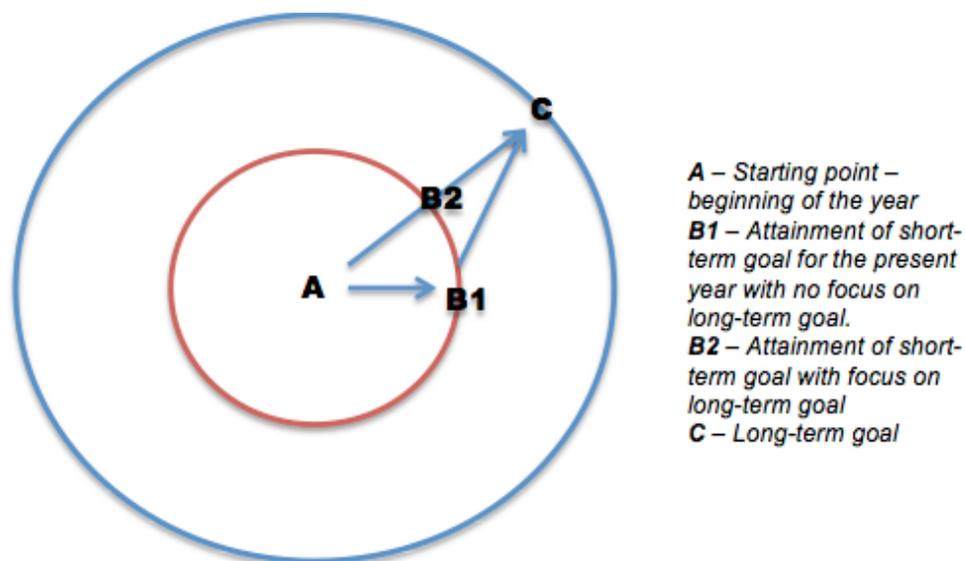


The Salesperson Plan and Coaching With It

The Sales Plan should be strategic and tactical, simple, not too long and relevant to the job of selling. The elements included in the plan should be:

- **Long-term goals** – a target, volume of business, type of accounts or products the sales person is focusing on attaining in the plus-two-year range.
- **Short-term goals** – results and activities that can be graphed and monitored.
- **Sales and Marketing approach** – specifics related to the ideal customer, marketing, differentiators, lead generation, systems, products and others.
- **Key Differentiator** – why people buy from the sales person and the company that is different or better than competitors. Consider WIIFT, What's In It For Them, the customer.
- **Improvement and Execution initiatives** – projects, training, education or events that will help you improve yourself or your chances of hitting your goals.

Why a **long-term goal**? Most sales people focus on the “here and now,” and their goals are very short-term. This is fine, and we will include short-term goals in the sales plan, but it’s important to keep an eye on the future as well. Having a long-term goal (anywhere from 3-10 years) along with the short-term goals will yield the greatest value, profit and result. The diagram below illustrates how attaining a short-term goal (B1) can add expense and effort to reaching your long-term goal (C) if they are not clearly defined up front. By keeping your eye on long-term goals as you attain short-term goals, you will build momentum and profit.



Long-term goals do not have to be related only to measurements or dollars. If you have a long-term goal of building your business by referrals, you must treat each sale in a way that will not only win you the business today but also provide you new business contacts for the future. The long-term goal of referrals will keep the salesperson focused on displaying integrity during the sale instead of taking short cuts or stretching the truth to win the deal today with no thought of tomorrow.

Short-term goals should be for the current year and broken down into monthly or quarterly targets. You should have some goals related to final results and some related to activity or results that lead to final results. Let's call the final results **lagging** indicators and the activity that lead to these results **leading** indicators. You will notice the examples below can be shown on a chart or graph. You don't want to include all the examples, more is not necessarily better, but rather pick and choose what will be most helpful.

Example:

Lagging Indicators

Sales revenue

Profit margin

Number of units

Number of accounts

Cross-selling revenue

Average size of order

Leading Indicators

Discovery meetings

Referrals asked for

Drip marketing touches

Referrals received

Dollars proposed

Accounts proposed

Current pipeline level

Calls made

Networking events attended

The Sales and Marketing approach will help your sales employees be more focused on their efforts—another major benefit in having a plan created and documented. In this area you have them consider the following and choose five to ten items that will hone their efforts toward their goals. The approach does not necessarily have completion dates or measurable targets like goals. The elements in this section provide strategic direction and any goals or initiatives should align with the Sales and Marketing approach.

- Describe ideal customers

- Define the target industries or niche they will work
- Define how they'll generate leads; referrals must be included
- Do they have a geographic market? If so, define
- Size of deals they will focus on
- Associations they might align with
- How they will build a referral network
- What they will be known for by their customers
- Products or services they will focus on
- How to leverage vendors
- How to leverage and support other departments

Defining your Sales and Marketing approach can also keep you from developing new plans each quarter based on the idea of the month. Sales people like to create and I have seen time and energy wasted on re-creating a new plan when the one already created was just fine. The new plans are not created because they are needed, they are created because it is fun to come up with new ideas rather than implement (the hard work) the one in front of you.

Key differentiator: This can be tough to define. Have your sales people think about what makes them different personally and then discuss as a company what makes the company different than its competitors in the eyes of their customers or clients. Take your time with this and find out what it is; it is the power to more referrals, new prospects, listening more intently, and sales people who understand the value clients appreciate. Value is what people buy, not things or services.

Improvement initiatives: Improvement will be related to self and business. What can they do to improve their chances at hitting their goals? This might include events or conferences to attend, trainings to complete, books to read, products to learn, alliances to find, or processes to create and implement. Improvement won't happen simply because we want it to. It's important to be intentional with it. Any initiative should help sales people attain their short and long-term goals.

The One Page Business Plan by Jim Horan, can help anyone hone their ability to develop a solid strategic and tactical plan and if you choose, have it all on One Page. We use The One Page Plan approach with most of our clients.

Monthly One-On-One Coaching with a Planning System

The plan is to empower the salesperson to work their plan. This coaching time is not about a sales manager dazzling the rep with a bunch of great ideas. It is a time for the rep to share with the manager how he is working the plan and what his/her next moves are. When people are falling behind in certain areas, it is the sales managers responsibility to hold them accountable and ask for commitments on getting back on track.

Keep your meetings focused around the plan. Resist the urge or leading of the salesperson to take you on a rabbit trail that is too far away from the items on the plan. Remember this is a well thought out plan and the only way to ensure success is to work the plan. If new ideas come up they might be just fine to pursue but double check they are in alignment with the long-term goal and sales and marketing approach. If not, you need to consider if an alteration should be made or postpone for the next sales year.

Chart your short-term goals. The short-term goals should be measured to utilize the data to manage. The longer you keep track of indicators the more you can manage to trends within a goal or how they relate to other goals. Leading indicators should be a good indicator of what to expect on lagging indicators.

Monitor progress on any improvement initiatives: I like to have people document progress made during the previous month on their initiatives. Many times all I need to do is review the progress and we don't have to have long conversations about the notes. Other times the notes will strike up a conversation.

Review the Sales and Marketing Approach statements monthly: If the plan is being worked well and initiatives are being completed, take a look at the Sales and Marketing approach to find any new work to be done that is aligned with the plan. By looking here you will ensure that new ideas will be aligned with the original plan strategy.