

## Writing “The Winning Sales Plan in 2024”

In 2017, I was doing research for my new course, “*The Art & Science of Sales*”, at Tufts University, where I’m a Professor of the Practice within the [Derby Entrepreneurship Center](#), and at that time I’d been teaching a unique course in Marketing for 14 years. Maybe because I’m passionate about everything that is Tufts, maybe it was that I had just accepted an offer to become the Director of the Entrepreneur Center for the upcoming academic year, or most probably, it was because, more and more I was convinced that the profession of Sales was actually a science.

At that time, I didn’t have enough real data about the science of Sales. Now, the science, the research, and the data about the profession of Sales has significantly advanced, and in the fall semester of 2021, I kicked off a new elective course within the Center simply titled “*The Science of Sales*”. At the same time, I also updated this ebook, which had last been edited back in *the old days* of mid-2020. With that work done, which carried me through the last two quarters of 2021, I then sat down again in June and December 2022 to do another edit in prep for 2023 and now, once again here in January 2024.

Since 2020, in the profession of Sales, there’s not been “change”; there’s been a revolution in Sales: its practices, its processes, its tools and, most importantly, its people. We see it every day in the companies of our customers as sales managers and their teams adopt what we term in our management consulting in our practice of “*The Science of Sales*” as...

### Process, Tools, Technology, Math & People

...which then gets folded into our business vocabulary as “**10 Rules of The Way.**”

- This is the way we sell!
- There are no other ways!
- This is our discipline of Process, Tools, Technology, Math & People.
- Everyone in Sales sells the same way using the same tools.
- There is only one single source of truth in the transparency of all sales data.
- We share our best sales and customer success practices all the time everywhere.
- We innovate, formally adopting change to “The Way” focusing on customer value.
- We sell customer value not products or services.
- We are 100% focused on the health of our customers and, in turn, their customers.
- We focus on becoming trusted partners and strategic advisors for our customers.

As you think through these 10 points, one of the first reactions from people not used to the formality of a unified sales process with built in tools all labeled and located within powerful AI-enabled CRM system is that this all sounds very structured, highly organized and data-dependent, and our blunt response is always the same: “Absolutely, just like...

- ...your auto mechanic of your new car
- ...your surgeon
- ...the pilot on your next trip

In these practices and thousands of others, there’s only one way with checklists, specific tools, detailed measurements and formal reviews all enhanced with technologies ranging from instructive videos to AI-assisted bots, and in many cases requirements for re-certifications. To bring these comments down to the real world, that’s exactly the way it is for my Subaru mechanic and for my 2015 heart surgeon both of whom know which valves to clean out and replace on a regular schedule.

We should expect the same formality from the men and women who are on the front line of our customer experience every day in every call and in every email!

Just to extend this thought process back to Tufts, I’m very proud of the fact that our Science of Sales course has now moved from merely being an elective to a required core course in order to achieve a minor in entrepreneurship at Tufts. I’m even more proud of those hundreds of men and women alums who have gone on to excel in the profession of Sales as BDRs, AEs, Managers, Directors and in many cases, such as at Hubspot, have become the head of sales.

Based on a foundation of using [Hubspot’s](#) marketing and sales technologies, processes, tools, and metrics, my Tufts Science of Sales course, and therefore this ebook, follow the same requirements and rigors of my highly acclaimed Marketing course.

- The “teaching content” is based on six sales plan projects from real companies.
- The end-of-semester deliverable is a fully developed tactical sales plan and playbook.
- The companies come from a purposefully broad cross-section of industries.
- They range from tiny startups to large public corporations.
- The majority of the businesses have annual revenue between \$1m and \$100m.
- 40% of the course grade is decided by the senior management of the host company.
- I can guarantee jobs for my “A” level alums who put in the work.

By the way, if you’re interested in participating in either the Sales or the Marketing course, just connect with me, and I’ll send you an example of a recent syllabus and instructions as to how to apply.

When I was creating the original Sales syllabus back in 2017, it seemed that I had developed the correct balance of content, complexity and creativity. As with any new course, during the first couple of weeks, the complexity side of that equation seemed to be out of balance with everything else, which led me to search for solid examples of winning sales plans that I could provide to my 30 or so undergraduate and graduate students.

As I often do every week, I rebalance my time from being a Tufts professor to running our management consulting firm, [Derby Management](#), where we focus our time providing our hands-on expertise in dramatically improving productivity in both Sales and Marketing.

Sure, there are tons of consulting companies who do the same things that we do with different cute names like “sales enablement” for what they do, but, in reality, what every business leader...*and every salesperson...really* cares about is improving the efficiency of their own productivity while improving the effectiveness of the value that their company delivers to its customers.

- External effectiveness for customers
- Internal efficiency for salespeople

That’s what we do with our fingers in the dirt planting seeds not only at the level of strategic thinking in the boardroom, but, most importantly with the account execs and sales managers at the street level. Our perspective on 2024 is that there’s never been a time that this requirement of having more efficient and more effective selling processes has been as critical as seen from the customer’s side of the table.

Back a year ago in January 2023, we loudly proclaimed that it would be impossible to have a recession in spite of all of the media types and academic negators telling us that it would be a very tough year and that both a recession and “hard landings” were immediately on the horizon. We knew differently since we we’re up front and personal on the street with hundreds and hundreds of salespeople who simply were not saying what the media was hyping or the Sunday morning TV academics were preaching. Having said that, at the same time, we also knew that there would be sharp ups and downs in 2023, so our operating emphasis last year was for every manager to put their hard hats on, buckle up and pay attention to the science and the discipline of Sales as a process, and treat Sales no differently than the rigors required in the science and processes of Manufacturing and Engineering.

2024 is going to be a great year! Yes, we’re fully aware of the tragedies and the costs of the geopolitical wars. We’re also concerned with the distractions being caused by the political hysteria in Washington. Having said that, we personally live in a world of total management focus with our customers and recognize that we can have little to no impact on global events other than voting. Our six-month outlook is much more optimistic than downbeat since what we do have is the power and the skills to make immediate changes in the manner in which we sell and deliver customer value.

During the 2021 updating of my Science of Sales course material, given all the sales consulting work that Derby Management has done for years, I thought that it would be an easy task to take a selection of a few good sales plans, redact the specifics of company names and anything else that could be considered confidential, and then use those plans as part of my teaching curricula during the new semester. At least that process would serve to provide some level of real examples and potential templates to fill out the structure and content that I provide in the classroom.

What should have been an easy and quick search actually turned into a desperate and depressing realization that in my three-hour search through the work we had done with hundreds of customers, I could find very few complete sales plans. They simply did not exist. What did exist in our files by the hundreds were “pieces” of sales plans, but only a very few complete plans.

### **I did find:**

- Quarterly and monthly action plans
- Playbooks and Battle Cards
- Skills Training plans
- Comp plans
- Waterfall Sales & Marketing Excel files

...but very few solid examples of fundamental, foundation-setting annual sales plans created by the head of sales and agreed to by the senior management team and the directors of the company. When I use those words, “annual sales plans”, I mean:

- Annual Sales plans that should have been written in November and December, as part of the company’s annual company planning and budgeting process for the following year.
- Annual Sales plans that would have included 12-month strategies and the detailed tactics that had been directly integrated into those strategies, forecasts, metrics, KPIs and budgets.
- Annual Sales plans that would have set the foundation for everyone in Sales from regional managers to individual account execs to define their own personal quarter-by-quarter selling plans.
- Annual Sales Plans that would have spelled out in detail the SLA Agreements with Marketing and what was expected from each department covering everything from MQL to SQL conversions and the specific lead gen expected from both Marketing and from Sales
- Annual Sales plans that would have been discussed in detail at the kickoff sales meeting in January.

The bottom line of my frustrating discovery back then and now carried forward to 2024 is that in every company, of every size, and especially now in this year of both knowns in the first six months and uncertainties in the balance of this year, there needs to be a very different approach to creating sales plans of any kind. Especially in what we have termed for 2024 as *“the year of the customer”*!

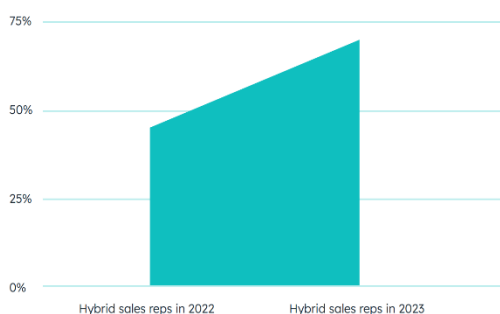
**Simply said: the world of Sales has changed forever** as a result of the pandemic chaos and its financial impact then heightened during this past year of 2023 due to inflation and labor shortages in almost every market. Very specifically, as salespeople, we had to adapt very quickly in the first quarter of 2020 to a world that was locked down, did not permit any travel and was in a state of suspended activity as management attempted to figure out how to survive, how to *“go-to-work”* and how to communicate with employees, shareholders, existing customers and new prospects. Now, early in 2024, we’ve figured out the rhythm of work for the most part, and we are now actively piecing together the sales planning processes for this year even given the bumpy geopolitical picture ahead plus the major distraction of national elections. Bottom line here: it’s going to be a solid year for growth, and as professional salespeople and managers, we need to focus on what we can impact and not be distracted by things that we cannot.

Let’s first level-set the selling environment with a few factoids:

## A few B2B 2023 “factoids” ...

First, since everyone always asks us what other companies are doing regarding remote work for salespeople, let’s deal with the facts. We’ve gathered these together between December 2022 and December 2023 by talking with hundreds of professional salespeople and sales managers at every level from a wide and very diverse cross section of B2B companies:

### How many sales reps are hybrid? 2022 vs. 2023



-Hybrid sales pros are 28% more likely to be performing better than their sales goals this year than in-person and fully remote sales pros. 65% state they are more productive being remote.

-With remote and hybrid environments, given the digital-first experience, B2B salespeople have discovered a 20%-30% gain in their time efficiency due to no commute (21%), and flexibility (60%) in their and their customers’ schedules and locations.

-95% of salespeople say that they have no intention of going back “in the office” full time and would quit if forced to do so.

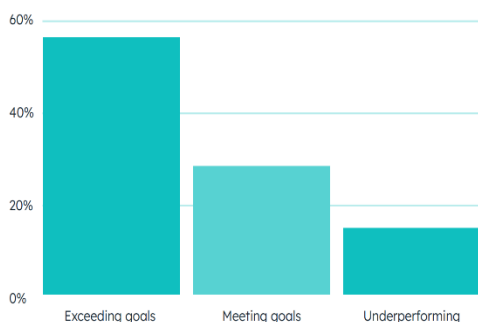
## Noteworthy:

- 62% of salespeople noted their selling process “changed substantially” in 2023.
- 33% of salespeople have created an entirely new sales process in 2022-2023
- The antiquated terms of “field sales” and “inside sales” no longer apply.
- CAC, LTV, MEDDICC, GPCT and renewal and retention rates have become the new currency.

## The realities of 2023 as we move into 2024:

On average, B2B salespeople across industries only achieve 53-68% of their committed quota. For us, this remains a shockingly low number, and why we are so passionate and committed to creating a formal environment of... **Process, Tools, Technology, Math & People**

### How are sales pros performing this year?



-For a 60-hour week, (approximately 3,000 hours) the “effective” sales hours are only 1,100.

-Historically, the vast majority of sales productivity improvement programs have had negative returns.

-70% of the 2021 buying process occurred internally before talking to a sales rep of any kind. The number was 75% in 2022, and it jumped to 96% defined by buyers researched your products before talking with anyone from your company”

- For first meetings either F2F or online, 56% of the sales reps defined those meetings as “very positive”. For that same meeting, when interviewed by a third party, 79% of the prospects stated they would not do a follow-on meeting with that rep.

-B2B customers dedicate only 17% of their purchase process to talking with potential suppliers.

-They spend the majority of their time online researching sites, blogs, social posts and review

-Buyers who are high skeptical of a rep’s claims are 1.6 times less likely to buy anything.

**Gartner** just surveyed 1,110 B2B buyers, all of whom thought supplier information was of high quality but struggled to make sense of it:

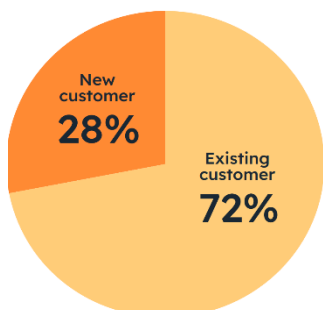
- 55% thought the information to be trustworthy, but undifferentiated.
- 44% thought the information to be trustworthy, but contradictory.
- 66% of those were less likely to buy as a result.
- Prospects with too much unasked-for data are 54% less likely to buy.

For more granularity on what we term as **Jack's Law of 3,000** and how we arrive at the 1,100 hours of effective availability for salespeople, we have the following which is based on an ideal of a dedicated salesperson actually working 60 hours a week, or about 3,000 hours a year.

**3120** Salesperson's Hours/Week/Year

- 180	15 days' vacation
- 40	5 sick + personal days
- 80	10 company holidays
- 180	training, sales + company meetings
- 15%	standard non-utilizable time (breaks, getting started, etc)
= 2,244	total <b>Available Hours to Sell</b>
x 50%	Sales effectiveness (50% of the time they sell, they close, which is <i>very high</i> )
= <b>1,122</b>	Actual available selling time or sales management time

The bottom line of **Jack's Law of 3,000** is that *good* salespeople, only have about 1,000 to 1,200 hours a year to actually sell and effectively close business for you, so your most important job as a manager is to make that time highly effective and to eliminate everything else from their activity that takes away from their effectiveness as sales warriors.



- 91% of all sales pros upsell. 87% cross-sell. In 2023, 72% of company revenue came from existing customers, with only 28% coming from new customers.

-In 2023, the average B2B new deal sales win rate was only 21%, and the median deal size was \$4,000. Impossible to make these low numbers work in terms of ROI.

-For the "A" level salesperson, their #1 differentiator for their success is their ability to consistently deliver effective value propositions that translate directly to the customer.

And finally, if those stats were not depressing enough, our Q4 2023 surveys showed that 62% of salespeople noted, as a result of their sales planning and budgeting for 2024, that their companies were taking fewer risks in 2023 and that their budgets were much more scrutinized in 2023 than in 2022 and that that same trend will be the trend in 2024.

Given all of this, there needs to be an even larger mandate for change in the way we sell in 2024. Back-in-the-day (*in the “old days” of 2019*) in a normal sales planning cycle, we would be developing both annual and quarterly sales plans in the fall that would then be tightened up in early January and rolled out at the January national sales meeting with strict requirements to have regional, district and then quarterly individual plans developed to be reviewed and approved within the following week. Pretty standard stuff since that’s the way that I grew up as a salesguy, and what I was required to do, but more importantly, that rhythm of business is what I’ve always considered to be a “normal” building block for any business and in any sales department at any level from national to regional to territory plans right down to individual quarterly selling plans at the street level.

The requirement of this level of detailed planning has not changed. What has changed, and changed for the better, are the tools and the integrated technologies that allow now us the opportunity to execute on this level of detail and track our results seamlessly using AI, throughout the entire buyer journey

- We will simply not be returning to many of the old sales practices of 2019.
- We have already realized huge gains in time and in effectiveness by using Zoom/Teams.
- Both customers and prospects appreciate their time savings with more efficient meetings.
- Internal virtual meetings are much shorter, much more effective and at almost zero cost.

Add to all of this the fact that we are still in the infancy stages of tech communication tools such as Zoom and Teams and the video and audio tools that come with them. As a result, we are anticipating even more significant gains both in time efficiency and effectiveness throughout 2024, and that’s without the significant impact of AI, which is just now beginning to work its way into every CRM platform.

Looking back to *the old days* of 2019 and prior years, there’s been no real “*invention*” in the sales planning process for decades. The requirements and the timing have been the same that salespeople and their managers were required to complete every year. And yet, what I learned from reviewing hundreds of prior “sales plans” was that fully complete annual plans simply do not exist in the majority of cases. Through that process of assessing all the sales plans in our files, what I did discover were....

- Hundreds of engineering and product plans and more hundreds of excellent marketing plans
- Gigabits of sales financial plans with forecasts by month, by quarter and by year



- Terabytes of commission and bonus plans
- Hundreds of “big bullet” PowerPoints that were mostly high-level strategies.

Bottom line was that there were very few real quarterly or annual sales plans that had any depth. When I use this phrase *“real quarterly and annual sales plans”* I mean definitions of...

- ...what the overarching sales model will be: direct, indirect, partner models?
- ...account sizing: same or changed? National accounts?
- ...territory management: same, consolidated or expanded?
- ...lead management: what % from marketing, what % self-generated from salespeople?
- ...primary personas of decision makers
- ...common messaging of value propositions tied to the principal personas as part of the plan.
- ...hiring and compensation and bonus plans.
- ...training, retraining and certification plans.
- ...CRM and related tech changes
- ...the highlights of the tactical activity planning on a quarter-by-quarter basis.

Where I discovered that pieces of real, somewhat complete sales plans did exist, correspondingly I assessed that the performance of the company overall was “excellent” to “very good”. Where I discovered that only financial expense budgets and annual sales forecasts existed as the primary planning documents, not surprisingly, the overall past performance had been weak or marginal, at best.

As a sales manager and a management consultant, for me there was no real surprise in the performance results. The big surprise for me during this process was the lack of real twelve-month sales plans incorporating both 12 month and longer-range sales strategies and most importantly, tactical monthly and quarterly activity plans with real metrics and applicable training.

It was General Eisenhower at the invasion of Normandy who said...

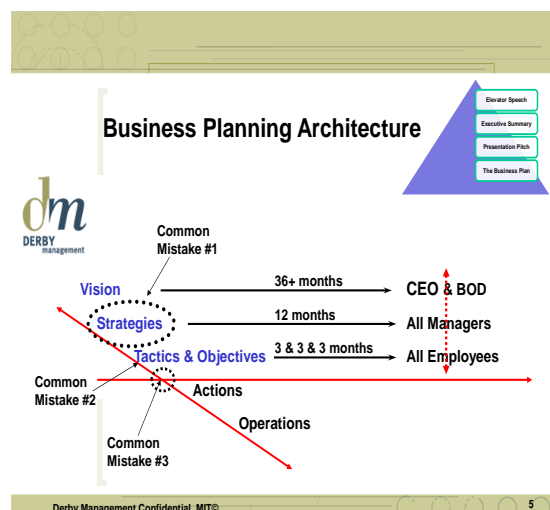
***“In preparing for battle, I have always found that plans are worthless, but the planning process was indispensable”, ...***

...and he was absolutely correct since that same thought process that applies to battles in war also applies to our annual and quarterly sales plans. In our sales planning, we *advance* into new territories, we *defeat* our competitors, and we *win* more customers. Ideally, as a result of a fully engaged planning process with the entire sales team, we get to surpass our quota and margin objectives, but, at the very least, given the detailed thinking that goes into any sales planning process, we are much more prepared to deal with the realities of the market and with our prospects and customers when their own business plans change.

At a very different level, it was Mike Tyson, the controversial boxing athlete, who simply said...  
***“Everyone has a plan, until they get punched in the mouth.”***

Somewhat by definition an annual sales plan constructed in November of any year during the annual budgeting process, which looks out on how prospects will be thinking and what existing customers will be doing 12 and 18 months into the future can only be *“somewhat effective”* given the length of absolute time and the unknowns of customer forecasting in general and personnel changes specifically.

That having been said, the most critical component in sales planning is the actual process of bringing the plan together with the sales team and all the related departments to work through future products, personnel hiring and training decisions, lead gen plans from Marketing while figuring out what fits into the actual budget.



As to where Sales Plans “fit” in the completion of your company’s annual Business Plan, the one that is officially approved by your board of directors and therefore becomes the yardstick against which all of your sales activities and results will be measured, please note the graphic here to the left.

This is a slide from our Sales Management Boot Camps, and it is meant to provide you with a possible architecture to keep in your head when you’re going through your annual and quarterly sales planning process.

The word definitions that go with this slide define that your Sales Plan needs to be a mix of...

- **“Vision”** This may be important culturally, but don’t take much time on Vision.
- **“Strategy”** simply means *“longer term primary directions”* that you plan to follow in the year. They are broad in their definitions and typically take 12 to 24 months to fully implement.
  - **“Strategies”** could be sales models of direct sales or distribution or partnerships.
  - **“Strategies”** could be geography changes.
  - **“Strategies”** could be selling into national or local locations of a large company.
- **“Tactics”** are where your sales plan needs to focus. These are your playbooks and battle plans.
- **“Activities”** are the details of individual quarterly tactics you have planned for that period.

Prior to 2020, we would have defined *strategic* plans as those that project out for 24 plus months and tactical plans as those that embody four quarters ahead. Today, even though we are much more settled

in 2024 than we were in Q3 and Q4 of 2023, we are once again strongly recommending you primarily focus your sales planning on the quarterly tactics you will employ and not on any longer-term strategies especially given the unknowns of the geopolitical issues and the upcoming elections. From where we are today in 2024, your primary focus needs be on very tactical quarter-by-quarter 90-day tactical and activity planning.

Plan out each quarter this year, and when you're 60 days into that plan, begin the process over again for the next 90 days. This simply is the reality of sales and of marketing planning in the yet-not-totally-understood world of 2024...and especially to the second half of this year. Having said that, and to our point mentioned earlier, 2024 is going to be a good year with far more positives on the horizon than negatives.

Now to the classic mistakes that far too many heads of Sales make simply because, as a group, they don't take sufficient time out every year to plan out the details of the year ahead and especially the quarter-by-quarter tactical and activity planning.

**Mistake #1 in the graphic above** refers to the fact that too many heads of sales companies just skip over the setting of the strategies part and jump right into tactics. In more stable periods of known knowns, prior to 2020, that may have been acceptable, but in reality, it was not. From where we are right now in the still unknowns of 2024, it is simply not acceptable behaviour on the part of any sales manager at any level from manager to director to VP to CRO. Setting strategies, better defined as "the primary sales directions for the business" is both complex and difficult, and it is at the heart of what defines sales management. If it were simple, it would not be "a primary direction", and you would not be comped at the level you are.

For example, "strategic decisions" might include incorporating a new distribution channel or a decision to add in a corporate partner channel with a similarly aligned company who will be selling your products or services as part of their offerings.

Actually, coming up with the ideas for those strategies is the easy part. Actually, making decisions on a small number of priority strategies that are going to produce consistently increasing new sources of revenue is the tough part. It's for this reason during the Covid years of 2020 and 2002, we just said... "forget strategy!", and focus on survival and keeping the team together. We innovation and hard work, we accomplished that and stabilized both the business and the team. Right now, in the first half of 2024, we need to continue to be very heavily focused on tactical execution! If we can get that down, make our planned numbers for the first and second quarters, then there's time to take a deep breath in July and August and take a longer-term view into the second half of 2024.

**“Mistake #2”** identifies that too often the actual tactics are not backed up with detailed objectives, activities plan, metrics or even KPIs. Planning out the tactics that fit directly into and give detailing to the primary strategies that have been agreed to is critical, and nowhere is that tactical planning more critical than in the world of Sales this year. This is absolutely the most critical time for detailed, short-term quarter-by-quarter tactical playbooks!

That having been said, let’s just say that there is a longer-term sales strategy that the management team has worked through and agreed to invest time and money into. An example might be to add to your current sales model by changing the way that the company strategically sells to a national account at that company’s headquarters while also selling to at separate locations in a regionalized territory.

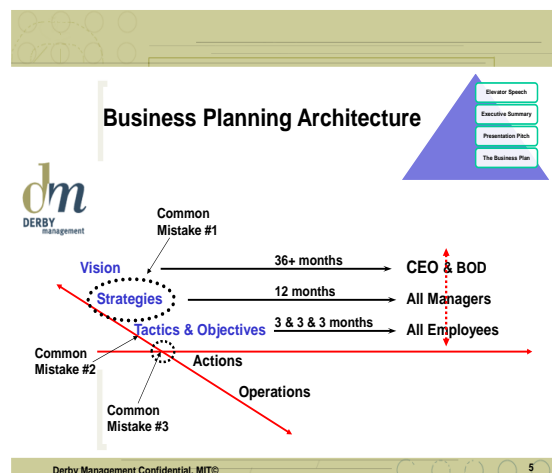
For instance, let’s say that the national account is Tyson Foods, a highly respected national and international brand. The strategic question for both our Sales and your Marketing planning is whether your company will set prices and plan supporting marketing and sales tactics at the national level of headquarters or will you do that on a region-by-region basis or even at a plant-by-plant local level?

Depending on the that type of strategic definition decided in most cases by the customer, your own sales plan for that year would need to detail...

- Does your company follow just one model or is there another model, or it is a hybrid?
- What are the required communications practices among the salespeople involved?
- What does the customer want to do and what would provide the value best for them?
- Where would pricing occur? Same question for Customer Success and Support?

The answer to these complex and very common sales strategy questions then becomes a series of well-researched and planned-out management decisions. Those decisions are “strategies.” The corresponding sales tactics that tie into those strategies both nationally (and especially at the individual customer locations themselves) would then constitute the sales tactics and the detailed activity planning of the salesperson on that account.

**“Mistake #3”**, which I am sure will never happen with you, is that too often sales management and the salespeople themselves do not take time out of their very busy schedules to actually plan out the sales “Actions” or “Activities” below the red line.



In our work with sales management, we like to recommend that a sales team should be spending 80% of their time below the red line actually selling and executing to the defined Sales Playbook, and 20% above the line, both as sales managers and as salespeople, planning for the future.

We created this graphic just to quickly visualize the differences in the words- **“Vision”**, **“Strategies”**, **“Tactics”** and **“Actions”**.

Sales management’s primary responsibility is to create a totally integrated sales plan balanced within this architecture. Too many different strategies, and there will be chaos since the actual tactics that produce the revenue would not tie together. On the other hand, too few strategies or poorly planned tactics will not create enough growth.

### Key points:

- All **Tactics** have **Objectives**.
- All **Objectives** have dates and metrics.
- **Activity** planning is where the rubber hits the road
- **Quarterly sales plans** outline your tactics and primary activities that get you to your objectives.

### All that any salesperson or any sales manager can manage are “Activities”!

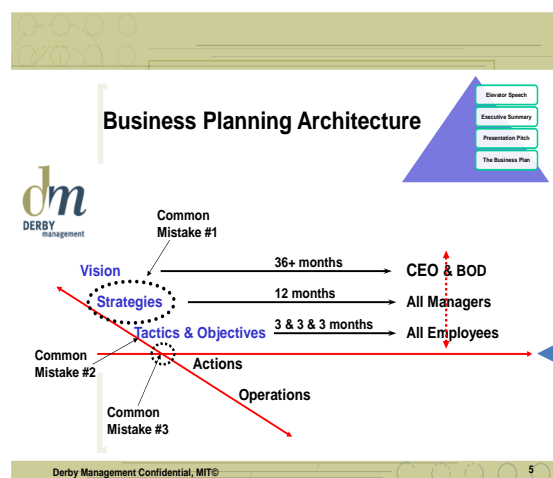
Often, in the heat of a very busy sales month, we realize that all that can be managed by any salesperson are planned activities at that particular snapshot in time. Don’t overthink this reality and just totally focus on what you can manage in any short timetable, and that will always come down to activities against your monthly plan. You simply cannot manage Results or Objectives or even Tactics! The rest is all “just” a framework. There are only general timelines for the implementation of strategies for example, but here are a few guidelines that we have found useful over the years in our conducting 30 to 40 sales planning sessions every year.

- Do not waste your management time with strategies right now that go beyond 2024. There are still too many unknowns, too many market and economic changes, plus you

have a sales number to reach this month and this quarter, so just focus on those for now until the geopolitical challenges settle down.

- Tactical game plans will work perfectly if you now lock them into your quarterly operating playbook.
- Activities are the most critical element in your Sales plan and should come down to where your salespeople need to be spending the majority of their time in developing monthly and quarterly activity plans looking out no more than 90 days.
- For example, start thinking about Q4 planning in early September. Every quarter, plan and replan two quarters ahead.

There may be long term strategies somewhere for some companies in 2024. One of our customers, [Steinway & Sons](#), in business for 165 years, clearly has very long-term plans as do our biopharma customers. At [Reiser](#), where I've been chairman and now work with senior management on their overall business strategies, we have an underlying strategy of adding customer value boldly defined in our company logo-“Built on Trust” that serves us well. Having used those two companies as examples, they are both decades old and both have been superbly managed over those decades in both good and not-so-good economic conditions.



Let's take another look at this word, "architecture", since at various times as an individual salesperson or as a sales manager, you need to balance your time, your planning and certainly your energy between planning and doing, which is the purpose of this horizontal red line. As a sales manager at any level, you need to be spending 20% of your time above the red line working on planning with your peer managers and bosses and 80%

in the field leading the team and making players yourself.

The graphic below (borrowed from one of our recent Sales Management Boot Camps) provides you with an opportunity to think through just where your sales plan fits in with the scope of your company's overall business planning for 2024.

- There is the annual company sales plan detailed by quarters.
- There is a sub plan based on regions or key accounts if the company is larger.

- There are the most important Key Account Plans that bring planning to the rep level, and it's at this level that the rubber needs to hit the road.



- Most importantly, the business plan for the company provides an overview of what the current status is and where the company is headed over the period of the next four quarters refreshed every quarter to look out for the current and the following quarter. Since this is a consistently updated document, quarterly sales plans and consistent quarterly performance reviews are mandatory to get full buy-in from all the salespeople, management and from Marketing and Customer Success. Remember, this is a team effort, and the Sales department cannot stand by itself.

Next in line is the company's Marketing plan, which actually sets the pace for everything in the overall business plan and in the Sales plan since it sets in place the market opportunities, the prospective customer needs, the ever-present competition, the future product and service requirements and an outline of the primary marketing tactics and accompanying budgets which will be required for that period of time. Most importantly, the quarterly Marketing action plan

provides the lead gen plans, timetables and coordinated SLAs (Sales Lead Agreements) between Sales and Marketing.

All of which brings me to why we wrote this guide. Is the guide perfect? My expectation is that we will go through another major revision in July. Even our award-winning 20 year old ebook, **“Writing the Winning Business Plan”**, with tens of thousands of downloads and used repeatedly at MIT, underwent major revisions mid-year between February 2020 and July 2023.

In this edition of **“Writing the Winning Sales Plan”**, our intent is to provide you with a guide, perhaps an outline and maybe a template or three, but the real intent is to get you to think, to bring together your sales team and the salespeople from other teams and work through the process of planning out your primary tactics for at least these twelve months of 2024. Sometime during Q3, we will know enough to be able to take a longer view into 2025. Right now, step up, put your hard hat on and fill in the details of all your tactics, your quarterly activities and the required operational technology and tool support details that you will need to surpass your quota plan this year. Therefore, if you find that all of the levels of plans identified here are too complex or simply too many, then eliminate what you don’t need and just focus on two sets of plans:

1. Your overall quarter-by-quarter sales plan for the year in terms of your objectives.
2. Your individual quarterly Key Account Plans for your salespeople.

At any time, if you have comments, questions or want to add your own content to this, just connect with me by email or through Linked In, and we will set up a time to talk in the short term.

Best of Success!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Joe'.

[Derby Management Site](#)

-Sales & Marketing Productivity Experts

-Business & Strategy Planning Specialists

[What We Do & the Value We Add](#)

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## The 8 Step Sales Plan Outline

1. Analyze Sales Performance” by District/Region/Territory
2. Identify “Opportunity” (High Potential /Low Performance) Territories



3. Establish total company and regional Quarterly Sales Objectives
4. Establish Regional Quarterly sales objectives.
5. Develop Sales Tactics and Activities for each Customer Segment
6. Develop a Quarterly Regional Action Plan (The 30-60-90 Day Plan)
7. Identify National Key Accounts and Develop Key Account Plans
8. Develop a Key Account Plan for each of your Key Accounts

The process I want to bring you through is one of creating these various plans and doing the thinking old school, piece-by-piece, whether that's on paper, on a whiteboard, in the architecture of a PowerPoint deck or worked through online using the sales planning templates and tools in your CRM. For me personally, since that's the way I learned, I bring everything through the details I write out in PowerPoint, share that with customers, get their edits, go back and forth a few times, and then commit everything to CRM templates.

First, get your ideas down in any manner that you want. Think it through by yourself or with a peer-whatever's the best way for you to work through your own planning whether you're the head of sales or an individual salesperson. For me, even before I go to a PPT deck, I start by using a whiteboard, and my first step is just to whiteboard-out the key objectives and timetables I must meet. As I am doing that, various tactical ideas will come to mind, and I just find a place on the whiteboard to start jotting those down. What I have at the end of that exercise, which will most likely take four or five sessions, are most of the basic components of what will need to be put into my plan, once I figure out the architecture. I then use a PPT deck to be able to visualize that architecture.

Once those foundational objectives are at least written down, and the foundation begins to take shape, and perhaps the primary tactics are identified, and I'm starting to think through what will need to take place in the planning of the actual activities, then I transfer and integrate everything into my Hubspot CRM.

I just want you to think all of this through first before you start moving through filling in the blanks in your CRM templates. I am a strong believer in CRM platforms. Having said that, I recommend that you first work through the baseline planning, then move those planning details and tools over to the structures and templates required in your CRM.

## Definitions

An important tactic when you are developing your sales plan is to make sure that everyone uses the same language on both the Sales and the Marketing teams and in their respective tactical

plans. The specifics of the meaning of the words you use are totally up to you, and the language definitions are whatever you say they are. Once they are established, enforce the use of those terms everywhere. Formality and discipline are key components in your sales plan, and no one should be allowed to color outside the box with different terminology or different processes and tools. The profession of Sales is just that, *a certified profession*, and whether it's the profession of being a Navy Seal, a certified electrician, a member of the Celtics, your certified auto mechanic who works on your Subaru, or most importantly the pilot or the surgeon that has your life in their hands, there are specific rules, processes, tools and measurements that become customized in the Sales organization at your company.

Quite frankly, why would you allow your salespeople to do anything differently? Every profession has playbooks that require training and typically certification; salespeople need to have the same. They will become "certified" to *"Your Way of Selling,"* or they simply won't be allowed to stay on the team. Common language is a very basic part of that discipline, and the following terms are our own. You should develop your own vocabulary and then insist that that vocabulary be used everywhere from the streets in the field to the directors in the boardroom.

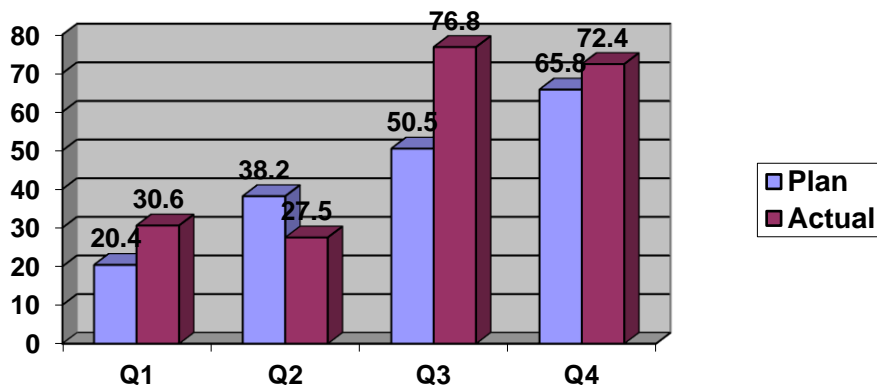
For what it's worth our own vocabulary consists of...

- We use **"Objectives"** rather than "goals". "Goals" are too wishy-washy for us.
- We use **"KPI's"** for Key Performance Indicators.
- We use **"Business Plans"** for officially approved plans by the Board of Directors.
- **"Sales Plans"** for annual/quarterly plans from the head of Sales to the senior team.
- We use **"Quota"** for revenue or bookings plans committed to by Sales.
- We want quota to be a minimum of 15% more than the Business Plan revenue number.
- **"Tactics"** are fundamental quarterly plans, and **"Activities"** are the action items.
- **"Customers" & "Prospects"**. We mix the terms since tactics can apply to both.
- **"Personas"** define in human terms the personification of buyers and decisions makers.
- **"Calls" or "Connects"** refer to calls, emails, Zoom/Team meetings and F2F visits.
- **"Regional"** encompasses "Regions", "Districts" and "Territories"
- **"Key Accounts"** follow the 20%/80% rule.

## Step #1: Do the analysis!

### Analyze existing Sales performance by region by salesperson – (use graphics)

- Utilize charts, graphs, or bullets to analyze sales performance to the quota plan.
- Analyze sales detailing at the level that makes sense for you as a Sales Manager.
- Use examples from your company's toolbox or your own graphs from your CRM.
- Analyze sales performance compared to Quota.
- Analyze sales performance compared to primary competition.



For an existing company, your graphics should be generated from your CRM. If this is a startup or a small business where the past performance has not been measured or you simply do not have a CRM, define, as best you can some prior measurement of performance just to give yourself a baseline. If there is nothing in real detail, don't overthink this step. It is whatever it is. That then becomes your baseline. By the way, what you do want to put in place is a *real* CRM that has the necessary tools, apps and easy-to-use templates. There are literally hundreds of choices, and while we can easily state that your only choices *should* be the following three, we can definitely provide advice on products you should not use.

1. [Hubspot CRM](#)-our personal preference as “an integrated single source of truth”.
2. SFDC-Salesforce.com
3. MSCRM-Microsoft CRM

Just connect with me at [jack@derbymanagement.com](mailto:jack@derbymanagement.com), and we can talk about this.

## Step #2: Focus on your “High Opportunity Regions”!

### First identify your “High Opportunity” regions

In 2024, since we want to be deep into tactical planning, what we want to do here is to follow the 80/20 Rule and focus 80% of our effort on the 20% of the accounts that will lead to the highest probability results...month-by-month and quarter-by-quarter. If you were to spend your time (which is your most valuable resource in 2024) trying to take in the entire region of all of New England or the Mid-Atlantic states for example, it simply couldn't be done. Too much territory, too many potential accounts and too much defocus even given that actual account travel time in a Zoom/Teams world would be greatly reduced.

For example, if I were a salesperson selling medical equipment, and I had the entire region of New England, I would plan on the following:

- Vermont: either never call on anything or limit it to the University Medical Center in Burlington.
- Maine: limit my focus to the Maine Medical Center. Nowhere else; no stops along the way.
- Massachusetts: focus 80% of my time in Greater Boston and the UMass Medical in Worcester.
- NH: focus in Concord and in the five hospitals on the seacoast, all owned by larger systems.
- RI: focus only on Providence.
- CT: focus my time on Hartford. The salesperson who owns NYC can have southern CT.

Even in a Zoom environment where travel doesn't really matter, there is an affinity for “selling locally” among the hospital systems, and when travel becomes standard again, I still need to severely cut back on what used to be “normal expected” windshield time. A trip from Boston to Burlington VT will take six hours back and forth with most of the time spent 200 miles of non-existent cell zones.

At the same time that you're analyzing historical sales analysis and researching the high opportunities geographies, start noting down the specific high potential accounts in those same regions.

**Objective:** Identify those territories that are underperforming but have *large* potential to grow market share and sales revenue. In the medtech equipment example above, this may narrow down to the cities of Boston and Cambridge. Large opportunities, but difficult to crack into.

**Planning Tips:** You should also utilize this format to identify the **“Middle Performing Regions”** where you can grow the business through standard blocking, tackling and solid execution plans. Do the same especially for the existing **“High Performing Regions.”**

These tactical plans need to be very detailed and in text. They are three month written plans which are metric-heavy and graphic in detail. There is nothing general or fluffy, and the *“hope”* word is never used. These documents are full game plans for each of the high performing regions, and they also include your Key Account Plans for the specific high potential accounts. Yes, this is hard work, but in any sales environment and especially in this 2024 world of both political and geopolitical distractions with limited bandwidth on the part of your customers and prospects, this is a battlefield with more direct and indirect competitors than ever before including the reality of the prospect who would rather simply “do nothing!”. As a result, there’s absolutely no allowance for fluffy plans without detailed detail in 2024!

Ideally, there should be three types of Sales Plans within each Region, but if this is your first or second time going through the rigors of this process, I recommend that you focus only on creating Sales Plans for your **“Key Accounts”** for which you’re going to apply the 80/20% or better yet, in which 80% of your results will come from 20% of your accounts.

**Four types of account game plans:**

1. **“High Opportunity Plans”** are for “High Potential Accounts” in low performance regions.
2. **“High Performing Accounts”** are your **“Key Accounts.”**
3. **“Grow-the-Business-Plans”** are for existing customers which have expansion opportunities.

These can be either pure expansion account or **“Affiliated New Accounts”** which are other divisions or other locations in that same company. If you are doing business with one department or division within Tyson or Fidelity or Alcoa, for example, and that business is going well, then getting into another division should be a much shorter sales cycle with a reference from your currently satisfied buyer in a sister division or location.

4. **“Customer Retention Plans”** are for existing large customers, which although there may be little in the way of expansion opportunities, you cannot afford to lose. Your strategic question for these accounts is how you plan to build your “customer success” model in these accounts. Ideally, they should be handled by a separate **“Customer Success Rep”** (titles typically given to support people focused on satisfaction and retention metrics) and not by the primary salesperson. Different skills, different compensation, and different metrics, which always come down to retention.

Given this outline, now you, as the sales manager, just need to figure out where you’re going to spend your time as a manager working with which salespeople, in which regions, and for which key accounts. Here’s a bit of advice based on 30 years of doing it both the right...*and the wrong* ways.

### People

- Focus your time on your best “A” level salespeople. They will always produce more.
- Focus your time also on your B+/A- level salespeople. Your coaching will pay off quickly.
- Train, challenge and recertify your B/B- players to become B+/A- in three months.
- Terminate those who do not make the cut. You simply don’t have the time as a manager.

### Regions

Focus your time on the **High Opportunity Regions** but be very careful if they represent major logistics challenges in terms of difficult distances to travel or there is heavy competition. Better to walk away from a region than to waste your time travelling there even in the new normality of mostly zoom meetings.

Use the sales operating strategy of **“Streets not States.”** There is not much rationale that a \$10 million business, with a total of six salespeople for example, should have their salespeople divided into the regions of the Northeast, Canada, Mid Atlantic, Southeast, Midwest, Southern California, and Northern California. That might look good on a wall map, but you need to think through geography strategically, and most importantly, tactically.

A better alternative could very well be from the standpoint of your sales efficiency and the customer’s support effectiveness to have one person in NE, one in NY City through Albany, one in North New Jersey/Midlantic, one in the Carolinas and one in Atlanta and one in Chicago or LA.

One of our most successful businesses and investments was in a company where I was chairman that grew from \$8 to \$120 million in eight years with a highly commoditized product. We sold in only three states in New England. Given the carefully researched and very tight geographies of the Merrimac Valley in Massachusetts, two cities in southern New Hampshire, one location in southern Maine and the city of Providence, Rhode Island, the ability to focus specifically on these territories and their related Key Accounts was excellent with high penetration and very high satisfaction levels.

### **Step #3. Set quarterly objectives for the entire year.**

This example below is for New/Affiliated New Business. A different plan would be developed for existing business (expansion and retention). For each product, select one or two Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to measure on a quarterly basis. Basically, the primary metric will be your quota plan, which will usually be revenue.

Having said that, other examples could be gross margin, unit volume, bookings, retention, or any combination of these. If you are using revenue or bookings, and there could also be other terms such as “ACV” (Annual Contract Value) or “MRR” (Monthly Recurring Revenue), both heavily used in the subscription business, then define those exactly in your quarterly sales plan. You just want common language to be used everywhere from the streets to the boardroom.

### 3.1 This table example is by Product/Quarter/All Customers

KPI Measurements sales metrics	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total
Product #1					
[Detailed text here with explanations of what the metrics mean]					
Product #2					
[Detailed text here with explanations of what the metrics mean]					
Product #3					
[Detailed text here with explanations of what the metrics mean]					



### 3.2: Establish Quarterly New Customer Objectives

This example of a table is for both “New Logo” and “Affiliated New” accounts but is not for expansion business from existing accounts. The reason for this is that we like to keep the primary selling focus on “New Logo Business”. Having said that, this table could very easily incorporate what is here plus existing customers if there are subscriptions or maintenance revenue monthly. It could also have a row for upsell and expansion revenue or bookings.

What you want to achieve in this process is to create one clear dashboard of where you want to strategically focus for these monthly / quarterly time periods, and maybe another snapshot for everything in total. What I am doing here is merely show these tables graphically as part of this document. In your CRM, everything would be created automatically following the reporting criteria you had established with your peers.

Customers	Jan	Feb	Mar	Q1	Apr	May	June	Q2	July	Aug	Sept		Q3	Oct	Nov	Dec	Q4	Total
Prior Year Reference Point																		
New Logo																		
Affiliated New																		
Total																		

This table should be in dollars, and there could be a separate table for units depending on the ASP and the importance of the metric. A high ASP, for example, might also be defined in terms of units just to sharpen the focus, but ultimately everyone is going to be measured by quota dollars for either bookings and revenue and/or margin or all of these.

**“New”** is a new logo customer.

**“Affiliated New”** is an added division or added department from an existing customer where a totally new sales process needed to take place.

This is not an “upsell”, but it could be “an expansion” as long as it represents a new sales process with a separate decision maker, but that the process took place because the sales rep had used their existing relationship with a key decision maker at the existing customer location to ask for a proactive reference point or an actual introduction to an affiliated division or business location within the same corporation.

### 3.3 Establish customer objectives” by product.

This table would be used if you or your company set a strategic objective that selling a new product was critical to the longer-term success of the business. This could be shown for both new logo customers and for expansion into existing customers.

Region #	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total Yr.
Product #1 Objectives					
[detailed text here]					
Product #2 Objectives					
Product #3 Objectives					

### 3.4 Summary Results by Region

Once the objectives by product by quarter have been detailed, which is both critical and time-consuming work, you want to take a snapshot of what this means to you as a manager or as a salesperson in terms of dollars and maybe units.

**This table's value** is to provide an overview of dollars or units (if it makes sense, and especially if you have a relatively high ASP and relatively low unit sales), or both, in order to merely take a snapshot of the growth required for a 12-month picture.

Customers	Jan	Feb	Mar	Q1	Apr	May	June	Q2	July	Aug	Sept	Q3	Oct	Nov	Dec	Q4	Total
Prior Year																	
Existing Baseline if any																	
New																	
Affiliated New																	
Expansion & Upsell																	
Total																	

In a tech company, for example, it would not be unusual to see 30% to 40% annual growth numbers in units and in dollars. Just as one example, the impact of that visual is important in terms of hiring criteria since it takes 90-120 days just to recruit and hire experienced sales reps, then another 90 days to formally onboard individual reps and another 12 to 18 months before that person is fully ramped up to their top productivity. Yes, that's correct-12 to 18 months to get and average sales rep fully ramped up such that they are consistently hitting their quarter-by-quarter quota.

Other examples of the potential use of this table would be for adding personnel in Customer Success or in Operations, but the key use is for the salesperson and the manager to have a visual for planning and for creating impact.

## Step #4: Establish monthly & quarterly sales objectives.

This table provides a different way of looking at your region.

Territory by Product	Jan	Feb	Mar	Q1	Apr	May	June	Q2	July	Aug	Sept	Q3	Oct	Nov	Dec	Q4	Total

## Step #5 Identify sales strategies and tactics for each customer segment.

**Example:** Customize what is below to meet your individual requirements

Segment	Strategies for Segment	Sales Tactics/Action Plans for each Segment
This could be by product or market sector or customer or persona	Strategies would be ... - “Primary Directions” - “Major Initiatives” - “Fundamental Building Blocks” in markets, geo, customer focus, persona shifts or products	Tactics are quarterly and annual plans. Activities are monthly action items in the plan. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase call frequency to 8x/month.</li> <li>• Send to National Speaker training program.</li> </ul>
	Strategy examples: -add distributors to sell with direct salespeople -sales both through salespeople and online	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> </ul>

## Step #6: Each Sales Rep develops their own quarterly activity plan

**Planning Tip:** This template will, of course, be customized by the VP of Sales, and the same template will be used by each Regional Manager and by each sales rep in the territory. There will be an overall annual Sales plan, but the most critical component, which will be detailed later will be **“The 30-60-90 Plan**, which is your Quarterly Plan. This is where the rubber hits the road, and without it, there’s just wasted words. big ideas and lots of talk and arm waving.

## This is an example of a Sales Plan Template

### The 5 Steps to Creating a Winning Regional Sales Plan

Step 1	Analyze the territory or defined geo.
Step 2	Analyze & set objectives for all “Key Accounts”
Step 3	Identify a minimum of 10 Key Accounts that require individual Key Account Plans (Use Template)
Step 4	Set regional objectives and activity plans.
Step 5	<b>Take action &amp; measure results</b> At the beginning of each new quarter look back and formally review the results for <b><i>“What were the Best Practices” that we can use again?</i></b>

### Beginning of a Written Region Action Plan Template

**Region Action Plan**

**Name of District/Region**

**Name of Sales Rep**

**Region Name & Location**

**Date**

## Step I: Analyze Territory

At various places in this written sales plan, for the purpose of providing an example, we have used a medical device product sold to hospitals of various sizes of bed capacity.

Summarize the following regional information in two to three concise paragraphs. Make sure that this is detailed and write it as if you needed to hand it off to your replacement because you were promoted to another position in the sales organization. My point here is just to put down as much detail as is possible since this is going to be a living plan, and it just may be that you get promoted, and there should be solid history in your CRM for everything you have done.

- Sales Potential
- Geography/Size of Territory
- Account Analysis: Retained, New, Lost, Recaptured
- Treatment Protocols used in Territory
- Market & Competitive Information
- Demographics
- Number of Accounts by Segment
- Reimbursement/Payor information
- Overall Company Product Usage
- Perceptions

- Step #1: Record the territory sales history for the prior year.

Total Year Sales Results	Quarter 1	Quarter 2	Quarter 3	Quarter 4	Total
Quota Plan					
Actual Results					

Also, provide at this point all the market research data on this region or at least what it is on a national scope. This data always exists somewhere, or there will be data of a similar product or service.



## Step 2: Analyze & set objectives for your Key Accounts

Analyze and set objectives for the top Key Accounts that represent 80% of Sales (the most profitable) or have “High Sales Potential” for the upcoming year. Again, use the 80/20% Rule here. It depends on your revenue volume of course, but my expectation is that this number of actual accounts will be 25ish for a salesperson. By definition, it needs to be more than 10, and correspondingly, it cannot be 100.

You will note the word “connects” here, which might be a F2F meeting, a phone call, an email, a text, a Zoom/Teams meeting or a LinkedIn InMail. Whatever it is, you want to count frequency. Why? It’s the only way that you can plan, use your time and then forecast accurately!

### Examples of criteria used to define a Key Account:

Key Account Classification Criteria	Key Account Screening Criteria
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Customers responsible for 80% of revenue</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ability to sustain long term profitable relationship (\$X net over Y years)</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Customer with over \$ 1.5 million in sales. [\$1.5m is an arbitrary number on my part]</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Account values Company products and services to be distinct from competition</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Customer with potential of (an example) of \$1.5 million of sales over 2 years</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Relationship has strategic value or adds to quality of the company</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Customer generates \$800,000 profit [\$8m is an arbitrary number on my part]</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Company can create differential advantage by serving the customer</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Customer responsible for of x% of the market in units or value</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Company can create considerable barrier to entry by serving the customer</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Opinion leader influences 20% of prescribers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Potential for growth is greater than the current major customers.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Customer with contribution of &gt; 5%</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Customer relationship based on more than price negotiation.</li> </ul>

Key Account Name Min: 10 Go for 25	Potential Sales by Quarter	Competition Market Share Ideally in %, but can be very general	Our Market Share	Quarterly Sales Objective	% Sales Contribution	Segment Current Objective	Current Connect Frequency	Connect Frequency Objective
1.								
2.								

**Step 3: Identify the 10-25 Highest Sales Potential Accounts**

These would be “Key Accounts” that require complete written Key Account Plans (KAPS)

**Key Account # 1:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Sales Potential:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Company Share:** \_\_\_\_\_

Don't get hung up on the exact % if you don't know; guessing is better than nothing.

**Competitive Share:**

Don't get hung up on the exact % if you don't know; guessing is better than nothing.

**% Territory Sales Contribution:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Sales Objectives for this year:** \_\_\_\_\_

List the primary objectives here

**Connect Frequency Objective for this year:** \_\_\_\_\_

Note this in monthly averages and in a total.

#### Step 4: Set Region Objectives

- ✓ Establish Monthly Sales/Market Share objectives for the region for this year
- ✓ Measure Actual Results on a monthly and quarterly basis.

Total Year	Month 1	Month 2	Month 3	Quarter
Sales Objectives				
Actual Results				
% Attainment				

## Develop a “Connection Plan”

This plan is developed by customer segment where you will measure actual results against your quarterly objectives for every one of your key accounts. Here also, your ‘connection’ can be calls, emails, text, video, LI, or anything else. LinkedIn is preferred by us, but anything used must be directly tied into your CRM as a direct connection. Connects must be measured as a two-way connection- *“I sent something, and I received a response”*-not just *“I sent”*.

### Sample Connect Plan:

**Note:** The Sales Rep calculates available connects to make sure the Connect Plan is realistic.

**Total Available Connects = Days available x Daily Connect Average: \_\_\_\_\_**

**Example:** 20 working days in the month X connect average of 10/day = 800 available Connects. The monthly Connect Plan then requires 800 Connects. The Sales rep will need to increase their Connect average to make their total targeted Connect plan realistic. It is recommended that the Sales Rep develop a Connect Plan for each Key Account they plan on talking with or traveling to at the beginning of each month.

Obviously, most of their time should be spent with the high volume or high potential accounts. In parallel with these Connect Plans, travel or Zoom/Team time plans need to be laid out in rolling 30, 60 and 90-day time blocks.

Customer Segment	# of contacts to connect with at each KA	Target Connect Frequency	Total Targeted Connects/ Month	Actual Connects Month 1	Actual Connects Month 2	Actual Connects Month 3
"A" Accounts	6-10	4-6 month	20-60 for example			
Next priority Key Accounts	4-6	3-4 month				
Next priority Key Accounts	4-6	2-3/month				
Next priority Key Accounts	4-6	2-3/month				
Next priority Key Accounts	4-6	2-3/month				
Next priority Key Accounts	4-5	2-3/month	8-15 for example			
Totals						

## Establish Region Action Plans- Medical Product Example

Step 4: Set Action Plans	Develop Strategies	Develop Action Plan	Budget \$ Planned Date	Take Action \$\$\$ Date	Step 5: Measure Results/ROI
<b>1. Develop 1 new Thought Leader/Speaker</b>  <b>Potential Speakers:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dr. Smith</li> <li>• Dr. Jones</li> <li>• Dr. Grant</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide Slide Deck</li> <li>• Speaker Training</li> <li>• Provide latest abstracts &amp; reprints</li> <li>• Become accredited</li> </ul>	Have Smith, Jones, & Grant attend the Training Program in Orlando and meet with Director of Engineering to review the latest publications.	<b>Budget:</b> <b>\$2,500</b> <b>May</b>	<b>Actual Cost:</b> <b>\$2,250</b> <b>plus</b> <b>\$2,500</b> <b>T&amp;E</b>  <b>Held</b> <b>May</b> <b>20<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>Incremental Sales =</b> <b>\$100,000</b>  <b>ROI =200%</b> <b>(\$100K/\$5,000)</b>

(End of Territory Business Plan Template).

The next few pages, taken from our Sales Management Boot Camp programs, provide you with an example of “another view” of a sales planning process using a series of PowerPoint templates that provided an easy-to-do, easy-to-review, common methodology within a sales team. Although seemingly easier to accomplish and display, the homework and the detailing necessary to get to this view requires the same amount of planning effort, discipline and detailing.

These are merely visuals. In actual practice, we would use the templates in Hubspot, our CRM.

## Examples from our Sales Management Boot Camps



### Start Writing...

#### What you need...



- 2 to 3 half days
- End of quarter or first 2 days of new quarter
- A quiet place and time.
- All of your data easily available.
- Get your ideas and content down quickly.
- Write draft after draft



Let it air out for a day

Share an almost final draft with others

- Someone else on the Sales Team
- Your boss, definitely the CFO





## Example #1

- Business system software & services
- Sold to hospitals
- Very rapid growth
- Value proposition: ROI, billing
- Your planning format: **Only 5 sections**
  1. Segment customers
  2. List Key Accounts
  3. Assess competitors
  4. Detail quarterly objectives
  5. Detail monthly and quarterly tactics



## Quarterly Plan Example -Step #1-Segment

### 1. Segment Your Customers

1. There is not much to do here.
- This is a listing of the specific market segment types which are available
- It should begin every Plan since it is a strong visual reminder as to your sales focus for this period.

Segment Name	Segmentation Characteristics	No. of Beds
Teaching	Major urban teaching hospital in one of the key 18 cities	750
Large Urban	Large urban hospital, but not affiliated with a university	500-750
Community#1	• Located outside of the urban geography, but directly affiliated with a university	300-500
Community#2	• Located outside of the urban geography, but not affiliated with a university, but part of an IDN	300-500
Large Group >10 docs	• Large Group Practice directly associated with a Teaching or Large Urban	NA
Small Group	• 5-10 physicians	NA

## Territory Plan Example -Step #1-Segment

### 1. Segment Your Customers Focus Your Plan

- What you would do here is to fill in the % of your your bookings or sales that you have achieved YTD and **highlight** the segment or two that you are focusing this plan on. It may be the exact same for the past period or you may be changing your focus to an added segment

Segment Name	Segmentation Characteristics	No. of Beds	Current YTD %
Teaching	Major urban teaching hospital in one of the key 18 cities	750	9.1%
Large Urban	Large urban hospital, but not affiliated with a university	500-750	12.8%
Community #1	Located outside of the urban geography, but directly affiliated with a university	300-500	29.7%
Community #2	Located outside of the urban geography, but not affiliated with a university, but part of an IDN	300-500	48.4%
Large Group > 10 docs	Large Group Practice directly associated with a Teaching or Large Urban	N/A	0%
Small Group	5-10 physicians	N/A	0%

In this example, the account manager is going to continue to focus on Community #2, but they have also decided to make inroads into the Large Group Practices

## Territory Plan Example -Step #2- Key Accounts

### 2. List Key Accounts

- Use simple language
- Use clear definitions
- Use metrics & data
- Who is the targeted prospect or the existing customer?
- What are their key needs for this time period?
- What would be the expected dollar value if you were able to close them during this period?

Prospect or Customer	Key Needs	\$ Value to

Key Accounts should follow the 80/20 % Rule  
Maybe even 90/10%



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## Territory Plan Example -Step #2-Key Accounts

Prospect or Customer	Key Needs	\$ Value to
Winchester Hospital	Their existing Meditech system is ancient and not integrated to their billing and coding system. They are looking at both replacing their entire enterprise or doing so on a department by department basis. Their biggest pain point currently is their Orthopedics Department where they are losing patient data. Orthopedics currently is the busiest department in the hospital due to their heavy marketing campaign last quarter	\$ 100K for an Orthopedic module only. Sales cycle would be 180 days.
NE Ortho	This would be a new account and a new entry into the Large Group Practice segment where I have a quota requirement of opening two accounts per quarter equaling \$25K for the 1 <sup>st</sup> quarter and \$50K/quarter for the balance of the year.	\$10-\$15K for a standalone. \$7.5K if tied to Winchester Plus \$10k in training.



## Territory Plan Example -Step #3-Competitors

### 3. Assess Competitors



- Who & Why?
- Must detail both the Strengths & Weaknesses
- Need to be very objective and detailed

Competitor	Strengths	Weaknesses

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## Territory Plan Example -Step #3-Competitors



Competitor	Strengths	Weaknesses	Our Value
Meditech	The 800 pound gorilla. Installed everywhere.	Poor service reputation Antiquated technology	Excellent quality and proven track record in service gets them up and running within 30 days
eClinicalWork	•Web-based •Lots of market buzz •Easy to install •Excellent Marketing	Not many except price is at the top of the market.	Same as above • We have a 20% price advantage. Do not want to discount, but could "throw in" our training package if they buy in this quarter.

This would be a listing of the primary competitors that you are seeing in the market during that time period of that quarter.

You need to make sure that you keep this list fresh and that you are very objective in your comments

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## Territory Plan Example -Step #4-Objectives

### 4. Primary Objectives (simple, easily defined)

– Annual, Quarterly, Actual to Plan -both MTD & QTD



Top 3 Primary Objectives	'24 Plan	Actual YTD QTD	30-60-90 Plan	Comments
• Objective 1:				
• Objective 2:				
• Objective 3:				

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## Territory Plan Example -Step #4-Objectives

### 4. Primary Objectives (simple, easily defined)

– Annual, Quarterly, Actual to Plan -both MTD & QTD



Top 3 Primary Objectives	'24 Plan	Actual YTD QTD	30-60-90 Plan	Comments
• Objective 1: Bookings Achieve \$1.8m   Q1:\$350K, Q2:\$450, Q3: \$400K, Q4: \$600K	\$1.8m Bookings Quota  \$2.2m Bookings for Club	Q1: \$400K Q2: \$0K Q3: \$825K	Q4 Plan is to get \$775K  \$325K-\$200K-\$250K	Q4 is going to be the critical month. Need to maximize the focus into new/new accounts. Forget about existing accounts for this quarter. Discuss with Inside Sales.
• Objective 2: Need to move focus to new accounts: 60% new, 40% existing	Today: 50%/50%	Q1: 50/50 Q2: 50/50 Q3: 75/25	Need 6 new accounts	Need to spend time with Mary in Marketing to have her focus on new lead gen in western MA, CT and RI. Must break into Yale affiliated hospitals
• Objective 3: Open a minimum of 6 Large Group Practice accounts for >\$250K	\$175K quota \$250K Stretch	Q1: 1 Q2: 1 Q3: 3		Winchester is up and running. Need to use their testimonials for referrals to their partners in CT.

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## Territory Plan Example - Step #5-Tactical Plan



Tactic	Expected Outcome (Detail Benefits or Return)	Time-Start -Finish	Cost
1.			
2.			
3.			

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## Territory Plan Example - Step #5-Tactical Plan

Tactic	Expected Outcome (Benefits or Return)	Time: Start to Finish	Cost
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Target Orthopedic departments in all non-Customer Community #2 Hospitals for White Paper Download results achieved at Baptist in Q4, .....</li> <li>• Work with Marketing for November launch. Must work existing new leads-need content</li> </ul>	30 Qualified leads as a result of campaign.	Q4	<\$1,000
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase travel to 10 days per month with principal activity for Large Community Hospitals in Providence and in all CT. Bring the head of our Medical Advisory Board, Dr. Smith, to Yale New Haven and to Stamford Memorial for one symposium in each by end of November.</li> <li>• Research Maine Medical Center for need.</li> <li>• Travel with clinical specialist, Jan Olmstead.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Achieve 60/40% split for New/Existing.</li> <li>• Must get out of MA territory and focus on the CT geography.</li> <li>• Stop wasting time in VT and NH.</li> <li>-</li> </ul>	Immediate	\$12,000 Increased travel and hotels for CT. Run symposia at \$3,000 each
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focus majority of MA time on getting into the Large Group Practices affiliated with existing MA hospital customers using their networks.</li> <li>• Spend 30% of October targeting 10 new practices.</li> <li>• Use the Brainshark module on testimonials from New England Rehab Center featuring improvements in customer satisfaction.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Open minimum of 6 new Group Practices.</li> <li>• Demonstrate specifically that "Meaningful Use" can be impacted as a result</li> </ul>	October & November	<\$1,000



Again, what's been directly supplied above is just another template example shown here to provide you with a different view of a Sales Plan structure. The key takeaway is to have the sales rep...

- Take a quarterly detailed view of their territory and their high opportunity key accounts.
- Define the activities for both the quarter and the month into 30-60-90-day periods.
- Identify metrics.
- Focus on the one thing they can totally control, which is always activities.

As you will note, the key to success in this is getting the results that you want for each quarter detailed down into 30-60-90-day activities. Very simply, you can never get results without detailing the activities. All plans get sidetracked, and often, *"it's the actual planning process that is most important."*

## **Process-Tools-Technology-Math & People**

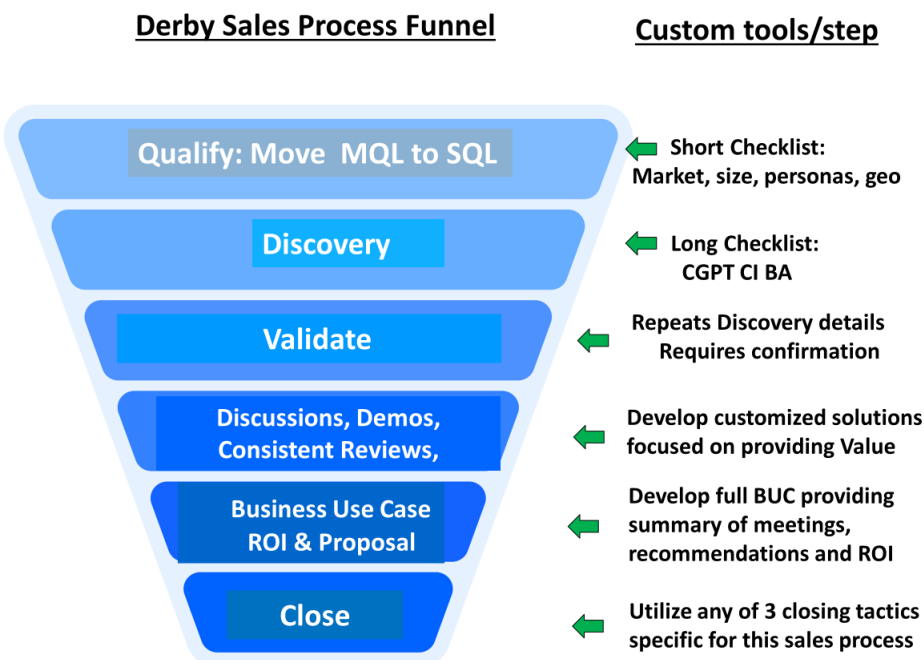
This phrase of ***“Process-Tools-Technology-Math & People”*** is one that I and my partners use many times every day when working with customers, and I use all of the time in teaching my courses at Tufts in Marketing and in Sales. We apply the same exacting principles of bringing operating processes with individual steps, tools that tie into those steps and technology always integrated into the company’s CRM platform. All this thought process of applying systematic processes which use specific tools along with required training have been used in manufacturing, engineering, and quality control systems for decades. Finally, the world of Sales has caught up and is now realizing the same rewards of shorter time periods and dramatically increased win rates.

When properly introduced and bought into by the sales team, success has been measured by increasing the productivity of the salespeople by a minimum of 25% and the effectiveness of increasing customer value also by 25% plus.

For the purpose of this document, which is primarily to provide you with an overview of how to construct sales plan, what we have done below is to provide our own generic definition our sales process in order to give graphic representations of what a typical Sales Process would look like. For your own sales process, you need to customize whatever will be useful to you. Having said that, we know from our experience through hundreds of companies that the Discovery step is the #1 most important step in any sales process, and strongly recommend that it is Step #2 in your own sales process.

Each sales process would be customized to the requirements of the individual company and the market requirements of the customers.

Typically, the initial steps of “Qualify”, “Discovery” and “Validate” will always be in place although they may be titled differently, and then there will always be a “Close” step. What lies between these two groups would be heavily customized by the sales management of the individual company.



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- Our Sales funnels will typically have 5 to 7 steps.
- They will always start with a “Qualify” step.
- They will next always move to a “Discovery” step, which is the #1 most important step.
- They will always have a “Validate” step, which confirms the Discovery meeting results.
- They will always have a “Close” step.
- The other steps between “Validate” and “Close” are customized to your own process.

After working through the development of the steps and their accompanying tools that go into each step, the sales process of a funnel with its steps would then be embedded directly into your company’s CRM platform which would then be used to provide the planning and performance metrics that move from step to step.

A factoid taken out of our 2023 survey shows that 28% of sales pros say the sales process takes too long and is the biggest reason prospects back out of deals. We also know that there’s an average of five decision-makers involved in every sales process today. We also know that unless there is a formal process, the Discovery step is either not done or it’s done superficially. When that happens and there is not a clear definition of Challenges, Goals, Plans, Timelines, Consequences, Implication Budgets & Authority, (Hubspot’s [CGPT CI BA](#) Formula we are religious about) the process slows down and repeats itself again and again filling in the facts that should have been understood and agreed to up front in the Discovery step.

## Just for an example, using our funnel above:

We have 6 **steps**, each of which is clearly defined on our Deal Page in our CRM.

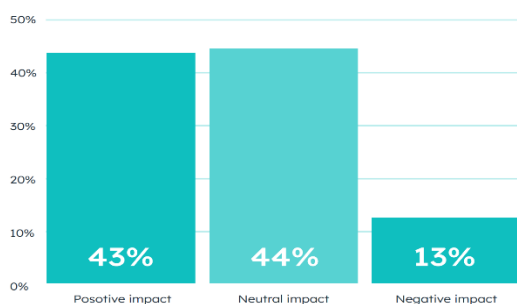
Each step then has specific **tools** that show as drop-down templates at each step.

The Discovery Checklist tool of CGPT CI BA is an example which is embedded into Discovery.

In Close, we would embed short videos done in-house demonstrating the best techniques.

With this structure created, and then tools built into the steps, we would then set up automated sequencing from one step to another based on how the flow should unfold with reminders and added content detailed along that path.

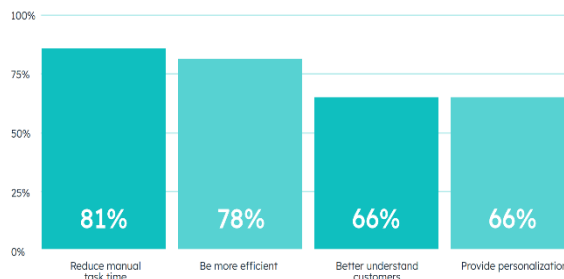
### How reps feel buyers using AI to research will impact their work



As practitioners of the science of Sales, we are just starting to use true AI tools, and know that 2024 will be a year of explosion and rapid adoption and are hugely excited about what lies ahead. Having said that, we would caution that what you want to make sure is that everything ties seamlessly into your CRM, which ultimately is your one source of truth...or else the analytics will not work.

We know that with AI even in its infancy of 2024, the use of self-serve sales tools will proliferate in what were always considered to be the importance of having the sales rep involved and “controlling” the sale process. In an AI-enabled world, demos and free trials could easily be more efficiently enacted by the prospect directly without the involvement of the sales rep. The same goes for chatbots providing customer and product reviews directly to the prospect.

### How do sales pros say AI tools help them in their work?



Moving out of the realm of AI and even our religion of the required use of a formal sales process, what seems to be the best manner to close this introduction to the science of sales is to provide an outline of what we saw in 2023 from the best high performing sales teams:

- A dedication to a formal sales process using an embedded CRM with aligned tools.
- Prioritizing internal trust among all salespeople. Doing the same with sales and marketing
- Collaboration and knowledge sharing everywhere.
- Transparent easy-to-access data and performance analytics
- Formal quarterly training sessions specifically directed to skills.
- Easy-to-use lead gen tools with an emphasis on social media, demos, and video

If you want to learn a lot more about what's happening in the world of Sales, just connect with us, and we would welcome the opportunity to schedule a [Whiteboarding Session](#) with you to explore what you're currently doing in Sales. You may also want to think about attending one of our virtual Sales Management Boot Camps this year or talk to us about developing a specific boot camp for your team.

Thanks very much for reading and thinking through our 7<sup>th</sup> edition of this ebook, "[How to Write the Winning Sales Plan](#)". It's getting better with each edit and considering the now very rapid changes that are occurring in Sales this year and especially with AI, we would expect that we will do another edit sometime this summer. Keep in touch, and if you have ideas as to what you would like to see in future editions or comments about what's here, just email me with your ideas, and we can set up a call to discuss what you have in mind.

**Best of Success in your 2024 sales results!**

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Joe'.

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