4 Tips to Jump-Start a Stalled Funnel

Assess Your Pipeline Health to Reinvigorate It Creatively and Collaboratively

Televerde

Sales and marketing leaders live and breathe the opportunity funnel daily, and sometimes nightly too. A good night's sleep hinges on its health. When the funnel flows according to plan, life and sleep are great. But when it doesn't, well, not so good.

The first layer of pipeline analysis should be focused on what's stalled – sales qualified opportunities that aren't moving forward. There are a variety of reasons, and some are within sales and marketing control while others aren't.

In this eBook we'll examine a few reasons, what to analyze, the benefits of conducting pipeline hygiene, and how to reignite stalled opportunities and accelerate momentum

Takeaways:

1 Continual pipeline analysis is vital to assess and improve its health, reinvigorate and accelerate stuck and slow-moving opportunities, and remove false-positives that create forecast inaccuracy and distractions.

2 Sales pipelines are living, breathing organisms. Keeping them dynamic and energized is an essential function of sales, marketing, and demand generation leaders that requires collaborative accountability, attention, and effort.

3 Jumpstarting stalled opportunities demands agility and creativity. It isn't always easy, but it's doable and effective with the right stakeholders involved and some creativity.

TIP #1: Continually Assess and Score Pipeline Health

There's little that sales, marketing, and demand generation professionals can confidently categorize as "set and forget." Automating as much as possible sounds good in theory, but human intervention and creativity are essential.

Not that AI and machine learning aren't critical to creating scalable processes (they are!), but data and alerts only get you part of the way there. This is especially true when it comes to knowing if your sales pipeline is in good health and, more importantly, what to do if it isn't.

Sales opportunities should be in a continual state of evaluation. They progress, regress, or stand still.
A standing still status can be resolved with collaboration from sales, marketing, and other executive leaders. Thus, the case for ongoing pipeline health assessments to gauge what needs attention.

Like-minded savvy sales and marketing professionals with skin in the game should review the sales pipeline frequently and together with an objective of preventing surprising disappointments, stimulating momentum, and assigning ownership for next steps.

Grading/scoring sales opportunities is an important process discipline that should involve multiple people to enable a score that reflects objective perspectives. The key is to develop a simplified model customized for your organization that creates a clear and unified way to determine which opportunities are at risk and steps needed to minimize it. While there are numerous scoring attributes and models, here are some important ones to consider:

- **STALL TIME/VELOCITY:** Number of days opportunities are sitting in pipeline but not progressing

- **VALUE:** Potential short- and long-term financial outcome if the opportunity is won

- **CURRENT OR NEW:** Is it a growth/expansion opportunity with a current client or is it a potential net new logo

- **REVENUE CONVERSION SPEED:** If an opportunity converts to a win, when does the client want their engagement with you to be operationalized and how soon before you can recognize the revenue

- **STAKEHOLDER SUPPORT & ENGAGEMENT:** Number of client-side decision-makers/influencers who are engaged in the process and their overall engagement level

- **STRATEGIC FIT:** Alignment between the stalled opportunity and what your organization can accomplish for them

TIP #2: Remove False-Positives

We have limited bandwidth in terms of attention we can reasonably allocate and time available to do what needs to be done. Prioritizing is a challenging but necessary part of the pipeline assessment process. It's a good thing because it removes distractions, thereby increasing the amount of attention and time available to focus on higher probability opportunities.

Opportunities tend to find their way into a pipeline even if they don't belong there due to overly ambitious forecasting or because while they may have looked promising at the outset, they're not moving forward. A current or prospective client's needs may have changed, their budgets were reduced mid-stage, or decision-makers moved on and replaced by those without the same affinity for your solution, etc. – the list goes on.

Whatever the reason, these opportunities should be re-evaluated, re-staged, and sometimes removed altogether to enable focus on what's real, what's likely, and what has the chance to convert if given more effort and energy.

The big takeaway here is there's only so much time in a sales or marketing exec's day and it should be used wisely. We're not saying this is a binary "use it or move it" scenario where sales opportunities that don't meet all the qualifying criteria should be removed from the pipeline altogether. Rather, the point is to devote a proportionate amount of more energy to those with a greater chance of progressing, and less energy to those that don't.

TIP #3: Assign Accountability and Mutual Attention

Some opportunities need more sales effort, while others require more marketing attention to be re-engaged. In either case, both sales AND marketing should be involved even though one or the other will be assigned ownership/primary accountability. Both sides must work together and be at the ready if/when things change – for better or worse.

If **sales** takes ownership, it's usually the result of the sales exec making a convincing case for opportunity handholding because stakeholders on the client side just need some nudging and high touch through calls, meetings, etc. The salesperson may feel additional marketing intervention through email nurture, social outreach, etc. could in fact hinder the sales process when a strong client relationship has already been developed.

If it's determined **marketing** should take ownership, this should happen because the opportunity isn't ready enough, or was ready at one time, but its status has changed, therefore the need for a prioritization shift. Sales and marketing should agree on what the ideal next steps should be. For example, the sales rep should convey to their marketing colleagues the potential client relationship stage, what the client does/doesn't know enough about, and what it'll take to renew momentum. Specific pieces of sharable content should be identified, new/more contacts should be added to the nurture outreach program, a new nurture path should be selected, etc. Next steps/touches must be carefully calculated.

36.3%

of sales leaders complain that approaching the wrong audience is their top reason for a long sales cycle.

(Source: Salesforce)

Extra sales effort and accountability can look like this:

- More highly personalized touches via calls, in-person meetings, etc.
- Requests for names of (and introductions to) other client-side stakeholders
- Solution-validating intros to key execs at other companies your organization is already successful serving
- Sharing of relevant case studies, success stories, eBooks, research, etc.
- Bringing other execs at your organization into the conversation with key contacts to demonstrate high-level interest
- Collaboration with your organization's execs (especially finance) on the possibility of offering the prospect incentives or other 'deal sweeteners'

Extra marketing effort and accountability can look like this:

- Collaborating with sales to identify new/additional key contacts that should be marketed to
- Moving an opportunity's key contacts into different role-based nurture paths
- Orchestrating an ABM approach if one wasn't already in place, or renewing the approach if there was an active ABM program prior to the opportunity converting to pipeline but then stalling
- Creating and sharing customized/personalized content, messaging, etc. to re-engage stakeholders

TIP #4: Orchestrate Collaborative Creativity

As good as machine learning, and automation are for some sales, marketing, and demand generation applications, **nothing replaces real-world insights from actual sales execs having actual conversations with the decision-makers and influencers on the other side of the table or phone.**

This is how challenges, roadblocks, and unique opportunities become known and can be more easily interpreted and understood. It's also where alternate solutions and compelling incentives can be identified and brought to bear on a stalled opportunity.

Sure, data can be structured and clustered, but it can be difficult to contextualize and give it real-world meaning that empowers companies to frame the right approaches and next steps to re-energize its pipeline. Nuanced information and insights shared verbally throughout the course of a current or potential client relationship matter! This uniquely acquired knowledge should be leveraged for all it's worth, especially when it comes to generating creative approaches to move an opportunity from stalled to active.

Not all challenges are the same, so one-size-fits-all solutions don't always apply. This is why we're fans of sales and marketing collaboration to best determine how to utilize relationship-based insight to creatively re-energize stagnant pipeline opportunities.

Moving stalled opportunities into different nurture programs can usually be soundly rationalized based on the inherent scalability and sustainability of an automated approach, and it's for certain types of stuck opportunities. But for more potentially lucrative and strategically aligned deals that are stalled, automated approaches aren't always the most appropriate. Instead, a more creative and non-traditional effort is in order.

Assemble a collaborative group of creative problem-solvers to ideate what it'll take to jump-start a potentially rich but idle funnel. These stakeholders should have the enthusiasm, savvy, autonomy, and ability to implement ideas with potential for positive impact. The group could represent sales, marketing, finance, operations, customer experience, and tech teams. The guiding rule for this team should be to produce practical actions to blow the dust off stalled opportunities.

Here are a couple pipeline jump-start examples to frame your thinking (and to jump-start your own internal ideation):

Time-sensitive, compelling CTA's that could include financial incentives, added-value packages, or other special offers that could trigger movement.

A carefully-coordinated sales and marketing outreach blitz through several channels and targeted to multiple contacts within stalled accounts. Don't overwhelm or annoy your decision-makers and influencers though. Be respectful of their time and informational needs by delivering the right personalized messages, content, and CTAs to the right people. Your objective is to draw attention and stimulate conversation within the account.

A good night's sleep is important for busy sales and marketing teams. We know that improving the health of your funnel can help because we've done it for ourselves and our clients, and we're all resting more peacefully.

68%
of companies
have not identified or
attempted to measure
a sales funnel.

(Source: Salesforce)

About Televerde

Televerde is the first and only fully integrated sales and marketing technology organization with a proven execution model for generating demand and accelerating sales. The company combines end-to-end sales and marketing solutions to drive engagement, pipeline, and revenue for the world's leading B2B companies including SAP, Adobe-Marketo, and Pulse Secure. Since 1995, Televerde has generated more than $10B in revenue for its clients. A purpose-built company, Televerde believes in second chance employment and strives to help disempowered people find their voice and reach their human potential. Seven of Televerde's 10 engagement centers are staffed by incarcerated women, representing 70 percent of the company's 600+ global workforce. The success of this model was documented in a recent study by the Arizona State University Seidman Research Institute. The results reveal that participants of Televerde's program go on to attain employment, earnings, and education at higher rates and reoffend at significantly lower rates than other formerly incarcerated females in the United States. The full study can be accessed here.

Based on the ideas and insight presented in this eBook, here are some of the services we provide companies like yours to optimize their sales pipeline:

- Market Analysis & Survey Services
- Data Sourcing & Market Insights
- Functional Role-Based Contact Acquisition & Validation
- Lead Generation & Qualification
- Inside Sales & Business Development Representatives
- Account-Based Sales Strategy & Execution
- Won, Lost & Stalled Lost Opportunity Analysis

For more information, visit **televerde.com** or call **888-925-7526.**

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