



## Local Territory Sales Planning

***How and why to make a sales plan for your sales territory: Your plan for success***

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## 1. Why Plan?

In order to make the very best use of our time and resources it is necessary to plan the finite time and resources available to us at a local territory level. It is very easy to be busy but much more difficult to be busy and effective. With more and more expected from less and less it is important to think about how we get the very best return from that precious time and resource available to us from across our territory.

In addition it is critical to think about the sales process and the model of the sales funnel – we have to pay attention to developing the 'right number' of sales opportunities through effective planning in order to give us the luxury of the choice we seek – the luxury of choice referring to the decisions that we make about which sales opportunities we allow into the sales funnel and those we do not – the point is we have a choice!

## 2. The Key Steps in Constructing a Territory Sales Plan

- Understand the overall vision of the business and 'strategic guidance' factors
- **Establish current position – conduct SWOT analysis – analyse and evaluate opportunities and threats**
- Set the goals that we want to achieve – primary financial and non financial goals
- Define key strategies – the route we will take to move from our current position to reach our goals taking account of strategic guidance factors
- Set detailed actions by rolling quarter
- Identify the resources required
- Communicate the plan
- Set the monitoring and review schedule

## 3. Who is Involved?

Ideally all those involved in the execution of the territory sales plan should be involved in the planning process – key resourcing decisions cannot be made in isolation and all parties ultimately must sign up to the plan and agree to the actions and the part they play at a team and individual level – the planning process itself is a great team building activity.

## 4. Use of Data

Developing a territory sales plan is no different from developing a business plan in the sense that we, wherever possible, have to make decisions based on valid data and information relating to historical performance. These will include the product/service revenues and margins, account revenues, application and market segment revenues and margins, market share, customer retention / loss levels, key data from the Sales Funnel in terms of conversion levels from sales leads generated into orders attained – local territory market knowledge is essential in developing an effective plan.

The rest of this document covers in more detail establishing the current position and conducting a SWOT analysis.

## **5. Establish the Current Position – Conduct a SWOT analysis –**

One simple yet effective way to establish the current position of any territory / business is to conduct a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) analysis.

### **A. Strengths**

The strengths of your local business arise as a result of the decisions and actions taken internally by the business and the local 'team' in the past. We are responsible for our strengths – they are down to us.

List for example...

- Markets where you are enjoying rapid growth (outperforming the market) locally
- Reference customers with whom you have a strong relationship
- Guru's & key opinion leaders who 'sell' for you
- Products with a significant performance advantage that have resulted in more business locally
- Applications & Service offerings where you are strong
- Accounts where you dominate
- Accounts where you are growing rapidly (taking share from competitors)
- Relationships with service team for example – they pass you sales leads that result in business

Try to be as specific as possible when describing your strengths – use percentages and real numbers. Review your strengths from the customer's perspective – if you asked your customers to review them what would they say? You may have different strengths against different competitors

### **B. Weaknesses**

The weaknesses, like your strengths, of your local business arise as a result of the decisions and actions taken by the business and the local sales team in the past. We are responsible for our weaknesses.

List for example...

- Excessive discounting on market leading products causing margin erosion
- Loss of a key customer or customers to the competition
- Unhappy customers at top accounts
- Inaccurate order forecasting causing a credibility issue within the team / business
- Sporadic use of the Customer Database to gather and use key customer data
- Poor sales tools to prove the value of the company's offer
- Lack of knowledge of customers' workflow in key accounts
- Functions such as Sales and Customer Service not working together effectively for the benefit of the customer and the business
- Loss of market share in market segment X
- Failure to sell additional services such as support contracts, reagents and consumables to 50% of the existing customer base
- Lost track of location of much of the user base greater than 6 years old

Try to be as specific as possible when describing your weaknesses – use percentages, real numbers. Review your weaknesses from the customer's perspective – if you asked your customers to review them what would they say? You may have different weaknesses against different competitors

### **C. Opportunities (for Growth)**

Opportunities arise as a result in changes beyond our control in the market place – they are external factors. Sometimes an opportunity can initially be seen as a threat – for instance reduction in the size of the workforce in an account – however this may be an opportunity as the account may need to invest in more automation to both protect and improve productivity – hence if you provide automation this might be an opportunity.

Consider political, economic, environmental, technology factors in particular.

Some specific examples might be...

- Increasing investment levels in Science and Technology in the health and education sector (we have many such accounts locally)
- Legislation changes meaning increasing requirements for more analysis or more sensitive analysis in markets that you can address or are now able to address
- Specific accounts deciding to expand their research, production locally etc
- A competitor withdrawing from a market or experiencing serious product failure issues – poor local references
- Funding being made available by local, national, international bodies for specific research and development projects which your customers can access
- Technology changes opening up new markets currently using more traditional time consuming and labour intensive methods of which you have many locally

Some of the opportunities may be international or national opportunities that present themselves at a local territory level – other opportunities may only be applicable at a local level. We have to consider both.

### **D. Threats (preventing or slowing growth or causing business failure)**

We should consider the factors we considered when we were thinking about the opportunities only this time we think about these factors in terms of how they will impact our business negatively – either preventing or slowing growth or causing failure.

Some specific examples may be...

- Our major competitor has acquired the number 3 player in the market place giving them greater coverage and presence in the accounts we sell to
- A new technology is going to be adopted in a key market we supply to – at half the price and significantly increased levels of reliability
- Our largest account is scaling down its research operations locally
- Funding for a group of key customers will be increasingly switched to other areas
- The competition is specifically focussing on several of our large accounts

Some of the threats may be international / national threats that impact the territory at a local level – other threats may only be applicable at a local level. We have to consider both.

## **E. Evaluate Opportunities and Threats**

Evaluate the opportunities...we have to make an assessment, using data and evidence, which opportunities are most attractive and which least attractive. We must start by defining the size of the opportunity, the timescales to exploit and how accessible the opportunity really is. We must then consider what resources are required in order to exploit the opportunity. Then prioritise the opportunities – we can't chase them all at once!

We conduct a similar exercise with the threats we have identified. We have to understand which are most likely to strike our business and the level of impact they will have. What resources will it take to defend against them?

## **Understand the Vision of the Business Locally and 'Strategic Guidance' Factors**

Our Local Territory Sales Plan cannot 'sit' in isolation from the top level vision and overall strategic direction of the business – we have to take account of the 'bigger picture' and generate a plan which accommodates both the higher level and local requirements – this might be to defend certain key markets, attack others, increase margins of certain products, sell specific solutions...



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If you are interested in developing your own knowledge and skill set to achieve further success and make the most of your talents with proven coaches we would like to talk.

If you are looking for your next career move or wish to have some impartial and experienced career advice we would like to hear from you

### **Our Customers**

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European start up companies looking for additional funding, the recruitment of key staff or assistance with their HR processes.

Established small businesses to the largest international corporations looking to recruit train and develop their existing staff, review their HR processes or make an acquisition or divestiture.

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