



WHITEPAPER

EFFECTIVE **SALES** **PROCESS** EXECUTION THE SALES LEADERS GUIDE



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INTRODUCTION

Industry-wide over the past decade, sales organizations have invested hundreds of billions of dollars in sales teams – training, technology, information, and process, in part – to combat a global sales effectiveness crisis. Yet a Key Trends analysis from CSO Insights shows that, despite investment, sales effectiveness has been falling throughout that same period, to a current near-record low (as of this writing) to just over 40%. Meanwhile, process adoption is down, CRM adoption is declining, and customer relationships are deteriorating. The authors of another recent CSO Insights report joked that they could have named their report, “Never has so much been spent by so many to achieve so little.”

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**CSO Insights Research
Team**

Factors that can contribute to poor organizational sales effectiveness are many: A changing marketplace, lack of alignment between sales process and the customer journey, lack of sales and marketing alignment, sales team turn-over, lack of coaching, and poor or inconsistent value messaging.

However, all of these factors arise out of the same industry-wide epidemic: Lack of sales process. Throughout the sales industry, the old attitude persists that sales is an art rather than a science, that star salespeople are born not made, and that therefore an organization's sales performance depends on its ability to attract and retain these star players.

When George Brontén, the founder of Membrain, was building his second company, Upstream, he made the same mistake early on. He hired and fired, hired and fired, looking for the star players, the unicorns, who would transform his sales department. It never happened.

Over time, he realized that the problem wasn't the salespeople, but the lack of resources to support their work and, at the center of that, an actionable, measurable, disciplined sales process that could be used to consistently improve sales success on an individual and organizational level.

Achieving effective sales process proved to be the golden key Brontén was looking for. In this white paper, we'll explore why mapping out a formal sales process is worth the effort, how to do it successfully, and how technology makes effective execution achievable for any sales organization.

EIGHT REASONS SALES ORGANIZATIONS SHOULD MAP THEIR SALES PROCESS

01. CREATE A PATH TO REVENUE

A consistently executed and optimized sales process creates a clear path to revenue goal attainment. When your sales team knows exactly the steps necessary to reach sales goals, then your organization knows exactly the steps necessary to reach revenue goals.

By mapping the sales process and measuring the activities at each stage as well as outcomes, organizations can more easily see which activities drive which outcomes, and optimize those activities to drive higher revenue.

02. IDENTIFY STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

A clearly mapped process allows managers to measure and understand where individual salespeople are doing well, and where they're slipping up. It also allows the team to identify strengths and weaknesses in the process itself, in order to improve results.

03. PASS THE BATON, NOT THE BLAME

Finding and recruiting customers is like a relay race. If the team is working together, they race together to win the customer's trust and business. If, on the other hand, they're competing to pass blame between departments and individuals, nobody wins.

Mapping the sales process ensures that everyone on the team shares common definitions (such as "marketing qualified leads," "sales qualified leads," and "sales opportunities") so the baton can be passed seamlessly. Removing friction at the point of hand-off has the added benefit of reducing the inclination and ability to point fingers when something goes wrong.



04. SAVE TIME BY QUALIFYING OUT EARLY

Research shows that it takes 65% longer to lose a sale than it does to win one. Unfortunately, as humans, we don't like to let go of opportunities that we've invested time and energy into. This is called the "sunk cost bias," and it's expensive.

A carefully mapped and optimized sales process ensures that everyone on the team is very clear about what a qualified opportunity looks like, and allows them to understand immediately when an existing opportunity crosses the line into "unqualified." By cutting them out of the pipeline right away, salespeople regain the time they would otherwise have lost, and can reinvest it into developing more leads and nurturing more promising opportunities.

05. STOP FORECASTING BY GUT FEELING

Sales forecasting is notoriously unreliable. According to CSO Insights, average sales forecasting accuracy is below 50%. This is largely due to the fact that the data in the system relies on individual salespeople's gut feeling about which leads are qualified, the size of the deal, and how close they are to closing. Gut feeling is not a reliable forecasting method.

Mapping the sales process enables managers to hold their teams accountable to inputting clear data on where each opportunity is in the sales process, as well as key indicators such as the buyer's decision process, the level of the organization engaged with the salesperson, and the size of the organization. This better and more detailed information leads to data-driven forecasting which, in turn, leads to better reporting and decision-making capability.

06. KNOW WHO TO COACH, WHEN, AND ABOUT WHAT

When asked what matters most to the success of a sales organization, sales managers and executives consistently say the same thing: Coaching. Sales research backs them up: Effective sales coaching is the #1 driver of sales effectiveness. Yet many sales managers complain that they don't have the time and don't know how to help their sales people effectively.

A clearly mapped and measured sales process gives coaches the insight they need into what activities and milestones have been completed, as well as where individual salespeople need the most help.

07. CHANGE SALES BEHAVIORS FOR THE BETTER

Today's buyers have access to more information than ever before, which changes the way they behave. Most sales teams have not fully adapted their own behavior to match, in part because behavior change is hard. Mapping a buyer-aligned process allows sales teams to tap into tools that can help them visualize and reinforce new behaviors.

"If you want to teach people a new way of thinking, don't bother trying to teach them. Instead, give them a tool, the use of which will lead to new ways of thinking." ~Richard Buckmeister Fuller

08. STOP WINGING IT

To some extent, sales is an art, but it is also a science. Sales teams that are left to their own devices to decide what to do and when will never meet their potential. Worse, a disorganized sales force leads to inconsistent value propositions, opportunities falling through the cracks, and time wasted on the wrong prospects and clients.

To achieve long-term success, sales leaders have to stop expecting their teams to wing it, and provide them with a map of successful process that can be continuously improved.





A PRACTICAL GUIDE FOR MAPPING YOUR SALES PROCESS

One big reason most sales organizations don't map the process, despite the clear benefits, is that they don't know where to begin or how to ensure their investment in the process is worth it. Many organizations invest in methodologies, training, and technology in the hopes of solving the problem, without actually getting to the root of it.

Over the years, our team and partners have worked with hundreds of companies to map successful sales processes. Based on our experience and the latest research from organizations like CSO Insights, we've identified six critical best practices for mapping your sales process.

Step One: Understand the customer journey

Every effective sales process starts with the buyer. What drives the buyer's decision to consider change? What are they after, in real terms? What is their process for purchase, from the moment they realize they need help to the moment they make the purchase? Who is involved in the decision, and what do they need and when in order to make that decision? Once you understand how the buyer buys, you're well positioned to map a sales process that matches them step for step.

Step Two: Define stages and milestones

Most companies already have their sales process stages outlined. You may call them "prospecting, qualifying, engaging, and closing," or "engaging, designing, presenting, and fulfilling." However, it most often exists either as a drop-down in the CRM or in a book on a shelf—in other words, it's rarely operationalized.

In order to be effective, it must be brought into the daily workflow of the salesperson's job. To start, create a visualization so your team can easily see how the stages proceed. Then drill down further to map milestones within each stage, that match the buyer's journey.

Milestones may include steps like: understanding where the buyer is in the process, ensuring all stakeholders are engaged, and identifying which competitors the buyer is considering. For each milestone, consider creating scorecards to determine whether to invest resources in moving the prospect to the next milestone.

Milestones help salespeople avoid the common mistakes of presenting solutions and discussing price too early—mistakes that often have to be fixed before a sale can be closed, or lead to loss of sale altogether. Milestones also make hand-offs smoother, and make it easier for salespeople to know what to do to move buyers to the next milestone and thus, eventually, to the next stage.

Step Three: Build in skills and resources

With milestones in place, you can now map specific skills, activities, and resources to help salespeople move from one milestone to the next. For instance, skills necessary for identifying and connecting with important stakeholders can be mapped to the “engage stakeholders” milestone. Content such as case studies for specific industries, guides for positioning against specific competitors, and product sheets can also be connected to their relevant milestones.

Step Four: Align process with technology and systems

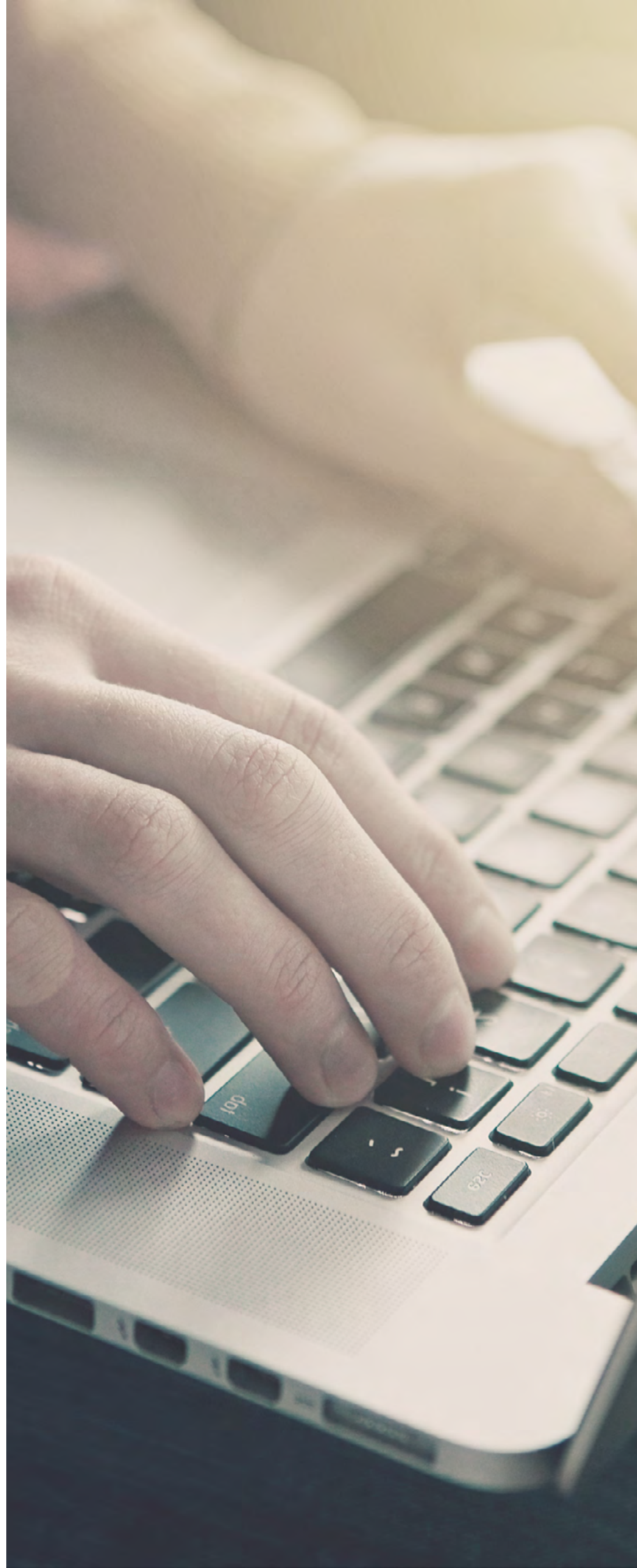
The right technology and tools will equip your salespeople to succeed with the new process. While traditional CRM can be useful to a sales team, top performing teams build technology systems that hold salespeople accountable, provide them with the right content at the right times, provide sales managers with the information they need to coach effectively, and provide sales executives with accurate data for forecasting and other business decision making.

Step Five: Align training to the sales process

Traditional sales training involves workshops and materials that are external to the sales process. With an effectively mapped process, organizations can take training to the next level by aligning skills and materials with the process in order to deliver training content and coaching exactly when the salespeople most need it.

Step Six: Continuously improve

In addition to measuring and reinforcing the process, the right technology system will allow the sales process to evolve and improve. Sales effectiveness software like Membrain allows executives and managers to quickly see where slow-downs and hiccups occur, and adjust the process across the organization to smooth the path. It also allows them to see what their star performers are doing differently, and adjust the process for everyone to match the winning behaviors. Over time, continuous improvement yields a highly effective sales team that easily outmatches the competition.



WHY WE CREATED MEMBRAIN

George Brontén, Membrain’s founder, started his first company when he was 21. He quickly discovered that the best solution in the world was useless if he couldn’t sell it. In the course of building several successful companies (and failing at many others), he learned the fundamentals of sales process that are outlined in this white paper.

He also learned that in order to scale a business, he needed tools and technologies to effectively model and reinforce the sales processes he created. Hiring and firing to find “superstars” didn’t work, and the available CRM technologies seemed designed as graveyards of information rather than dynamic tools for supporting sales process.
Step Five: Align training to the sales process

Driving behaviors and building infrastructure

With that realization, Brontén decided to create his own software to support the sales process. He designed it to balance ease of use with the power to provide insights to sales leaders and upper management, and of course, to truly support the mapping, reinforcement, and continuous improvement of the sales process.

Sometimes, to speed up, you need to slow down

There is no shortage of sales apps that allow you to email faster, call faster, and “easily do social selling.” Everyone wants shortcuts, but shortcuts for the sake of shortcuts usually lead to more waste. In order to truly speed up, companies needed a way to slow down to identify best practices and systematize them into a sales process that is easy to follow and optimize.

The right software supports easy implementation and long-term optimization

The idea of mapping out an entire sales process can seem overwhelming to sales teams who are busy in the day-to-day of getting it done. What Membrain does is allow even busy teams to map a skeleton process against the customer’s journey, build it in, and then use the information they collect from the system to continually tweak and optimize the process. This makes achieving a world-class sales process attainable even for medium-sized sales organizations. It’s also both less expensive and more effective than mapping out every detail in one giant effort.



CASE STUDY

HOW MAPPING THE SALES PROCESS BOOSTED PROFITS BY 50% FOR THIS MANUFACTURE

For decades, Scania Mining has successfully sold modern trucks into an old-line industry. As world mineral prices drop and the mining industry consolidates, the typical sales deal for Scania has become larger and more complex. Instead of selling a few trucks at a time, the Scania sales team pursues opportunities to deliver hundreds of trucks to buyers who scrutinize every aspect of the purchase, from fuel consumption and maintenance expenses, to driver turnover and capital budgets.

In this environment, Scania’s executives recognized the need to formalize and reinforce effective, dynamic sales process across the organization.

THE TECHNOLOGY CHALLENGE

As Scania’s leadership began the process of mapping, they sought out dynamic technology solutions to support their implementation. They found most of the common solutions to be inadequate.

“We looked at CRM tools,” says Sven-Erik Gustafsson, global sales director for Scania Mining, “but none of them really worked with the special sales process we developed. We have different types of key performance indicators, and many personalities involved in the sale. We needed something more.”

The Membrain platform gave Scania the tools to map their process into the system along with KPIs, built-in salesperson reinforcement, training and content resources, and the ability to continually optimize and apply learning across the organization.

THE IMPLEMENTATION

Australia was the first Scania sales region to switch to the new Scania Solution Selling method, supported by Membrain software. Membrain’s built-in reminders and reinforcement made it easier to implement the new selling process, so managers and reps adopted it right away.

As a result of mapping and successfully executing the Scania Solution Sales Process, Scania’s Australian sales teams began selling more high-value

services, making more sales to existing clients, and winning more global framework agreements. Scania Mining in Australia saw a 25% increase in same-quarter revenue following the strategy's introduction. Sales in the region grew faster than the market thereafter, lifting net profit by 50% in the first year.

GLOBAL EXPANSION

Sales success in Australia prompted Scania Mining's sales organization to expand their process into seven new markets. Membrain made the expansion simple, by delivering the tools and reinforcement necessary for user adoption, as well as the insights necessary for managers to easily coach their people.

Following success in the global market, Scania's sales process was expanded outward to its dealers. Scania now packages the Scania Solution Selling Process with Membrain and comprehensive training to dealers to help them successfully implement the approach that works.

GLOBAL RESULTS

In addition to supporting 25% revenue growth and 50% profitability increase, the Scania Solution Selling Process provides complete pipeline visibility at all levels of management, enabling precise forecasting and better strategic planning.



25%
Revenue growth

50%
Profitability
increase

HOW YOU SELL MATTERS



MEMBRAIN

SALES ENABLEMENT CRM FOR
TEAMS COMMITTED TO GROWTH

[MEMBRAIN.COM](https://membrain.com)