



# Methodical Or Haphazard?

Introducing The Sales Accelerator Method





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Our typical two-day workshop focuses on teaching participants how they can move from product-led selling to value-based selling, and demonstrates why a methodical approach always beats a haphazard one. At the end of day two, there are typically some questions of curiosity.

We are often asked how our proprietary **Sales Accelerator Method** came about. The simple answer is this: having reflected on the dozens of books on selling we have read, it was clear to us that 'doing it by the book' wasn't working for many people. Most books explained 'what' to do, and many failed to clarify 'how' to do it.

There are plenty of business development methodologies available and many have merit. The reason they can fail is because they are designed with completeness in mind rather than ease of adoption. Many methodologies are effective yet rarely used, and they seldom provide a return on investment.

If business development methodologies are too sophisticated, they won't be used. If they are too simple, they won't have a positive impact on results.

Typically, methodologies also focus on 'what to do' rather than 'how to do it'. **The Sales Accelerator Method** focuses on how to originate, advance, qualify and close profitable opportunities and can be taught alongside any other sales methodology or process.



## The Background

There are hundreds of books with tricks, tips and techniques to help salespeople become more skilled at selling. Becoming better at selling in the traditional sense often translates to performing more 'tricks' as a result of 'doing it by the book'.

Given the plethora of books with dozens of methodologies, many of which are similar, it can be difficult to know which one to choose to help you raise your game... and we often learn the hard way.

There was one book that stood out among others and provided the inspiration for **The Sales Accelerator Method**. It contains sound thinking about how we behave and how we can interact effectively with clients and prospects. Surprisingly, it wasn't even a sales book.

The book in question is 'The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People' by Stephen R. Covey. Every single principle can be applied to sales effectiveness as well as personal effectiveness.

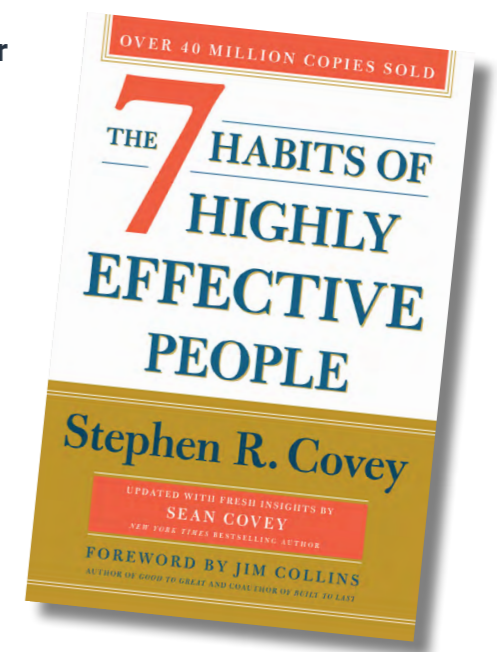
We have seen evidence of these principles transforming sales in a way that challenges many traditional 'buyer versus seller' behaviours.

Whether it is unconscious or habitual, what we do expresses our character and drives our personal effectiveness in sales and in life. Our characters as salespeople are a composite of our habits as people.

Having studied most sales methods over the years, we decided to develop **The Sales Accelerator Method** to help business development professionals work out how to:

- Avoid clients 'going dark'
- Focus on value rather than price
- Win more deals
- Shorten sales cycles
- Collaborate effectively when qualifying

As we work with clients to improve their sales performance, we focus on the mindsets, skills and tools to enable individuals and teams to raise their game in sales. **The Sales Accelerator Method** is best explained by taking a birds-eye view of typical complex opportunities.





Below is a high-level view of a typical value-based consultative sales pursuit. It depicts the journey from the initial meeting with a new client or prospect and works towards signing a significant contract.



You'll notice that the first two steps involve identifying value for the client, not us. The third step is about realising value, again for the client. Typically, the more value we realise for a client, the more value we'll realise for our business.

A large complex solution or services sale involves numerous interactions with multiple stakeholders. Our job when managing the process is to progress in incremental steps (from left to right) and to maintain momentum as we go.

Let's dive a little deeper and break down each of the three steps in turn.

**Originate New Opportunities**

Originating new opportunities for complex, high-value solutions rarely begins with mass emailing and volumes of content on LinkedIn and social media.

Success is about focusing on specific markets, industry verticals and target accounts. We teach business development professionals how to execute on a targeted campaign with priority prospects involving appropriate research, compelling messages and effective engagement.

Our objective in this first step is to obtain an initial meeting (Meeting 1) at which we can start the needs analysis or discovery process.

**Advance And Qualify Opportunities**

This stage requires diligence and a laser focus on qualification as we attempt to nurture the opportunity. Good qualification leads us to concluding the business or 'closing'.

I have disdain for the expression 'Always Be Closing', which is often referred to as the ABC of selling. This describes the idea that salespeople should be in a constant state of closing sales. Many consider this method as the way to sell, and the ABC acronym reinforces this.

This approach to selling can be seen as manipulative, or even coercive. In complex enterprise sales, buyers are better informed (thanks to the internet and social media) and the ABC approach is rarely tolerated.

My preferred approach is 'Always Be Qualifying', recognising that qualification is a process undertaken jointly by clients working collaboratively with sales professionals to identify the value, develop a business case and satisfy all the conditions required for a transaction to take place.

Our proprietary **Revenue** qualification method enables rigour in qualification and our complementary **Value Framework** focuses on the four pillars of value and the hierarchy of client values to enable professionals to gain a detailed understanding of what clients value.

Having agreed to meeting one, we then need to focus firmly on understanding needs. This involves a high level of curiosity, thoughtful diagnostic conversations and ongoing dialogue to ensure we qualify robustly.

When we consider the six client decisions (page 7), we teach simple frameworks to increase our awareness of client challenges, work with multiple stakeholders, understand the decision process and qualify the budget, timing and other resources required to deliver a great solution.

We also consider how to evaluate competitors, create a winning strategy and differentiate our proposal from other options.

**Win The Opportunity And Deliver**

This stage is not an opportunity to copy and paste content from previous proposals.

Winning proposals are tailored to solve challenges in a way that delivers value for the client or prospect. To answer the question: 'Will you do this with us?', we need to do much more than deliver boilerplate content.

Winning proposals are structured around compelling value propositions backed up by the story of how this meets the client's or prospect's needs. They include ways that we can deliver with minimum risk and maximum chance of success.

Proof points and reference client value stories are usually critical here to demonstrate our capability and credibility.

If the foregoing qualification is executed well, closing the deal is a natural next step. We then need to focus on delivering flawlessly in order to retain and grow the client long term.



# The 7 Principles

We have identified seven critical principles to successfully move from traditional selling to effective value-based consultative selling.

Note that these are principles, not fads or trends. Like other principles in life such as gravity, they are always there regardless of our beliefs or behaviours.

Here are the seven principles that enable us to accelerate our speed to value in complex sales opportunities:

## 1. Changing Mindsets Changes Results

Top performers realise that how they see things dictates what they do and the results they achieve. We have the capacity to stand back and reflect on our results (what we get), our behaviours (what we do), and our perspectives (how we see the situation and our understanding of it). Doing so requires deep thinking.

## 2. Value Matters Above All Else

Top performers appreciate that solutions derive value when they solve business challenges or create desired business outcomes. Value is the only thing that motivates a client or prospect to act and move from where they are today to where they want to be. Value is in the eye of the client.

## 3. Value Aligns Buyers And Sellers

Sellers and clients want the same thing, which is a solution that takes them from where they are to where they want to be in a way that delivers business value. The more value we identify for our clients, the more value we will realise for ourselves.

## 4. Methodology Matters

There is abundant evidence that methodical thinking outweighs random or haphazard thinking if you want to become more effective and efficient. This is true in business development. If business development methodologies are too sophisticated, they simply won't be used, and if they are too simple, they won't have a positive impact on results.

## 5. Diagnose Before You Prescribe

Prospects or clients assign an intent to us within minutes. The intent they assign to us will have a material impact on the information they share. Stop 'selling' and start helping your prospects and clients succeed. Seek first to understand, then to be understood. (Habit Five of The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People).

## 6. Trust Matters

Trustworthiness is a function of Credibility plus Reliability plus Intimacy divided by Self-Orientation. You can take months or years to build trust with a client, and it can quickly dissipate when self-orientation takes over. This can be caused by something as simple as somebody in your own organisation – perhaps a subject matter expert – showing up and talking about themselves, their experience, their solution and their organisation, rather than focusing on the client.

Client centricity is key. You need to build trust before you can build a relationship, and your intent (to help the client succeed) must be clear to you, or it won't be clear to them.

## 7. Decisions Drive Momentum

There are only ever three outcomes to a client meeting in the sales cycle: We advance, we go back a step (sometimes in order to go forward), or we stay where we are in the process (no advance, no regression) and the status quo is maintained. Top performers plan every meeting to enable the prospect or client to take the next logical decision (in their buying process) in their own best interests.

# The 6 Client Decisions

Having grasped the key principles of **The Sales Accelerator Method**, we then need to focus on the six decisions that every prospect needs to make to commence and complete a buying cycle.

Of course, we are simplifying this by saying there are only six decisions. There may be dozens of decisions the client makes, and in the context of client centricity, we deliberately want to frame all decisions as an answer to one of the following six questions, which enable us to continually qualify and advance any opportunity:

1. Should we be talking?
2. Should we keep talking?
3. Should you do this?
4. Can you do this?
5. Will you do this?
6. Will you do this with us?





### Should We Be Talking?

Top performers pose this question to prospects when originating new opportunities and engaging in dialogue. They bring value to an initial conversation (rather than overtly selling) with a well-honed point of view and a clear articulation of common challenges we see for our target clients. They prioritise their list of prospects against a clear set of criteria and focus on a limited number of well-executed conversations rather than mass mailing or cold calling.

On an initial call, they can interrupt and engage prospects in seconds, inviting them to decide whether we should be talking.

### Should We Keep Talking?

If we are continually qualifying, this type of question will manifest itself on numerous occasions relating to the Next Logical Decision (NLD) the client needs to make in their own best interests at each meeting to discuss, advance and qualify the opportunity.

The NLD may include whether the client should make introductions to new stakeholders, whether they should set aside a budget or other resources, whether to arrange a demonstration, conduct a workshop or build a business case. The list is potentially much longer than these examples and will depend on a typical buying cycle for your solutions or services.

Whatever the specific NLD, we always need to remember that client decisions drive momentum.

### Should You Do This?

As we adopt a client-centric approach to advancing and qualifying an opportunity, this question is posed to establish whether or not there is value for the client in doing anything.

The second principle of **The Sales Accelerator Method** is that value matters above all else and solutions have no inherent value. Top performers realise that solutions derive value when they solve business challenges or create desired outcomes.

For a real sales opportunity to exist, there is always a gap between where the client or prospect is today and where they want to be. Value exists in successfully 'moving' from the current state to the desired state.

Top performers understand that if they cannot collaborate with the client to identify material value, then there is no compelling reason for the client to act... and no deal.

Note that this question is different to 'Will you do this?'

### Can You Do This?

Top performers understand that, having identified value for the client in doing something new or different, the opportunity is far from qualified unless we also understand:

- The stakeholder landscape
- The decision process
- Availability of funding
- Timelines and timing
- Client resources available

Even if the client wants to do something, their own organisation may get in the way. We need to fully understand the organisational context and any constraints.

There are multiple opportunities to test these elements and if the client cannot outline the decision process, who the key stakeholders are and the budget, we'll likely have a problem. Likewise, not gaining access to decision makers, failing to understand the client resources available and the expected timeline can also give us false hope about a deal closing.

### Will You Do This?

Having satisfied ourselves that the client has the means to do something, we now need to consider whether or not they will actually do anything. As ever, each incremental decision requires alignment with the client and a clear understanding of their criteria.

Top performers challenge themselves to ensure:

- They understand any context and constraints relating to the opportunity
- Any objections have been handled effectively
- Their win strategy is clearly understood and executed
- Their solution closely meets the client's needs and budget
- They can outmanoeuvre competitors
- There is a compelling business case for change... now!

Opportunities that align with the current strategic priorities or initiatives have more chance of closing. Even the best-looking opportunities can fail because somewhere in the organisation there is somebody against the project or competing for the same budget.

Objectives that have not been adequately addressed will show up again further down the line, perhaps more strongly. We always have competition, including doing nothing (overcoming the status quo). Without understanding what we are up against and having an effective strategy, we'll potentially be in heaps of trouble. Many organisations have ROI requirements and if we fail to understand them, we could be left with a commercial mismatch.





## Will You Do This With Us?

We are now clear that the client or prospect will do something, or at least they said so.

The question remaining is whether they will choose us. This question is the last of the six for deliberate reasons of client-centricity. All the preceding decisions are driven by our intent to help the client or prospect succeed in making good decisions. Now it's time to persuade them that we are the best partner for the job.

Top performers apply more effort and time here to ensure that:

- Their proposals or presentations are well written and persuasive
- They can articulate why they are different in a way that matters to the client
- Closing is a natural 'next step' for the client

Firstly, the quality of our proposals and presentations can let us down if they aren't well structured for the people that will be evaluating them. Perhaps they don't tell a convincing story or they might fail to comply with client requirements or preferences. statement. The story will be written in a way that demonstrates our understanding of their situation and challenges, and articulates how our solution will solve these in a way that delivers value. It should close with a clear articulation of 'why us' and by restating the decision at hand.

It goes without saying that all proposals should be bespoke, should avoid the obvious 'copy and paste' that often occurs, and should be grammatically correct with no typos or spelling glitches.

Differentiation is the biggest challenge for most organisations, and we see too many boilerplate statements that are not differentiators at all. Remember, differences only count if they are visible and matter to the client. Top performers realise that on complex, high-value opportunities with long sales cycles, closing is less of an event, but a series of incremental decisions, well managed and well executed.

# Sales Only Happen When...

Complex, high-value sales only happen when:

- There are challenges to solve or business outcomes to achieve
- We jointly identify the value between where they are and where they want to be
- The change is worth the cost
- The future state is a better state
- Our solution precisely meets their needs – both intellectually and emotionally
- Prospects or clients see us as capable, credible and trustworthy
- We can articulate why we're different in a way that matters to the client

Remember, success is measurable and all of the skills required to become a top performer are teachable and learnable.

Finally, ask yourself whether you and your sales teams are methodical or somewhat haphazard in your approach to the crucial conversations that identify value in a way that builds trust with clients and prospects.



## Further Reading


Click to read more insights from The Sales Coach Network


[Crucial Conversations](#)[The Qualification Challenge](#)[Where's The Value?](#)[Sales Management Puzzle](#)[Sales Success Is Systematic](#)

## Get In Touch

Is it worth us having a conversation to see whether or not we can help you and your team achieve more? [Email us today](#) and we will put you in touch with one of our experienced coaches.

## Get in Touch

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