5 Ways You are Sabotaging Your Playbooks

Tips to do your sales playbooks right

veelo

Don’t Sabotage Your Sales Playbooks

A good, useful sales playbook is not a set of encyclopedias or a one-solution-fits-all approach. It needs to cater to how people digest their media and news today. Driven by social media and the internet, information today is consumed in short, “snackable” bites. With the technology available today, there is no reason your sales playbooks can’t be delivered like other forms for information.

Based on our reviews of playbooks from a wide range of industries, we’ve discovered several common issues and solutions to help improve your playbooks.

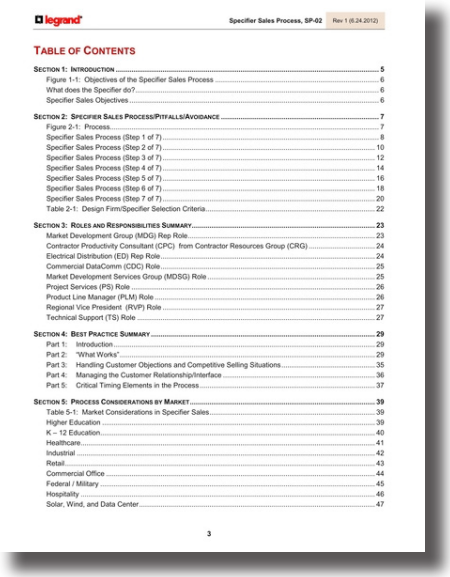
Problem #1 | Not playing to your audience

Marketers know intuitively that communication should be brief and informative. However a majority of sales playbooks seem to be the opposite.

Based on our work over the last three years, we calculated the average company sales playbook to be 56 pages! A typical table of contents is lengthy and dense. Graphics and hyperlink ability vary, but on average, we see playbooks like this example.

Solution

Don’t bury the salesperson with information and don’t try to provide everything to everyone. Choose a focus area for your playbook and break into a few, shorter versions if needed (e.g., vertical, global region or product). Make it short and engaging. Use technology to make them web-based and more dynamic. Again, think about how people seek information in their daily lives; quick searches for short, snackable information.



legrand Specifier Sales Process, SP-02 Rev 1 (6.24.2012)

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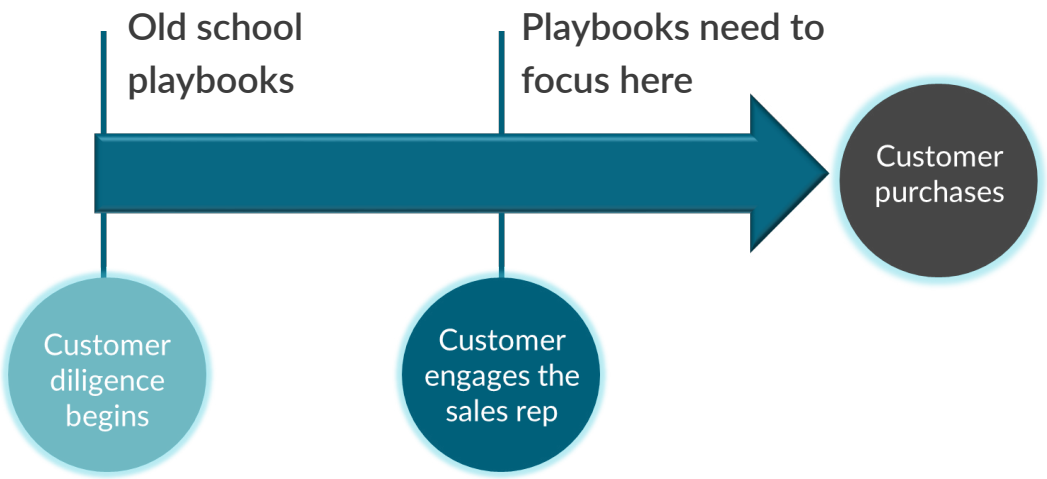
Problem #2 | Stuck in the past

The Corporate Executive Board estimates that the average B2B buyer is 57% through the buying and education process before ever contacting a vendor.

Playbooks today often resemble a sales process used in the 90s. At that time, sales reps were the main source of education for prospects. They explained the options, features, benefits and differentiation. So, if your sales playbook still resembles the table of contents and the sales process of the 90s, this won't help your sellers. In fact, you run the risk of annoying your prospects by telling them things they already know and never getting to insights or real value discovery.



Solution

The first stage of the buying process is often done by marketing through top and middle funnel tactics. This is where the customer self-educates. Sellers should be educated in this same set of information during their onboarding training period.

The focus of the sales playbooks needs to be on the portion of the buying cycle when prospects begin to engage with sales reps. This includes how to position, discover unrecognized needs, tailor a value proposition, provide insights, provide examples

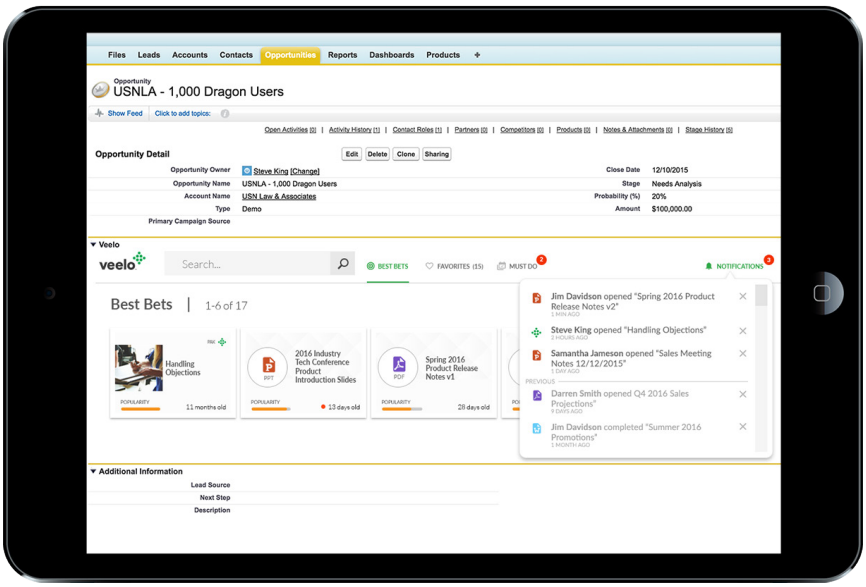
of best practices and more. Information should also have guidance on how to help the prospect buy, advocate for budget and build a business case so they can influence other company people involved in the buying decision. Finally, don't forget the basics of negotiation, discounting and navigating through procurement, legal and the internal order-entry/hand-off processes.

Problem #3 | Stagnant Playbooks

The average playbook is in a PDF or paper format. This format is linear and not how your sellers learn nor the way prospects buy.

A stagnant playbook does not address a sale that involves multiple decision makers. A recent study by Corporate Exeuctive Board shows an average of 6.8 people are involved in a buying decision. Each person has specific needs a salesperson must be able to address. There also can be 5-7 sales stages, and multiple products to discuss. Sellers need to be armed with contextually relevant information on a moment's notice.

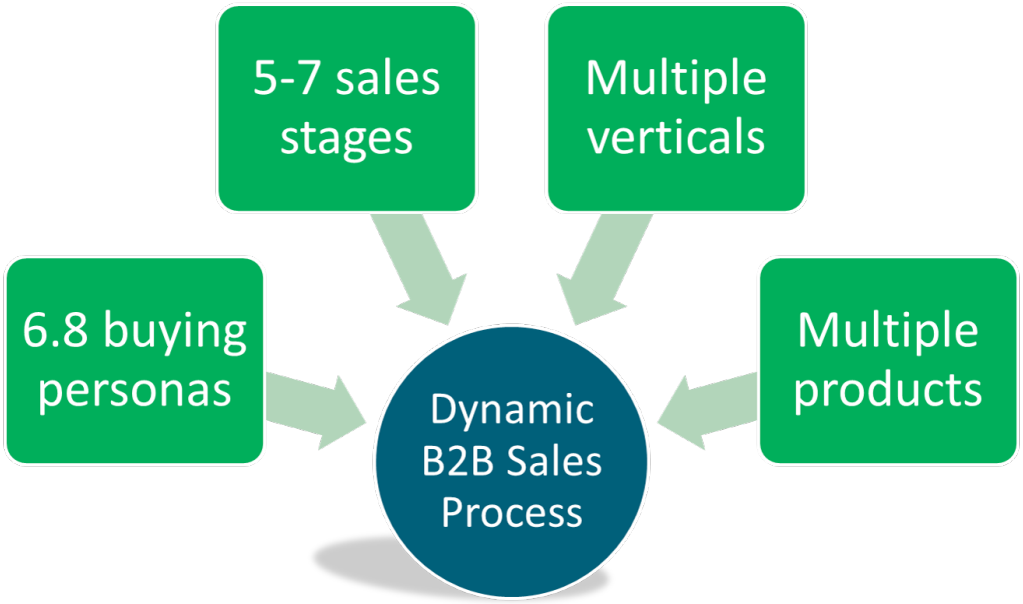
Also, consider what learning theory and brain research has shown. Adults learn best when information is presented when they need it. The best learning occurs when people are motivated, such as right before a conversation with a prospect.



Solution

Move the playbook to the cloud. Having information outside of a PDF format and easily searchable provides a more nimble experience for your sellers to find the combination of reference and support they need. The advantage to having a cloud-based, interactive playbook is that the adaptable format fits perfectly with how people really learn, process information, and retain important concepts.

Most Playbooks are Static ... But They Need to be Dynamic!



Best Practices for Building Playbooks

1. Make information easy to find when sales reps are motivated (such as before a sales call) and need it most. Have it accessible from anywhere at anytime.
2. Present and suggest information in their workflow and in context. Quickly deliver the information for the exact context. Vertical X, Buyer Y, Product Z,..
3. Incorporate short, interactive coaching modules that can be consumed in less than five minutes to provide examples that can be practiced and adopted.
4. Add playbooks to your CRM. Use technology to prompt playbook elements by sales stage, opportunity type and persona.
5. Track and pay attention to feedback so you know what assets salespeople are using to close deals.

Problem #4 | A real business objective for your sales playbook

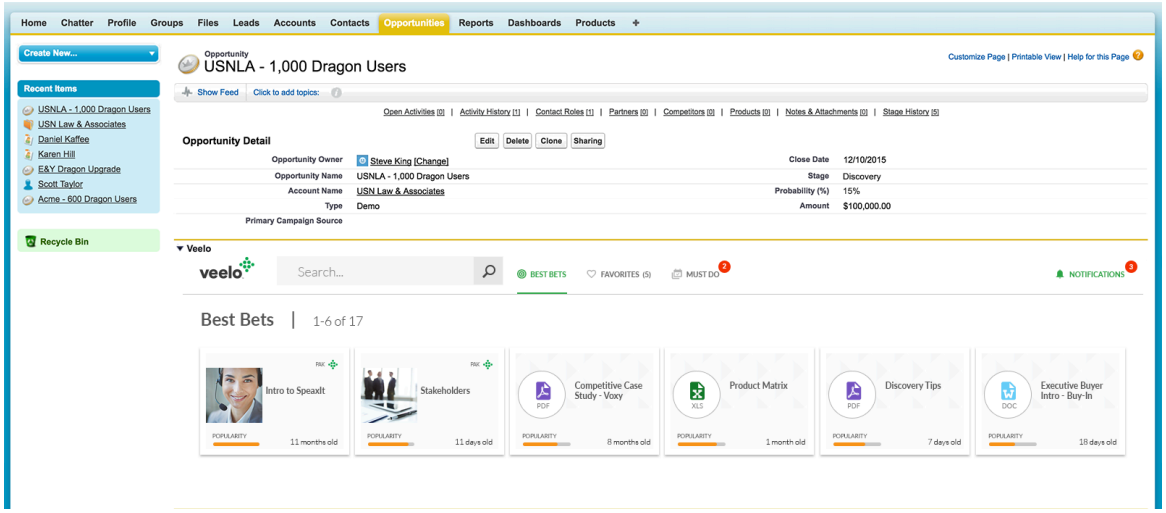
The old adage that "you get what you measure" applies even to the sales playbook. The average cost to produce one is $50K.

It's important to build a business case for your playbook. The most common objective we hear from companies (even the most sophisticated ones) about their sales playbooks is to have sales use it more. Rather, wouldn't the objective be about better equipping the sales reps with specific information and guidance that leads to an increase in pipeline or won deals?

Most companies don't have a great way to measure their playbooks. Often it is measured by number of downloads and/or word of mouth. Obviously, just because information is downloaded, doesn't mean it was read or embraced.

Solution

Start with clear business objectives. Is this playbook helping you to launch a new product, build pipeline for a product line or continue to expand existing accounts? Treat a sales playbook initiative as you would any other goal and make it SMART: specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-bound.



A cloud-based playbook allows you to continually measure, tweak and optimize your playbooks. When it is integrated inside your CRM, it's possible to correlate the tool's use to revenue impact.

One aditional tip. Make sure to manage expectations. Is this is a formal goal or baseline testing? It's best to establish a baseline first. Once you start measuring, you'll have actual data to make real improvements.

Problem #5 | No maintenance plan

Creating an effective playbook is not a one-time project that can be checked off the list.

If the information becomes dated, sellers lose confidence in the asset and abandon it all together. Or, if they do use the playbook, they could be completely off message and not selling the right value.

Solution

Plan your sales playbook (and budget for it) as a program, not a one-time sales asset. Know that aspects of your playbook will change over time. For instance, devote time each month to reviewing usage data and seller feedback for what is working. Coordinate content updates and improvements with product marketing. Then, correlate the usage with deals won and make changes along the way.

How Often and Which Playbook Elements Should Change?

- Frequently – Common for new product and specification updates
- Occasionally – New case studies, graphs, and success stories
- Rarely – Information, such as the company story, will stay the same for years

Summary

Selling today is more complex and individualized than ever, which means that the amount of information a sales person has to manage continues to expand and grow. High performing companies invest in their salespeople and having an effective, dynamic sales playbook is one of the best practices we see repeatedly.

With today's playbooks, we now have the ability to dynamically mix and match content to fit a buyer persona and specific industry. Being able to have just the right conversation, at the right time with a buyer is invaluable.

Veelo is a sales performance platform that improves the performance of individual sellers by guiding the seller on what to know, say and do. Veelo enables sellers to have better selling conversations by providing them with content, coaching and knowledge, in context and in the moment they need it. Our machine learning algorithm powers recommendations that deliver the most relevant content so sellers don't have to search for it, and Veelo uniquely also provides coaching alongside content so sellers stay on message and sell value. Built on brain science, Veelo uses techniques that have been proven to increase knowledge retention and reinforce desired sales behaviors. Companies like Google, Xerox, Siemens and Qorvo use Veelo to help their sales reps have better selling conversations and reach quota faster. Learn more at http://veeloinc.com.