



Canadian Professional  
Sales Association

*Since 1874*

# **5 TIPS** FOR DEVELOPING YOUR 2017 SALES STRATEGY

2016 was quite a year! Although it seems like it lasted a lifetime, 2017 is finally here. That means it's time to think of the next 365 days ahead. A new year is an opportunity to commit yourself to embracing change and meeting challenges head on. It's time to take all of your experiences and lessons from 2016 and apply them to a new 2017 sales strategy.

Big changes are expected across all industries in 2017, with sales being no exception. You may have already noticed that the sales industry is growing and developing at lightning speed, so don't expect things to slow down now. It's actually one of the most exciting times to be salesperson! Creativity and variety make it an exciting ride, with professional opportunities to be found at every turn. But if you go into 2017 without a solid strategy, it might be an unpleasantly bumpy ride.

Simply "winging it" did not cut it last year, and it will certainly not serve you now if you want the year ahead to be a success. Preparation is imperative. Make sure you're in the best position to make a big impact.

Are you ready to develop a successful sales strategy for 2017? Here are a couple of tips.

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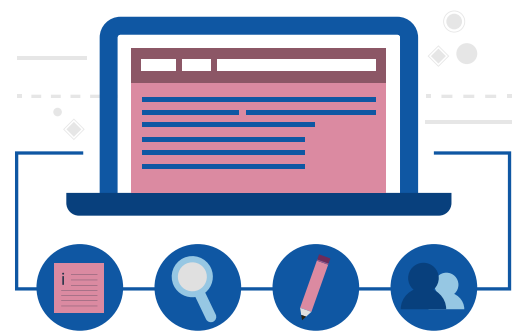


# 1 | OPTIMIZE ONLINE: WEBSITE & CONTENT

Are you a frequent visitor to your company's own website and social media channels? Have you tried viewing your company's website from a mobile device such as a smartphone or tablet? If your site is not optimized for mobile viewing you need to sort it out—stat.

You want people to engage with you online, and you likely don't need a study to confirm for you that a vast number of people are engaging on their phones. Even one negative experience with your business online can turn a potential customer off for good. In our digital age, the competition is only a click away.

Similarly, you want what's posted on your website and disseminated on your social media channels to be of the highest quality—that is, online content that is designed to attract, educate, and add value. Your output should be consistent, focused, engaging, and hitting the right audiences for your product or solution.



## STRATEGY: OPTIMIZE

- ✓ Boost customer engagement by ensuring your website and all online content is optimized for mobile platforms such as smartphones and tablets
- ✓ Go beyond a good first impression—add value to the customer experience by generating high-quality content for your website and blog
- ✓ Create a schedule to post your content consistently, at peak times, across all of your social media channels
- ✓ Do not hesitate to engage the help of a professional web designer or team of content writers

## 2 | IDENTIFY CUSTOMERS: BUYER PERSONAS

In your 2017 sales strategy you should make it a goal to vanquish vagueness—at all stages of the sales cycle and the buyer's journey. One way to accomplish this is to map (or remap) your buyer personas. In the past year, can you identify who your best customers were? What characteristics do they share? Why was your solution the perfect fit for them? Was it due to their age, lifestyle, income, geographic location, or a mix of these and other factors?

Creating customer profiles that break down who your ideal buyers are (and what makes them tick) is important. Keeping these buyer personas accurate and up to date is essential, so review them often.

A deep, meaningful understanding of your customers is going to be key for 2017. Technology is advancing, customers are evolving, and diversity is increasing. Cut through the complexity by reevaluating which demographics you should be targeting.



### STRATEGY: IDENTIFY

- ✓ Create buyer personas to understand your ideal customers and target demographics on a deeper, more meaningful level
- ✓ Ensure your buyer profiles are accurate and up to date for 2017
- ✓ Use your detailed and developed buyer persona profiles to help guide your sales and marketing focuses, as well as your content strategy

### 3 DOCUMENT THE JOURNEY: THE BUYER'S TRIP DOWN THE FUNNEL

You'll have a much clearer picture after you've mapped out your buyer personas. However, don't think you're done mapping things out just yet. Once your customer profiles are all up to date, it's time to pay close attention to the journey each persona takes on their way down the sales funnel.

Where are your buyer personas hearing about your company, product, or solution? How are they interacting with your content? What does first contact

look like? How many times do you follow up? How long does it take to close? As you know, different buyers have different needs and preferences. Tracking the way interactions play out between different buyer personas can help you move them down the sales funnel with more efficiency.

By effectively documenting the journey, you'll be better equipped to handle any questions, concerns, or objections your customers may have.



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## STRATEGY: DOCUMENT

- ✓ Map out the way the buyer's journey unfolds for different customer profiles
- ✓ With that knowledge, ensure that each buyer persona moves down the sales funnel with as much ease and efficiency as possible
- ✓ Identify recurring questions, concerns, or objections and be prepared with the proper answers and solutions in advance

## 4 | REVIEW GOALS: YOUR SALES PROCESS

After updating your buyer personas and documenting the buyer's journey down the sales funnel, it's time to look inward. What is your team's sales process like? Is the process effective enough to keep up with your company's competitive goals, or is it lagging behind? Is the process clearly defined and understood by all members of the team, or does it need tightening up? Is your process even clearly documented at all?

These are all very important questions to ask yourself when considering what to change when it comes to the sales process. Make sure you're using all the tools available to you, such as an effective Customer Relationship Manager (CRM). Using technology to your advantage is extremely helpful when it comes to streamlining processes and automating menial, time sucking tasks that take away from selling.

While taking a closer look at your process, document any problems that arise. Keep an eye out for any redundant steps that are a waste of time and resources. You want to be able to focus your attention on the customer.



### STRATEGY: REVIEW

- ✓ Take a hard look at your current sales process to understand how you can tighten it up and make it more efficient
- ✓ Use tools such as an effective CRM and various technological resources to streamline and organize the process so that you have more time for selling
- ✓ Cut out any steps in the process that are redundant and/or a waste of resources

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## 5 VISUAL INFORMATION: SEE YOUR DATA

You know that data is important. In the age of analytics and algorithms, any successful sales team knows that they depend on measurable results. As we've mentioned, your 2017 sales strategy should aim to banish vagueness. The best way to accomplish this is to rely on data. After all, numbers don't lie.

However, have you put any thought into how you're going to present, share, and interpret all of this data? Excel spreadsheets are simply not going to cut it anymore. You need to get creative. There are many types of software, online platforms, applications, and more out there that will allow you to visualize data simply and effectively.

Data visualization helps ensure that the numbers you're crunching are digestible enough for everyone. Using visuals is a smart way of communicating data, allowing it to be understood more easily. It is usually also more quickly actionable. Adapting to the new visual world and incorporating it into your sales strategy can give you a leg up with the competition if they're slower to adapt.



### STRATEGY: VISUALIZE

- ✓ Banish vagueness and encourage measurable results by tracking data and using the right metrics
- ✓ Invest in a data visualization solution to communicate results to the entire team in a quick, simple, and encouraging way
- ✓ Get a competitive edge over the competition who might still be using outdated methods such as spreadsheets

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Our 27,000+ members include senior executives, entrepreneurs, sales managers, sales representatives and sale agents. We help them reduce costs, increase efficiencies, develop

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CPSA members enjoy exclusive benefits and discounts, top-notch sales and professional training, powerful tools and resources, and an active cross-country community of sales professionals.

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