

# A GUIDE TO SALES PIPELINE OPTIMIZATION

**Pipeline management is a key factor in sales success.** A proper sales pipeline management strategy is critical for evaluating and improving the sales process in order to close more deals. A bigger pipeline is not necessarily a better pipeline – the ideal pipeline is filled with high-quality opportunities.

However, not every company has optimized their sales pipelines fully, and they may be following opportunities that ultimately are a waste of time and effort. How, then, can representatives ensure they're making the most of their leads and opportunities? First, it's essential to dissect the sales pipeline as a whole.

## CHECK YOUR FUNNEL DESIGN

The best companies set employees up for success by setting a plan according to data and analysis. Strong organizations measure inputs – a representative's sales pipeline or time spent prospecting, for instance – as well as outputs. Additionally, companies shouldn't ignore functions outside of sales such as R&D, human resources, accounting, and finance. It's important to consider: Are other teams efficiently utilizing their time spent assisting the sales function?



**60-70%**  
of B2B content produced by marketing organizations goes unused.



**95%**  
of buyers prefer companies that provide content throughout the buying process.



**ONLY 46%**  
of representatives feel their sales pipeline is accurate.

## UPGRADE YOUR OPERATIONS

To prevent the pipeline from shrinking, it's crucial to focus on pipeline flow, ultimately creating more opportunities won than lost. Are things stalling in specific stages? Companies should look at the average sales cycle both by individual employees and as an aggregate. Addressing those problems will lead to more success.



**+50%**  
the total increase in conversion rates caused by marketing automation.



**4-10X'S**  
the increased response rate lead nurturing emails receive compared to standalone email blasts.



**91%**  
of the most successful users agree that marketing automation is "very important" to the overall success of their marketing across channels.

Additionally, it's worth considering automation within lead management. Lead-nurturing emails boost conversion rates. If this can be done automatically – for instance, when an email is sent after downloading a piece of content – leads are more likely to respond positively. This allows both sales and marketing teams to focus on bigger priorities, resulting in smoother operations across the company. However, marketing automation is only useful when done right, which means tailoring thoughtful content directed at the individual audience versus distributing blanket and generic messages.

## MEASURE AND EVALUATE

Regularly measuring a sales cycle can ensure whether teams are closing opportunities quickly. Decision makers should look beyond monthly lagging indicators (revenue and profit) and consider leading indicators.

**FOR EXAMPLE:** "Proposals submitted" is a lagging indicator, while "customers requesting proposals to review together" is a leading indicator. The latter is a measure of customer commitment and engagement. Not every organization will have the same set of metrics, and it may take most businesses a few tweaks before getting to the right spot, but it's a worthwhile investment.



**107%**  
the quota achieved by representatives who receive at least three hours of coaching per month.



**46%**  
of salespeople win more than half of their potential deals.



**1 HOUR**  
companies that respond in this timeframe are 60x more likely to qualify a lead, than those that respond in the first 24 hours.

Consider asking former leads – now customers – what they thought of the sales process and the content they were provided. Would they change anything? Listen to the organization's executives as well. If they noticed a gap or obstacle in the pipeline, give them the opportunity to share areas for improvement. It's important to remember that it's impossible for sales representatives to close 100% of all deals.