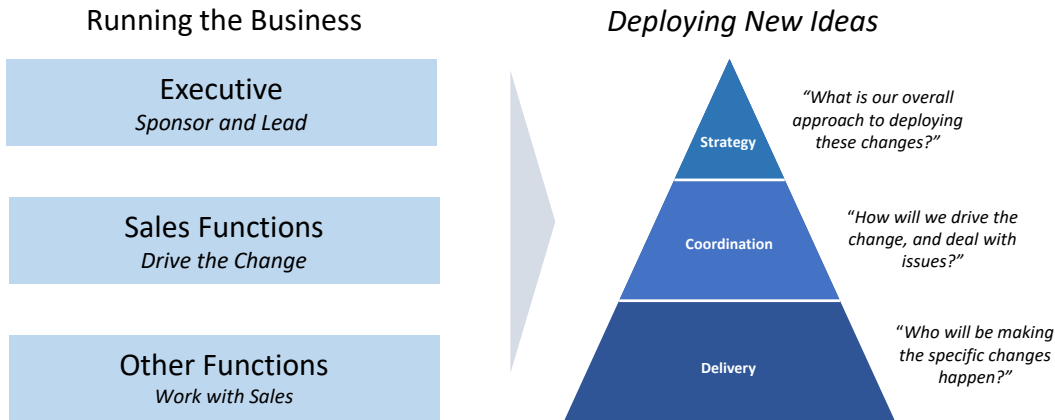
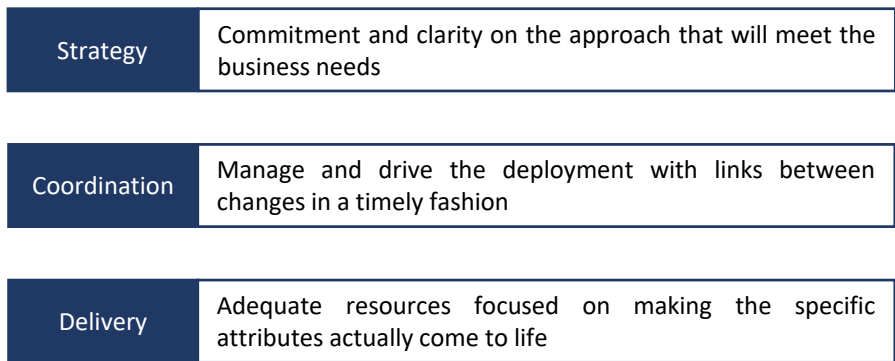


Figure 4

The foundation is making sure that each function understands its interconnected role, and how it contributes to the overall strategy. Our experience shows that is the essence of creating pathways for success across multiple sectors through the use of practical and fit for purpose techniques.

This final article has focused on practical ways to go about implementing changes that will benefit the organisation, both during and after the Covid crisis. In our experience, with a clear understanding of the problems and issues, fit-for purpose solutions and thoughtful deployment strategy, organisations can make value-adding step changes even in the most difficult of times.

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.

**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.**

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