

# 5 COVID-19 SALES HABITS FOR NOW AND LATER



## Crises are Often Incentives for Innovation

*Your salespeople are developing new habits; are they what you want?*

The process of professional selling has been changing rapidly. The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the innovations that were already being implemented. Five of them are critical for any B2B sales organization and many will apply to all sales situations. These are permanent shifts. They may be replaced later, but there is no going back to the old way of doing things.

### THE BASICS

Salespeople are humans and the number one aspect of human behavior is habits. Every day we execute thousands of tasks without thinking at the conscious level. For instance, have you ever circled back around to see if you really closed the garage door? And did you find it closed?

Our minds are not binary like a computer. They are capable of “running programs in the background” like our computers do. Habits are neural pathways that respond based on specific stimuli. Habits are neither good nor bad; they are simply conditioned behavior.

## The Five COVID-19 Sales Habits for Now and Later:

1. Begin with Outcome – The Destination
2. Kaizen – The Route
3. Tools – Making It Happen
4. Who Else? | What Else? – Travelling Companions
5. Win/Win/Win – Making the Journey Worthwhile

### Begin with Outcome

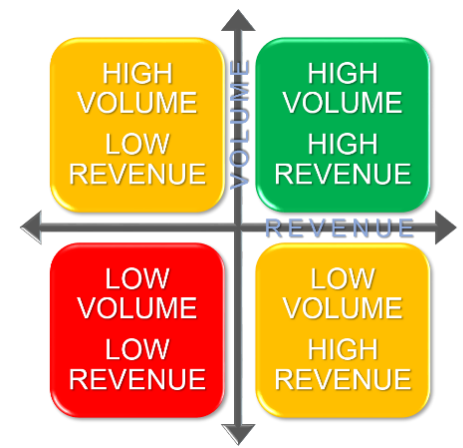
Where do you want to go? For organizations and individuals, this is an important question. The answer creates focus, increases productivity and can positively impact profitability by eliminating waste.

Where your organization want to go must be determined by what your target customers’ desired destinations are. Sales is the process of helping customers have what they want. This is a three-step process:

1. What are your target industries?

2. How do you define the best accounts within those industries?
3. How will you prioritize those accounts?

Consider using the matrix on the right or developing one with your own criteria. This can be used for all three steps above. Here the highest priority would be the industries and accounts in the upper right and the lowest would be the ones in the lower left. In the post-pandemic environment, analytics can prevent poor decisions which will only make things worse.



This is one of many post-pandemic sales habits that need to become familiar and repeated. The initial assumptions may change as more unintended and unforeseen consequences emerge. Concentrate your energies on the areas of fastest, greatest potential.

#### How-To

Begin with an industry-focused needs analysis. Your leadership team is usually best equipped to perform this task. The industries that were the strongest going into the pandemic may or may not be the healthiest coming out of it. Examine industry web sites, industry journals as well as similar resources for the industries they serve. *For instance, study the residential widow industry as well as the projected growth in new home sales.*

## Kaizen/Lean for Sales

For too long, the sales department was treated like the corporate stepchild. New processes were introduced in operations that allowed products to be manufactured better and faster. Inventory control processes, like JIT, streamlined manufacturing while reducing costs. Accounting processes were built on GAAP (Generally Accepted Accounting Principles) and new ways of categorizing and executing different functions helped the corporate bottom line.

Using GASP, the sales version of GAAP, can reveal new processes that can become fundamental in your sales model. Sales is a science and can be improved by paying close attention to the details.

No two salespeople are the same and no two customers are the same. No customer is the same on subsequent visits. However, using the same principles of professional selling, every salesperson can succeed. The secret is in the fundamentals. As long as the fundamentals are covered thoroughly, the outcome of the sales process has the best chance of being successful.

An example is the implementation of Lean or Kaizen in manufacturing and other operational areas. Products were manufactured better, faster and at a lower cost.

Unfortunately, the same process was not taken onto many sales departments who only used the advantage of lower cost to sell at lower prices. They used the shorter lead times as a benefit for the customer without asking more from the buyer.

The mantra for Kaizen for Sales is “*Better, Faster, Lower Cost.*” Every sales call needs to be better than the last, within a shorter sales cycle and with lower expenditures.

## Tools: Digital, Calculators, Configurators, Apps

Younger workers are more comfortable with technology than older ones, as a rule. Seasoned sales professionals have experience that younger people lack. While new salespeople may be more comfortable communicating with their thumbs and senior salespeople want to use their tongues, all that matters is how the customer wants to receive information.

Having a library of digital tools, sales professionals can make better, faster and lower cost sales calls and do so the way the customer chooses to receive information.

Awesome examples abound in this category. Digital tools can be designed to differentiate the vendor during a face-to-face call, to make more effective video calls and for the customer or prospect to use discreetly on the vendor’s web site. Again, the focus is on analytics, not estimates using customer-provided inputs.

## Who Else? | What Else?

Keep an ongoing discussion focusing on these two issues: “Who else could we be selling to?” “What else could we be offering?” Answering the “who else” question creates horizontal growth through an expanded customer base. Answering the “what else?” question creates vertical growth by increasing the revenue from each customer. Combining the two creates exponential growth.

One approach for identifying these opportunities is to consider the customers’ desire for single sourcing. Qualifying and quantifying the value of single sourcing can make it more desirable for customers who are reluctant to trust one vendor with providing too many resources.

Another approach is to provide modules or assemblies rather than parts and pieces. Equipping your salespeople with the training and tools to quantify the value of this method can make it more successful.

The most advanced approach is to examine your customer’s supply chain. Where are the strengths and weakness? Could you partner with some of the customer’s other vendors to offer a more advantageous option? *For instance, if you sold bicycle tires, rather than*

*sell to the bike manufacturer, sell to the wheel company so the bike maker would receive a complete assembly, saving time, labor, inventory and other costs.*

## Win/Win/Win

Rethink all elements of your sales process. Everyone wants to win and deserves to win. Most people want to win big – or at least on par with others.

A thorough cost justification gives the customer the data they need to realize they are winning even though they are paying a higher price.

The organization needs to have winning season, based on their criteria for winning.

Salespeople and sales professionals must feel as though they are winning. They have interests in both other entities: customers and the organization they represent. Perhaps some of the greatest changes are happening in this area, many were emerging when the pandemic arrived. Bottom-up sales planning is the best.

- Unique compensation plan for each person. Every salesperson is different, and their accounts may vary significantly from each other. Each sales professional submits their compensation program and a negotiation follows. The plan should include a penalty for non-performance and a significant reward for exceeding agreed-upon objectives.
- No more annual sales plans. The frequency of change is making it more difficult and more unrealistic for salespeople to submit plans for a year in advance. The pandemic wiped out this type of planning. Instead, use a rolling X-month plan where “X” represents three sales cycles. Each month drop off one month and add another. The number of months is equal the three sales cycles. Example: if your sales cycle from lead to close is one month, the salesperson would be responsible for a rolling three-month period and no monthly exceptions would be made for any of those months unless there were justifiable circumstances. Sales above quota each month would be rewarded. As each month ends, another one is added. Subsequent months can still be altered; however, the annual sales objective does not change.

## Summary

The old game is over. Use this time to develop the sales skills and build the tools you need for the next season. Decide to thrive, not survive.

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