

HOW TO GUIDE

NAVIGATING THROUGH SALES OPPORTUNITIES

This is a practical how-to guide for mastering sales opportunities, starting from qualification to closing. Learn to navigate each stage with clarity, structure, and a winning mindset.



INSIGHTS FOR GROWTH

This material is part of a series I've created to share insights and strategies for business growth. I believe in the power of exchanging ideas and real-world experience to drive success.

ABOUT ME

Sales growth expert with 20+ years' experience strategizing and executing business development and marketing plans. From startups to global enterprises, I help businesses scale revenues, expand internationally, and build winning sales strategies and teams.

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Executive Summary

Sales opportunity is a group of stages of the sales funnel. This is the stage where a target client is qualified and has chances to buy. The sales funnel has a wider meaning and includes different stages that a client goes through. When this target lead is well qualified by sales (SQL) it can enter the opportunity stages. The main difference characteristic of a sales opportunity is that there is intent to buy with specific timeline and budget approved.

First Thoughts

Sales opportunities are where the real deals happens; when a lead shows intent, has a budget, and a timeline. This guide offers a structured approach for sales teams to navigate and manage these critical stages. Covering qualification frameworks like BANT and MEDDIC, opportunity scoring, client-vendor dynamics, and performance metrics. Whether you're a sales rep or sales manager, this guide helps you stay focused, aligned, and prepared to win.

Many salespeople confuse having a lead with having an opportunity. But an opportunity is not only a warm contact. It is a serious conversation with buying intent, urgency, and budget. Getting this wrong leads to wasted time, misleading forecasts, and missed quotas.



What you will learn

- How to qualify opportunities with confidence using BANT and MEDDIC
- The difference between funnel stages and opportunity stages
- How to approach opportunities from both the vendor and customer perspective
- Tactics to handle inactive or lost opportunities with professionalism
- KPIs to monitor and manage your opportunity pipeline
- Best practices for progressing, closing, and learning from each deal

Qualifying Sales Opportunities

If and when a lead enters the opportunity stage depends on certain factors:

Compelling reason – is there a compelling reason for the client to buy?

External reason to buy – Is there an external yet important reason the client tries to comply with? Eg. comply with a new regulation.

BANT, MQL, SQL and MEDDIC

BANT criteria

Budget – Is there budget in place and approved? Have you talked to the budget owner?

Authority – Is the decision maker in the sales process?

Need – Is there a need for your service/product? Why do they need it?

Timeline – Is there a specific timeline for the client to buy?

MQL (Marketing Qualified Lead) and SQL (Sales Qualified Lead)

Did the client pass through the qualification from both Marketing and Sales in the pre-opportunity phase? (Develop certain criteria for both Marketing and Sales that justifies an opportunity passes the qualification.)

Example MQL criteria:

- Belongs to the target audience.
- Belongs to certain industry and region.
- The company is of certain size.
- Lead read two of the collateral we sent.

Example SQL criteria:

- Has compelling reason to buy – Compelling reasons linked to market share, revenues, costs, profitability.
- There is a budget in place approved by budget committee.
- There is a timeline in place by stakeholders.

MEDDIC approach

Metrics

Understand the key performance indicators (KPIs) and metrics that matter most to the prospect's business.

Economic Buyer

Identify and engage with the person who holds the budgetary authority within the prospect's organization.

Decision Criteria

Define the specific criteria that the prospect will use to evaluate and make a decision.

Decision Process

Map out the steps and stages involved in the prospect's decision-making process.

Identify Pain

Uncovering and understanding the prospect's pain points and challenges.

Champion

Identifying and building a relationship with a key internal advocate or champion within the prospect's organization.



Navigating Opportunity Stages With Precision

Once a lead is qualified as a true opportunity, the game changes. Knowing what to do at each step, and why, helps your team stay aligned, spot red flags early, and move deals forward with purpose.

From Scoring to Legal—Structure Your Sales Process for Success

Competition

Identify who from your competitor also bids for the business of the client.

Make a map with the differentiators compared each competitor

Bring the differentiations in each conversation

Opportunity scoring

Create a lead scoring method for the sales opportunities.

Decide the quantitative criteria that justifies a high or low scoring.

Stages

The opportunity stages are different to the funnel stages. Opportunity is a subset of the funnel.

Once the opportunity is qualified it enters the opportunity stages:

- Opportunity identified
- Opportunity advanced
- Negotiation
- Closing
- Legal

Criteria for each stage

There are specific criteria to justify the opportunity

- Opportunity identified – SQL (BANT, MEDDIC), RFQ
- Opportunity advanced – Engage with all stakeholders, Scope of Work, Requirement Document, Tailor made demonstrations
- Negotiation – Terms and Conditions, Pricing
- Closing – SLAs, Final Terms, Project Team, Implementation Timeline
- Legal – Legal contracts drafts and shared, Legal Negotiation

Opportunities from Customer Point of View

Opportunity identified

The customers have a certain need that wants to fulfil. At this stage they require more information about the solution, asks for more demo tailor made to them, invite more people related to the certain implementation. They may ask for references and for technical documents.

Opportunity advanced

At this level the higher management would need to know about the vendor, its credibility and pricing drill down.

Negotiation

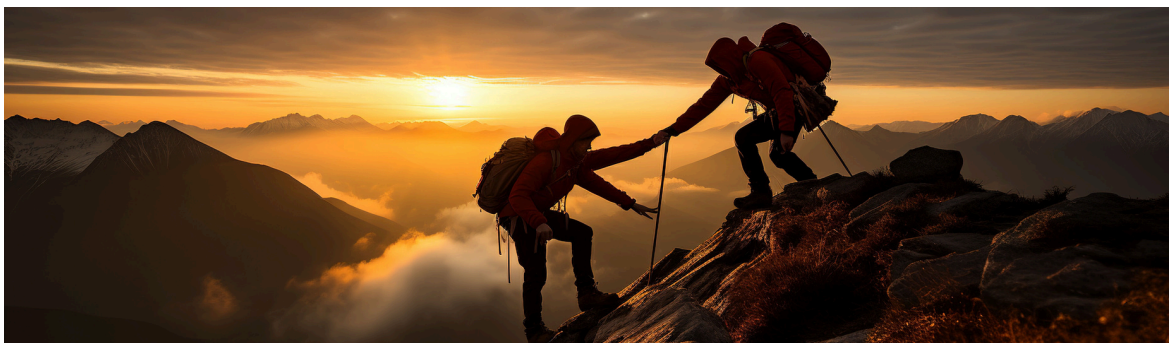
The customer negotiates terms, pricing and certain developments that need to fit the customer needs. They want to know the involved parties of the vendor, the technical team and the supervisors. They need to know there is a smooth transition from the current status quo to the new era.

Closing

The customer ticks final boxes to make sure there is a smooth project, wants to know the commitment of the vendor to implementation and post implementation. Procurement team is involved to ask questions. IT teams reviews technical infrastructure, safety, security and robustness of the solution.

Legal

The legal team of the client reviews and marks the legal documents. Internal procurement and compliance teams are involved to check against rules and guidelines.



Opportunities from Company Point of View

Opportunity identified

The vendor needs to work on providing a complete picture of how the world of the customer will look like after buying the solution. Stretching all the benefits compared to competition and the certain KPIs the customer will improve.

Opportunity advanced

The vendor should focus on the solution itself and how this fits to the operations and the different personas involved in the client.

Negotiation

The vendor shall be aiming for a win-win deal looking at what is important for the client and the company. They should look on the profitability to the deal and its importance to decide the right pricing for it.

Closing

The vendor shall push the client to involve every single related party from the client to allay concerns and answer any questions that may be risen.

Legal

The vendor shall work with the legal teams of the client, giving away some terms based on what the customer wants but also protecting the company at any cost. The vendor shall make decision to draw a red line for clauses the client wants to implement but are risky for the vendor.



Managing Opportunities Week By Week

Opportunities are not a “set and forget” part of the sales cycle. They require constant attention, smart actions, and disciplined tracking. With a proactive mindset and structured follow-up, you increase your chances of closing more and losing less.

Keep Momentum, Track Performance, and Handle Inactivity with Intent

Frequent activities for managing the opportunity list

1. Monitor the opportunity list on a weekly basis.
2. Decide what action items to do every week to push the opportunity forward.
3. Select relevant collateral to share.
4. Make sure you initiate conversations with all relevant stakeholders.

KPIs to monitor

- **Conversion rates** – measures how opportunities convert between each stage.
- **Win rate** – measures how many opportunities are won compared to all in the funnel.
- **Sales cycle length** – shows how much time it takes to complete a deal.
- **Lead opportunity ratio** – shows how many leads are converted to opportunities.
- **Sales funnel leakage** – measure how many opportunities drop off the funnel.
- **Opportunity age** – see how much time an opportunity stays in the funnel.

Ratios and numbers shown above depend on each case depending on the industry, product, qualification process, etc. Therefore, it is difficult and improper to display average scores.

Inactive opportunities

- Some opportunities will become inactive. This is inevitable. Assess the reasons why you believe it became inactive.
- Maybe the qualification was poor and was not qualified to be an opportunity yet.
- Downgrade them if necessary. If you see inactivity more than two months, it is alerting. Try to find and engage with another stakeholder in the firm.
- Send provoking email, asking why they disappeared, say you understand things may have changed but you are entitled to know.
- Keep them in the lower opportunity stage for up to 6 months and nurture them with tailor made material. If this doesn't work either “close lost” it or downgrade them.

Closed lost opportunities

Some of the opportunities will be lost. This is inevitable.

Send feedback email to find the reason.

Have an interview with the client.

Move them into a special bucket of leads with a tag.

Create a process, how to deal with lost opportunities.

The fact you lost it is not that they don't like your product or the solution.

Show respect and work with them in the future.

Keep in contact, they gave you an opportunity, they will give you that again.

Closed won opportunities

Once an opportunity is won don't disappear. It is important to show gratitude and show you are grateful.

Show them that you have a sales process and hand them to the technical team, implementation team and the account manager.

Send a closed won questionnaire to find out why they have selected you.

On regular basis get feedback how the solution works and how the results compared to their expectation. See how their KPIs are improved.

The client became a partner, and it is an opportunity to think outside the box and see if there is another way you can work together.

See if the client can help you in the product development with feedback.

Create stories together, get testimonials, interviews.

Put their logo in your social media.

Key points

Team effort – Winning an opportunity is a team effort. No one should be selfish to work this out alone without involving all relevant members from the company that would help.

Manage timeframe – Be careful and aware of the timeframe as a sales opportunity needs to close at some certain point either positively or negatively.

Ownership – There should be a certain owner or owners of the opportunity. Normally is the one that holds the budget.

Monitoring – Monitor the evolution of an opportunity constantly.

Final Thoughts and Conclusions

Sales opportunities are where preparation meets potential. Navigating them effectively requires structure, discipline, and a deep understanding of both your client and your internal sales process. With the right mindset and tools, every opportunity becomes a moment to create value—for the client and for your business.



Key Takeaways

- Entering too many opportunities without the right qualification, will distort the results. Do not urge to convert a lead into an opportunity.
- A lead to become an opportunity might take time, even a couple of years if not more sometime, so be patient.
- A compelling reason must be compelling! Is a “must have” situation. Example of compelling reasons are, losing to competition, losing revenues, risk of losing money, risk of increasing costs, etc.

What you learned

You’ve learned how to approach sales opportunities with clarity and structure—from initial qualification using frameworks like BANT and MEDDIC, to managing each stage with defined criteria and objectives. You now understand how to score opportunities, track performance with key KPIs, and handle both active and inactive deals with purpose.

Next Steps

Now it’s time to put this guide into action. Start by reviewing your current opportunity pipeline and applying the qualification criteria and stage definitions outlined here. Align your team on a consistent scoring method, schedule regular pipeline reviews, and tailor your engagement tactics for each stage.

