Predictable Revenue

SALES PROCESS

PART 4

Outbound Sales Learnings from 2018

A complete guide of Predictable Revenue's 2018 Podcasts

COLLIN STEWART

INTRO

Predictable Revenue is the "Outbound Success Company". We help companies grow faster with Outbound Sales.

Our Co-Founder Aaron Ross is the author of the book **Predictable Revenue** and was one of the first 150 employees at Salesforce where he built the outbound methodology that is practiced around the world in sales teams today. **Our other Co-Founder, Collin Stewart,** is the host of our weekly podcast where he interviews B2B sales leaders on the biggest opportunities and challenges in the industry.

We've taken all of our podcasts from 2018 and put them into a handy 6 part eBook. Learn how to overcome the biggest challenges facing B2B sales teams today, ensure you're leveraging opportunities, and learn from best practices from industry leaders.

Collin Stewart, Co-Founder of Predictable Revenue. Host of our weekly podcast.

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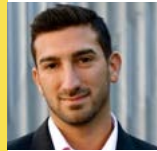# Close.io CEO Steli Efti on why your competitors' follow-ups aren't working and how you can stand out

Crafting the perfect follow up message (or, more accurately, messages) is often considered one of, if not the, most challenging aspects of a career sales.

There's the functional challenge: actually crafting interesting informative, and effective emails, social touches or voicemails. What do I say? And, how do I say it? If only every lead you reached out to realized immediately how perfect your product was and responded immediately, ready to buy (if only!).

If that weren't enough of a hurdle – and, as most of us will attest, it is quite the roadblock – there's the emotional challenge presented by the follow up. This is, admit-

tedly, an issue we don't talk enough about when analyzing the sales process. Concerns over craft, as mentioned above, tend to dominate the narrative.

But, the emotional side of follow ups is a significant issue, says Steli Efti, CEO of Silicon Valley-based CRM company Close. io, on a recent edition of The Predictable Revenue Podcast. In fact, says Efti, the emotional effects of follow ups are so strong, it's why most sales professionals don't execute on them well, if at all.

"The number one reason people don't like to follow up is the silence they are confronted with they take as personal rejection. We all don't like to be rejected, no matter how much or an alpha sales person you think you are. So, any time i try and reach out to connect and you respond with silence, I take this personally as a strong rejection. You are telling me that I'm not worth you responding. That feels terrible," **says Efti.**

"The other side of the coin is that we don't like to think of ourselves as needy or annoying. So, I'm emailing you and I'm making up this story that you are so important that you don't care about me, and no one wants to be interrupted with annoying emails. So, eventually, people stop following up because they don't want to feel the rejection and create a brand for themselves as being annoying."

CLEARING EMOTIONAL BLOCKAGES

If left unchecked, this negative mindset can prove detrimental to one's stress levels, happiness, and, of course, pipeline.
To combat this problem, Efti suggests a radical remedy: simply think positively about your follow ups, and expect positive results. It's that simple.

"You just decide to think differently about something, and that will change the outcomes. Your company doesn't have to change. Your product doesn't have to change. Your attitude has to change. If you have the right mindset, you will follow up with right intent and right energy to get the right responses," says Efti.

"One of my rules for follow ups – never apologize about it. Never refer to all of the follow ups you've done. Never make someone feel guilty. I emailed an investor 48 times. I got a warm introduction to him. Then, he went silent. So, I sent 48 emails. I had no strategy. I just sent a one sentence email, every other day. Zero creativity. Then, 48 times later, he responded. He had a crises overseas, and then we met the next day in his SF office."

Aside from Efti's dedication to following up with contacts (48 emails!), his story of emailing a potential investor highlights an important lesson for thinking about the contacts you are reaching out to: you are not the center of their universe.
As much as we want to think that our product or service is perfect for everyone we prospect to, the truth is we are not always (if ever) the priority of our prospects.
-And that's okay.-

> ❝ *"In my mind, when I follow up with you and you don't respond to me, I'm not making up a story that you are annoyed by me, or laughing at me with your colleagues. I have a simple, base hypothesis and that is that you are busy. That's it. Your universe is not centred around me and my emails,"* says Efti.

"Maybe your sick, maybe your busy, maybe your company is going through a tough time. Or, maybe my email, and what I'm asking, is something that you are on the fence about. As such, your are postponing your answer. It is my job to champion this relationship until you do reply."

PUTTING YOURSELF IN THEIR INBOX

If you can wrap your head around the fact that your prospects have lots on their plate, then it's a quick trip to Efti's next fundamental piece of effective follow ups: putting yourself in your prospect's inbox. This is a fascinating concept that revolves around one key concept – empathy. You have to have empathy for your prospects, says Efti. You have to understand their jobs, their motivations, and their needs. Such understanding, without a doubt, informs on why you are reaching out to them in the first place. Surely, you believe that what you have to offer can help them, and their organization.

But, the empathy that Efti is describing goes one step further than that. It requires you to truly understand not only that you can help them, but how to speak their language and communicate in the way they prefer to be communicated with.

> *"Whatever way you can do to implicitly or explicitly communicate that you understand who I am, what my problems are and what my inbox looks like, I'm going to respond much stronger to you than anyone else,"* says Efti.

So, what does that mean? What does an empathetic follow up look like?

Well, it could include humour – Efti has received follow ups with funny GIFs or jokes, that have caught his attention. Empathy could be reviews or questions about your prospect's organization, or some distilled thoughts on industry trends. It really helps to show you are an expert in their field.

Steli Efti.
CEO of Silicon
Valley-based CRM
company Close.

Empathy can even be the frequency by which you follow up. Efti recommends a high frequency of follow ups at first, which trail off as time passes. If a customer is worth millions of dollars, then your follow ups may never tend, he adds.

But, again, the frequency you choose should reflect how your prospects want to be followed up with. Everyone, and every industry, is different. But that's where empathy comes into play, and that's why it's so important.

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"Understand the market, the person you are trying to approach and what they want, acknowledge that. And give them a simple ask – that is a fair deal. And you will earn my time that you showed that level of understanding," says Efti.

"When you email someone, think about what their inbox looks like. Think about what their pattern recognition is like. I want to talk to people that I think get me, and understand me."

For more of Efti's detailed thoughts on effective, empathetic follow ups, check out his recent edition of The Predictable Revenue Podcast.

How RedLock's Christopher Fago Gets Prospects to Show Up On Time, Every Time

I've said it before and I'll say it again: for those in the trenches of sales development, there are few things better than booking a top-shelf meeting.

You found a company, and a prospect, that you knew you could help. You prospected. You educated. You sold. And you got them. It was a good day.

But that excitement can be fleeting – especially when that perfect meeting, that company-defining meeting, doesn't happen. The prospect doesn't show, and they don't reschedule. They're just...gone.

Sigh.

Of course, you might be thinking, no-shows happen. People get busy. People forget. Priorities change, sometimes on a dime. It's all part of the gig.

But that doesn't mean there aren't easy and effective steps we can take as sales development professionals to limit no-shows. In fact, a few tweaks to your scheduling routine can produce a dramatic increase in meeting attendance.

And that's what we want, right?

"When we have more conversations, we trade more stories, and eventually we come out ahead," says Christopher Fago, Cloud Security Specialist at RedLock, on recent edition of The Predictable Revenue Podcast.
"We come out ahead in opportunities, and we come out ahead in deals."

Fago's process

No matter how we try and spin it, the truth is we rarely rank at the top of our prospect's priority list. Like us, they're juggling responsibilities, and buying something (spending company money) is an easy task to drop down the list.

So, to ensure prospect's make it to discovery calls, Fago has developed a short, but consistent cadence for scheduling meetings. Once a prospect agrees to a meeting, Fago sets up three distinct emails:

✓ **An email thanking the prospect for agreeing to take the meeting.**
In this email, he reminds the prospect of the day and time they've agreed on, and mentions he will send a calendar invite along ASAP to confirm. A critical consideration here is to book the meeting as soon as possible. The further out you schedule the meeting, the greater a chance a prospect forgets, or changes their mind.

✓ **The calendar invite.**
Included in the calendar invite is the meeting URL, and any agenda items he feels will help structure / frame the call.

✓ **A day or two before the scheduled meeting (the previous Friday, if the meeting is booked on a Monday), Fago sends along another note detailing the agenda items for the upcoming call.**

He also asks the prospect if they wish to add anything to the agenda. The subject line for this email is key – Fago opts for a simple "Confirming," to catch the prospect's attention, and prompt them to respond. It also gives prospects valuable context for the meeting, which they can forward along to their colleagues, in case other team members will be sitting in on the call. Lastly, if a prospect has to reschedule, this email gives them the opportunity to do so.

"A enterprise deal takes like 8 people to get done," adds Fago.

> "
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> *"If there is 8 people on my call, and I only send the invite to one person, it's nice to give the person you invite more stuff to send along to the other people internally. It really helps."*

Christopher Fago.
Cloud Security Specialist at RedLock

Fago's numbers

So far, Fago's simple booking cadence has worked wonders. Last year, Fago booked, and held, 88 meetings in just 190 workdays (Fago started with RedLock in June). That's setting up a new conversation, basically, every other day.
"Back in June, it was all about having those conversations," says Fago.

"It was about discussing what we do, and learning what they are doing."
This year, Fago's numbers are even more impressive. Thus far, he's booked 59 meetings in 74 business days, including time off. That's nearly a meeting per day – Fago's goal for 2018.

More follow ups

After the initial discovery call, led by Fago, another call will be booked with a solutions engineer, if necessary. That call is a more technical demo, where RedLock can give prospects a detailed look under the hood. To be sure, RedLock isn't the only company that structure it's calls and demos as such (discovery call first, technical demo second). But their decision to do so, at least first, actually came from a lack of resources.

For example, when Fago started RedLock only had solution engineers based on the west coast.

Fago, on the hand, was based across the country, in Atlanta. Because of the time difference, scheduling an hour-long comprehensive demo (discovery and technical demo) on the first call could be difficult, depending on the schedules of the solutions engineers.

So, instead of losing out on potentially great calls, Fago and the team decided to split the calls into two 30 minute sessions. The first call, led by Fago, would cover all of the typical discovery call staples – are we a fit? – and include a sales focused deck.

If the discovery call went well, they would then schedule the technical demo where the solutions engineers could focus solely on the product.

And, as luck would have it, what started as a response to resources and times zones proved to be great journey for the prospect. "It worked out for the customer. We had 30 minutes, and we would go through the agenda we established," says Fago.

"And I would also add the fact that can use the first call to schedule a deeper dive later, so that way I don't have to show those 10 – 15 slides again. It really is customer first."

For more of Fago's thoughts on scheduling, and prospecting, check out his appearance on The Predictable Revenue Podcast.

How Ryan Reisert's SDRs Consistently Hit 100+ Activities Per Day

Raise your hand, sales development leaders, if you've had this thought before: *"If only there was some way that I could increase the volume of touchpoints my already busy SDRs produce."*
Okay... put your hands down. I know, it's a dilemma we've all faced.

Despite it's near ubiquity amongst sales development professionals, though, the question of volume and touchpoints is a unique issue because it's something we face during both good and tough times
For example, when your team is absolutely crushing its quota, wouldn't it be great if they just reached out to more prospects and a increased pipeline further? Conversely, when your team is in danger of missing its number, an easy way of combating that problem is to increase the leads you're prospecting to.

Falling short? Just add more!

Why, then, is it so difficult to have your team increase its volume? Why can it be such a challenge to have your reps reach out to more prospects each day? Ryan Reisert, Lead Instructor and Head of Partnership Development at San Francisco-based coaching firm Sales Bootcamp, says that challenge is surprising because high volume prospecting has historically been a cornerstone of sales development.
"It's a little surprising because it used to be the norm, but now that's changed. Hitting 100 activities today feels unattainable," says Reisert, on a recent edition of The Predictable Revenue Podcast.
"And, there weren't productivity tools in the last too. It's an interesting change."

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REISERT'S PROCESS

Bucking that trend, however, is the sales development process that Reisert has designed and implements with his clients.
At an expected average of 100+ touchpoints per day (that's right, 100+), per SDR, it is a high-volume prospecting approach, to be sure. But looking at this process as merely an exercise in sending a lot of emails and calling a lot of people is to sell its focus short. Yes, SDRs are reaching out a ton, but the ethic of Reisert's prospecting method is actually to ensure that reps are always doing the right activity at the right time.

"I think the reason people like to adopt my system is because there are so many things we're expected to do as SDRs – research, emails, calls, social. And, there are so many different tools we are working in to stay on top of our day to day. But, what we often forget about what is most important," **says Reisert.**

"What we don't want to do is have a day where you feel busy from beginning to end, but you're doing the wrong activities at the wrong time. So, if we can implement this strategy, this process we're able to focus on the right activities at the right time. And, once people adopt this process, they find their success goes up."

So, what is the process? What are the components of Reisert's method? It begins with a simple, tiered bucket system.

BUCKET 1:

This is the group of accounts (companies) that fall in your company's Ideal Customer Profile. These are the accounts that you should be attacking all the time.
Put another way, this bucket represents the total addressable market for your reps.

BUCKET 2:

These are the personas from Bucket 1, and you reps have made documented attempts to connect, although no connection has been made. Those attempts could be a verified dial, or a first email. Think of this as the in-cadence stage. Another critical piece to this bucket is research – to satisfy this stage, reps have made notes

and proven that you they know how to get a hold of these contacts. These notes are being tracked in your company's CRM or cadence platform, wherever is easiest to access the notes.

"I call this the warm up bucket," says Reisert. There should be 100 contacts in this bucket at any given time.

BUCKET 3:

This is the *"working"* category. Your reps have caught a contact on the phone, they've responded to an email, or referred your rep to someone else in their organization.

These are hot leads.
"There has been a hand-raised and there is a follow up," says Reisert.
Again, these connections should include contact information, notes etc. Your reps already know everything they need to know, and it's all right there for them in the CRM.

BUCKET 4:

This the *"booked meeting"* bucket.
"This is our money bucket. These are the leads we've set up for AEs," says Reisert.
"And we want to make sure there is a very low-no-show rate."

According to Reisert, each company that agrees to meet booked will get a check-in call from the SDR the week of the meeting. If there is no confirmation 24 hrs out, the reps are calling again to re-confirm. In fact, reps are calling up to 2-3 hours in advance of a schedule meeting to make sure prospects are still attending the meeting. If the meeting needs to be rescheduled, it's the SDRs responsibility to do so.

EXECUTING REISERT'S PROCESS

Once you have Reisert's bucket system in place, it's important to know how to work it properly.

To do so, his system is designed to be worked backwards (from Bucket 4 to Bucket 1) to maximize Reisert's belief that SDRs should always be doing the most important task available.

For example, reps should always start with confirming all meetings booked because this is the most high-value task they can perform. After that, reps work their "hot" leads in Bucket 3, hammer out their cadence in Bucket 2, and, finally, adding new prospects in Bucket 1.

"If we're looking at our bucketing strategy, Bucket 3 might have a lot of email opens, but no response. So, I'm gonna try and call them more than once per day. A couple of times maybe," adds Reisert.

"And, same with Bucket 2. If this is a high-value target, I want to connect with them. We know are accounts are all good fits, remember that."

The final piece to executing this prospecting method is to have your CRM designed to have four stages at the contact level to mirror the four buckets. According to Reisert, those stages don't necessarily have to be labelled *"Bucket 1, 2, 3, and 4"* but should have be clear so all reps know exactly what stage each contact is at and, therefore, what their daily priorities are.

Ryan Reisert.
Lead Instructor and Head of Partnership Development at San Francisco-based coaching firm Sales Bootcamp.

"But, if you're relying on a cadence tool, and that tool tells you to reach out next in two days, you are missing out on opportunity. So, it is helpful to keep a cadence of touches in play, process is not a tool. This process is meant to stay in to on top of the right activities at the right time, not to do a certain amount of activities over a period of time. There's a big difference there."

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"Remember, cadence tools are designed to try and help you do the right activities at the right time. But, you can't predict your specific prospect is going to start and engage with your activities. You might see an email get 10-15 opens all of a sudden," says Reisert.

For more on Reisert's prospecting philosophy and process, check out his recent edition of The Predictable Revenue Podcast.

Understanding buyer psychology and how it fits into the sales process with Outreach's Max Altschuler

Regardless of the position you currently hold in your sales org – prospector, Account Executive, or management – you are certainly juggling numerous responsibilities during your day-to-day routine.

Such is the life of a sales professional: there's always one more email to send, proposal to draft, meeting to attend, and demo to run. Like most professions, though, the daily tap dance needed to navigate each responsibility in the sales world and, ultimately, meet quota all stem from one basic requirement – to connect with a prospect in whichever way they prefer to talk and offer a solution to their pain.
It's that simple.
"First understand your buyer, and how they like to interact. In other words, figure out your ICP. Then, figure out where they live and where they want to buy. Is that on text? Phone? LinkedIn? Different prospects will have different preferences," says Max Altschuler, CEO, and Founder of Sales Hacker and Vice President of Marketing at Outreach, on a recent edition of The Predictable Revenue Podcast.
"That is the first piece, and then you can build your process around that. I recommend people think through all of this before spending a dollar. Understand your process first. Once you figure it out, then you can buy technology, and put gas on it."

If you build it...they will come

Every sales team, new or old, wants to build momentum. And they want to do it as soon as possible.

So, it's understandable that some would bristle at the idea of slowing down and going through the fundamentals first. But it will save time, and money, down the road because you're not just bringing on tech because you think you have to bring on tech. With a minimum investment in tooling, you see your process in its natural state. Once you do that legwork, however, you can start adding on other critical components of your sales process in tandem.

For example, you can start layering in your tech stack once you're process is ironed out, as well as iterating on your messaging, and compiling the marketing collateral you'll need to support your product.

But that's not all – while you're building this machine you must make sure you are constantly iterating, and making improvements based on the data you're gleaning.

"You might want to talk to advisors or friends, if you're really stuck before buying technology. But, you know you're going to need a CRM, a sales engagement tool, a data provider, etc," says Altschuler.

"For me, I'm all about omnichannel right now. So, I think it's critical to make sure you are on every channel and have your process refined on all channels. You must be religiously A/B testing. It's our job to making sure we are resonating with the person on the other side – and testing will help you do this."

Incorporating buyer psychology into your sales process

So...you've got your tech stack in place, your testing your messaging, and working closely with marketing to make sure the content you're distributing is top-notch.

What's missing, then? Getting out of the office and talking to current customers, and other contacts that fit within your ICP to gather in-depth information on the pain points.

"Talk with people – figure out what the pain points really are. Have some customer conversations while you're testing your messaging," says Altschuler.

Learn what particular pain points they are having, so you can clearly understand what you can help with. Then, get back in the office and get creative to get your point across."

For example, Altschuler was on a panel recently and was asked by a woman in the crowd for suggestions on how she could sell her corporate culture consulting service.

His suggestion was to email venture capital firms with a screenshot from a news story about a company acting badly. Then tell them "don't let this happen to you."

That email – short and sweet – implies what her service is and, more importantly, highlights a potentially serious pain point.

"That speaks volumes, and will connect. They send that email to their portfolio companies," says Altschuler.

"That headline says more than any line in a typical email will. That's the fun part of sales, that's the art."

PUTTING IT ALL INTO PRACTICE

Once you've incorporated the information gleaned from customer interviews, the final piece is adding a tailored element during the day-to-day prospecting. According to Altschuler, the level of tailoring you can add is dependant on the market you're attacking. If you sell to mid-market companies, Alt-

Max Altschuler,
CEO, and Founder of Sales Hacker and Vice President of Marketing at Outreach

schuler says you may not want to spend a lot of time personalizing all of your messaging, whether it be email, LinkedIn, other social touches, or direct mail, even. Your salespeople's time is worth more than selling, say, $6,000 deals. There are more automated ways of connecting with that audience at scale.

But if you sell to enterprise or public companies, says Altschuler, than there is a host of places to gather potentially critical information about your prospects. Here are just a few of the places you can get corporate information:

A K1 filing will tell you *"need"* and "timing"
LinkedIn tells you authority
Crunchbase tells you budget
"BANT, back in the day, was how you qualified people on a discovery call. Now you can almost get all of that information just by looking at CrunchBase and other avenues. With just these few examples, you will have all the information you need to get in touch with an account,"

says Altschuler.
"And, remember, it's going to be delivered on different channels, and it will be sent to numerous people in the company."
In addition to adding tailored content to outbound messaging, Altschuler stresses two avenues to maximize your time with a prospect: being cognizant of what time you are calling them, and resist trying to close on the first call.
Remember, despite all the things we're juggling as salespeople, effective sales boils down to connecting and meeting the prospect where they prefer to be met.
"If I call you at 9:15 am, the odds of you being in a meeting is much higher than if I call at 9:55. So, call at the :55 marker on the hour. Always be respectful of time," says Altschuler.

"And most people get on these calls and they are so gung-ho to close. Your goal is just a next meeting. Don't rush. If your expectation was just to get to a next meeting – how would your call sound? Work with that. Find out how to best communicate, and who to invite next."

For more Altschuler's thoughts on sales development and incorporating buyer psychology into your sales process, check out the rest of his interview on The Predictable Revenue Podcast.

Test, Iterate, and Scale: How to Evolve Your Sales Process as You Grow from 10 to 100 Customers

When scaling a company (if you're lucky enough to, of course), it's easy to ignore establishing critical sales processes. After all, you're just trying to grow. You need leads, you need meetings, you need to negotiate, and you need to close.

And you need it all now.

But running too fast – without any concern for testing, learning, and iterating – will produce its own set of problems. And those problems, if ignored, will stunt the growth of your company down the line. Scaling effectively, then, is finding the right mix of rocket-fuelled sales, and foundation-building processes. Too much of either, and that much-needed, although razor-thin, balance will be off.

"My role at Techstars is helping companies make this leap," says Sean Higgins, Entrepreneur In Residence at Techstars, on a recent edition of The Predictable Revenue Podcast.
"Whether they are trying to land their first 10 customers, or more often than not, they have some early traction and they are trying to move to early scale."

Sean Higgins,
Entrepreneur In
Residence at Techstars

FROM 10 TO 100

Getting those first 10 customers, regardless of how you close them or how much they end up paying you, is a huge accomplishment.

Your company is helping people – just as you knew it could. And you have a group of people that believe in you.

So...how do you harness that success and that trust and grow from those first 10 customers to 100 (and beyond)?

According to Higgins, that growth comes from an intimate understanding of why people use your product.

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> *"To get to 100 customers, you really need to understand three things: Why anything? Why us? And, why now?,"* says Higgins.
>
> *"What that means is an understanding of why your product category matters [why anything?], why people are buying your product [why us?], and why they are buying at this specific point in time [why now?]. I love using those questions as my framework."*

Uncovering answers to each of these questions, adds Wiggins, comes from running a few different tests. For example, if you find you have to educate prospects on why software like yours will transform a traditional business process, you are likely selling to a vertical that isn't used to implementing software.

As such, consistent education is key. This is a *"why anything?"* test. For a *"why us?"* test, you have to develop strong messaging that sets you apart from your competitors. If you find you are routinely losing deals to the competition, your messaging, likely, isn't establishing why your product is better than the rest. You need to differentiate yourself.

Finally, a "why now?" test could be comprised of different offers such as throwing in various features or integrations at no extra cost. What you're trying to learn here is what elements of a deal help get a prospect to close as quick as possible, and give you the sales velocity you want. Another test in this area is trying different pricing models. Companies have different internal policies related to spending, so if you're software subscription is less than, say, $5,000 per year, than a prospect could simply put the bill on the company credit card without having to seek approval.

"It's your job to figure out your story," says Higgins. *"Most startups think they have an answer to these questions by the time they reach 10 customers, but it's much more clear by the time they reach 100."*

THE IMPORTANCE OF CONVERSATIONS – LOTS AND LOTS OF CONVERSATIONS

Like most things in business (and in life, for that matter), there is no quick way of gathering these answers. It takes conversations – lots and lots of conversations.

Depending on the size of your team, those conversations are likely being had by your SDRs. Sure, product managers are tasked with gathering this type of information as well, but the volume SDRs work at make them a fountain of knowledge in this realm.

They are the ones on the frontlines, asking these questions everyday. And what they are learning must be shared and understood. It's a key, and unavoidable component to growth.

"For the rest of the company, we need to know that information," says Higgins. *"And we'll act on it."* Helping those conversations take place, adds Higgins, is some level of sales automation.

Again, depending on the size of your company, and the resources available, the amount of automation implemented will vary. But, software such as SalesLoft or Outreach, for instance, will help your prospectors follow up with hundreds of leads and book those meetings.

(Editor's note: we talked with Bregal Sagemount's Cole Fox a few months back on how to use LinkedIn to prospect and book meetings. Read about our chat with Fox **here,** or listen to the podcast **here.**)

"If you can go from 10 clicks to 2, do it. There are lots of tools to use for automation," says Higgins. *"You need to build up that candece of touchpoints. You need to make those follow ups, and you need those at bats. You need to gather that information."*

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# KNOWING THE DIFFER-ENCE BETWEEN A KILLER SALESPERSON AND A KILLER PRODUCT

This is an interesting question, and one not often discussed when analyzing growth. But, it's important to understand whether it's your rockstar salespeople or your product that is, ultimately, closing deals.Why? Well, the answer is simple – you want to know how good a fit your product is with your market, not just how good your sales team is.

To test this, says Higgins, he like to run two different sales models: one with a free 14-day trial and minimal connection with the sales team, and one with a more traditional sales process and no free trial.

"Run the tests and see which one comes out with the right velocity and the right close rate," says Higgins.

"That tells you a lot about your market." And learning about your market is the foundation for growth. At its best, going from 10 customers to 100 (and beyond!) takes a lot of work.

But without that intimate understanding – that detailed grasp of why anything, why us, and why now – navigating the always choppy waters of scaling a company will be that much harder.
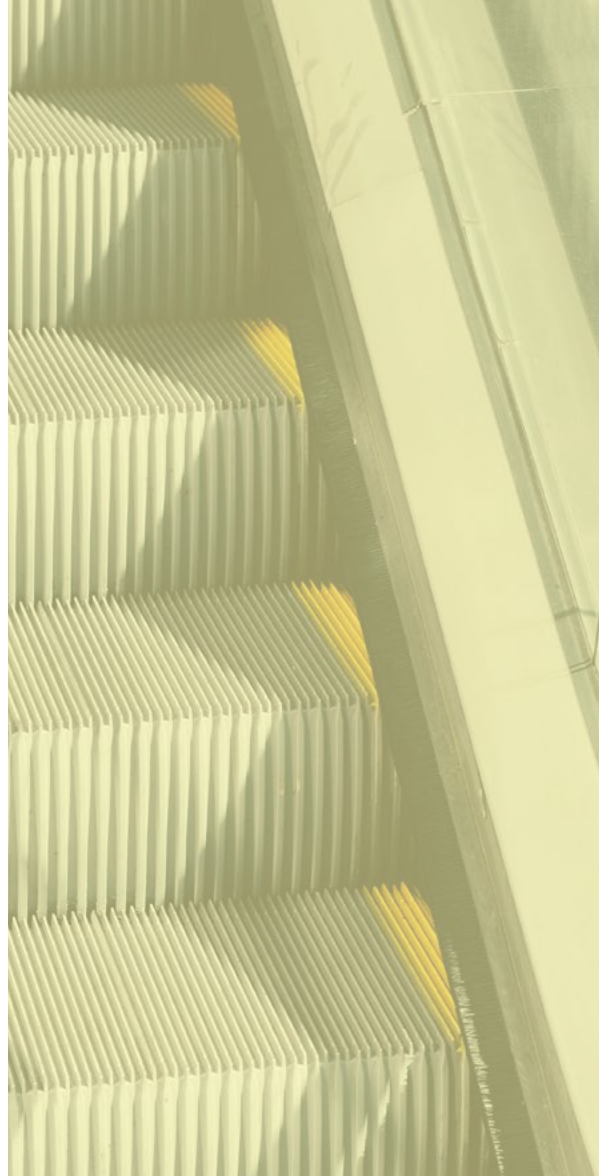
For more on Higgins' methods and tactics for scaling an early-stage company – including tips on building lists, outsourcing tasks, and hiring – **check out his full interview on a recent edition of The Predictable Revenue Podcast.**

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How to set up a scalable growth engine

Finding product-market fit, even the earliest inklings of it is a huge milestone for any growing company. You've identified a need in the market, you have a solution to that problem, and people are willing to pay for it. You're enjoying organic growth, and all that hard work and planning is finally starting to pay off.

IN GENERAL, A COMPANY EXPERIENCES THREE BROAD STAGES OF GROWTH:

• INITIAL STAGES OF PRODUCT MARKET FIT: (EARLY GROWTH)

• SEARCH FOR SCALABLE GROWTH REVENUE: this is an unpredictable stage that starts, typically, when a company hits $3 million in revenue. There is a lot of testing done during this phase to determine what growth levers will work for each respective company. Preserving cash at this stage is paramount.

• SCALABLE GROWTH: you've determined what growth levers will work, and they are being implemented. You know how to grow, and scale the company.

The challenge lies, as the above list above highlights, in figuring out how to combat the inevitable early plateau. Developing (and implementing) new scalable,
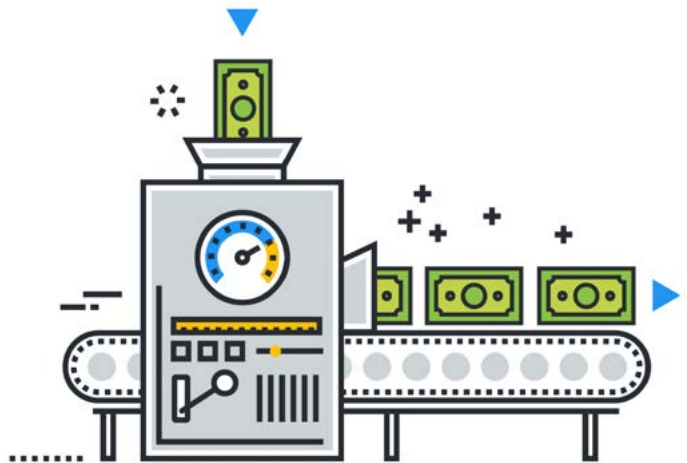
Ali Tajsekandar,
Founder and CEO
at Wishpond

and repeatable, sales processes is hard. But without those new schemes, substantial growth is near impossible.

"Growing a business needs to be repeatable. Imagine, you ran a marketing campaign, and it went viral. That's awesome, but it isn't repeatable. So, you need to have a bit more control," says Ali Tajsekandar, Founder and CEO at Wishpond, on a recent live chat with Collin Stewart, co-CEO of Predictable Revenue.

❝

"On the other hand, you have an ad campaign, and it does well. The costs are in line, at first, but, as you spend more, it doesn't scale further. You need more structure."

ACCORDING TO TAJSEKANDAR, THE FUNDAMENTAL PILLARS OF EVERY SUCCESSFUL GROWTH ENGINE ARE:

- **BEING REPEATABLE**
- **BEING SCALABLE**
- **BEING PROFITABLE**
- **ENSURING THE LONG-TERM VALUE OF EACH DEAL YOU WIN MUST BE 3X MORE THAN THE COSTS OF ACQUIRING THAT CUSTOMER** ($1,000 cost must be worth $3,000 to the business)
- **ENSURING YOU ARE ABLE TO RECOVER ACQUISITION COSTS IN 12 – 18 MONTHS**

THE SALES PROCESS

Once you've managed to nail down these points, you need to build inbound process that is clear and precise.

In the case of inbound, that process should look something like this:

- **ATTRACT VISITORS** (from SEO, ads, blogging etc.)
- **CAPTURE LEADS** (top of funnel, cold leads)
- **QUALIFY LEADS** (leads become Marketing Qualified Leads)
- **QUALIFY PROSPECTS** (SDR qualifies prospects, and leads become Sales Qualified Leads)
- **CLOSE DEALS** (Account Executives give demos, deliver pricing)
- **ONBOARDING** (Client Success or Account Managers trains new customers)
- **CLIENT SUCCESS** (Customer is using the platform, and getting results)

PROVIDE REFERRALS (Happy clients start providing referrals)

> ❝ *"The sales process is almost like a manufacturing line,"*
> **adds Tajsekandar**
> *"Each responsibility is separated out."*

GROWTH TACTICS

Okay, so...you've figured out a growth engine, and you've designed a crystal clear sales process. Now, you need a few tips and tricks up your sleeve to attract prospects and, ultimately, generate new revenue. **There are countless growth tactics a company could explore (for every unique business, there is a unique growth scheme), but a few tried-and-true methods are:**

- **GATED EDUCATIONAL PIECES OF CONTENT** (e-books, or whitepapers, for instance) – prospects download these resources, in exchange for their information. Once they download, their information is entered a sales drip.
- **CONTESTS** – again, prospects exchange their details to enter a contest. Once entered, their information is used in a sales drip.
- **WEBSITE CHAT SERVICES** – to engage with visitors on a website, companies will use chat technology such as Intercom or Sumo, for instance. This tactic can be automated, or not. Typically, the more expensive the lead, the less automated the engagement should be.
- **A WELCOME MAT** – an overlay that pops up as visitors are reading a blog post, for instance. That overlay asks if the visitor is interested in chatting, or learning more about what the company has to offer.

THE NUANCES OF OUTBOUND

An outbound sales process is similar to the inside process outlined above, with a few important distinctions. Chief amongst those differences is how much more intentional you have to be with outbound prospects. Inbound is casting a very large net, outbound is being very precise in who you want to reach out to.

"Outbound success is, in part, defined by being able to define your niche. Who do you want to target? If you get this wrong, everything that follows will be wrong. From there, you build your lists, via a reputable data source. People often say buying lists is bad, but buying lists is really effective if you buy the right lists," says Collin Stewart.

> "

"Then, you have to define your playbook – how do you want to engage with your prospects? How much can you afford to invest? The way I look at it is, if I have a $1,000,000 deal, I am absolutely going to be personalizing every part of that outreach. With $15,000 deals, that's a more programmatic outreach. All of your messaging here is personalized to a persona, or the market."

- **SDRS ARE FOLLOWING THE PLAYBOOK, AND BOOKING MEETINGS**
- **ACCOUNT EXECS ARE DEMOING PROSPECTS**
- **THE SALES TEAM IS FOLLOWING UP WITH LEADS. THIS IS A HUGE DIFFERENCE FROM INBOUND SALES – OUTBOUND PROSPECTS DON'T KNOW THEY HAVE PAIN. AS SUCH, MEMBERS OF THE SALES TEAM ARE GOING TO HAVE TO FOLLOW UP WITH PROSPECTS THAT NEED TO BE WORKED OVER THE LONG-TERM. THESE PROSPECTS ARE INTERESTED BUT AREN'T READY YET.** That's a unique characteristic to outbound, and needs to be considered.

(**Editor's note:** Have a great sales process, but want to make sure your sales team is trained as best as possible? We spoke with Pendo's Bill Binch about how to develop high performing salespeople. Read out about chat **here**, or listen **here**)

KEYS TO SUCCESS IN OUTBOUND

Just as inbound sales has a set of effective growth tactics, so too does outbound have distinct components for success. **They are:**

- **GROW THE TOP OF FUNNEL** – consistently reach out to new prospects
- **HAVE PERFECT MEETINGS** – focus on pain, and educate prospects on how you can help
- **EXECUTE PERFECT/INTELLIGENT FOLLOW-UP** – use what you have learned from those meetings to execute nuanced, effective follow-up messages.

Having a perfect meeting (and executing perfect follow-ups, for that matter) might sound difficult, impossible even. But, there are distinct features every meeting should have, in order for a salesperson to glean the information necessary to propel the sales cycle. Those features are:

- **BUILDING RAPPORT**
- **ESTABLISHING NEED**
- **DELIVERING YOUR PITCH, AS NEEDED**
- **UNDERSTANDING POTENTIAL DEAL SIZE**
- **UNDERSTAND THE DECISION-MAKING PROCESS**
- **UNDERSTAND THE TIME FRAME FOR A PURCHASE**
- **ESTABLISH NEXT STEPS**

COMPANY	Rapport (0-3)	Needs Established (0-3)	Pitch Quality (0-3)	Deal Sizing (0-3)	Decision Making (0-3)	Time Frame (0-3)	Next Steps/ Mutual Plan (0-3)	Total Ranking (1-21)
COMPANY XY	2	3	2	0	1	0	1	9
COMPANY XY	1	2	1	0	0	0	2	6
COMPANY XY	1	1	1	1	2	0	2	8
COMPANY XY	1	0	2	2	1	0	0	7

"You can use these elements in a scorecard for your reps – score then between 1 – 3 on each, to make sure they are ticking all the boxes on those calls," says Stewart.

"The important elements on the list are: establishing need, understanding the decision-making process, the time frame for the deal, and locking down next steps. If you can't book mutually agreed upon next steps, then that's a sign they aren't worth further prospecting. They have to keep showing interest."

THE CRITICAL FOLLOW UP MESSAGE

"About 80% of your outbound conversations, will be the result of follow-ups. Your outbound prospects simply won't be ready," says Stewart.

"What separates the best salespeople is their dedication to going after these prospects and building intelligent follow-ups."

To ensure your team is having the most effective calls possible, ask them to participate in mapping calls with the end users of your product, rather than just targeting the decision maker. Those calls will yield critical information about their day-to-day routines and organizational structure, so when you finally reach out to the decision maker, you'll know exactly what their pain points, and you'll be able to articulate how you can solve those issues.

"This information is great for email content," says Stewart.

"Now you have gone from sending a cold email, to showing you've done the work and that you understand their business."

For more both Tajsekandar's and Stewart's thoughts on sales development and building a well-oiled growth machine – including common mistakes to avoid, and the time it takes to start seeing results from outbound – check out the rest of their interview on The Predictable Revenue Podcast.

Want to learn if outbound is a fit for you?

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