



SELL

Sphere of Influence Selling

An Inside Sales Approach to Crushing Your Quota

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Introduction

The Problem with Most Sales Tactics

99% of sales efforts focus on how to optimize the subject line in your email, the enthusiasm of your voicemail, and the best time to call in order to catch the prospect at their desk. How likely is it that you're going to leave the perfect voicemail or send the perfect email? How likely is it that those tactics will speak to your prospect's issue right at that moment, right at that time?

It's not very likely.

This traditional sales approach increases the volume of information fired at prospects. They now have tons of information to self-digest and self-review, so there's little wonder why the response to voicemail and email continues to go down and down and down and down.

Hitting and optimizing those email, voicemail and time of call points are valid, but if you follow this model, your message will likely look like this:

“ Amanda, this is Dan from ABC Company. I'd like to talk to you about how our software can automate your manual research processes. Here's my email, here's my phone number, here's a link to my website. Feel free to call me back and if you don't, I'll call you every three days until you get tired of hearing from me. ”

How likely is Amanda to return that call? Not very likely.

What is Sphere of Influence Selling?

The founder of Sphere of Influence Selling, Dan Hughes, has 27 years of sales experience, and 17 of those years were in an inside sales capacity; representative, manager, trainer and entrepreneur. While working in these various inside sales capacities, he continuously sought ways to work smarter rather than harder. He aimed to stand above the noise and engage prospects in quality based, deliberately conscientious conversations about the topics and solutions that prospects care about.

Sphere of Influence Selling is all about sales engagement. It fosters, promotes, and incentivizes a prospect to want to engage with you to get the sales process moving.

Done correctly, it will materialize all the way through the sales process.

Creating sales engagement means creating awareness, curiosity, and an impetus to act. You have long known that the higher the level of awareness and curiosity, the stronger the likelihood of engagement, and ultimately, the more likelihood to close a sale.

Successful sales start with Sphere of Influence Selling because it encourages dialogue, obtains open communication, and enables a mutual exchange of ideas to determine if you and your prospect are a good match.

What Makes Sphere of Influence Selling Different?

What makes Sphere of Influence Selling successful and compelling is that prospects are more concerned with their reputation inside of their organization initially than they are about what you are calling about. Sphere of Influence Selling leverages this concept.

Sphere of Influence Selling shifts the odds in your favor. Go back to the scenario earlier to compare the approaches.



What Makes Sphere of Influence Selling Different?

OLD WAY:

“ Amanda, this is Dan from ABC Company. I'd like to talk to you about how our software can automate manual research processes. Here's my email, here's my phone number, here's a link to my website. Feel free to call me back and if you don't, I'll call you every three days until you get tired of hearing from me. ”

SPHERE OF INFLUENCE:

“ Amanda, this is Dan from ABC Company, I'm reaching out to you, and based on my research, I'm also reaching out to Joe, Matt and Jen, people you work with to determine who's best to begin my conversation about the topic of streamlining your processes. I'll be sending you all an email hoping to get some feedback from you as to where you recommend that I begin my effort to engage. Feel free to call me or email me. ”



The old approach is a direct engagement strategy, and it's based on a hope that your topic and your voicemail is so compelling that it catches your prospect at the right time.

The Sphere of Influence approach utilizes political and organizational motivation. It is mandate oriented because it makes the prospect not only think about what you're selling, but about their job. The last thing they want is their peers and superiors to call them and ask about that salesperson and their product. The prospect wants to be the one who knows first. The prospect wants to be the one who had the chance to determine if they want to carry this torch inside their organization.

Ready to start Sphere of Influence Selling? Here are the necessary steps.

Step 1: Do the Research

Sphere of Influence requires upfront work. You not only need to understand the prospect's topic of interest, but you need a knowledge of their internal power structure, and who you want to contact within that structure. Sphere of Influence techniques start with identifying multiple names, titles and emails. This is a due diligence step that every good sales professional should do.

Start with your ideal buyer. From there, determine the user, the champion, the decision maker, and the economic buyer. Since each organization has a different structure, the only way to determine the contacts is with research.

For instance, if you are calling the VP of Sales, your research will uncover the ideal influence points of that VP. Marketing,

the CEO, the CFO, an inside sales director, etc. all may play a role and influence the VP of Sales. Therefore, it's not just about finding the VP of Sales' manager, but finding the other influential team members within the organization.

You might be thinking, what about skipping the research and calling the owner or the CEO of the business? The owners and the CEO of the business are beholden to someone as well. It might be shareholders, board members, competitive pressure, etc. You will get their attention if you're able to tell an owner of a business that you plan to reach out to them, a couple of colleagues in their organization, as well as their competitors. This requires research.

There are a number of tools inside and outside of the CRM, such as LinkedIn, or automated research tools, etc. to help you find this contact information. It's all about taking the universe of potential points of contact, researching and building an up-to-date contact information and then piecing together the components of an organization. Determine the touch points, the influence points, the buyer points, etc. and line them up from there.

Those sales professionals that use these tools already know how to accomplish this step effectively, saving them time and allowing them to focus on selling.



Step 2: Leave a Voicemail

Armed with the necessary contact information, the next step is to approach the prospect with a series of voicemails and emails designed to create a Sphere of Influence around the identified contacts you wish to engage. Never call with the intention to have a dialogue the first time. Ask for voicemail, as you're not interested in having the conversation right now, for a couple for reasons.

#1

You are interrupting their day.

You're not bold or assumptive enough to think that your call, which interrupts

someone's day, is automatically of interest to them. Your contact is digging through 100 emails and has stacks of paper on their desk. How do you act when you pick up the phone and hear a sales pitch? Don't interrupt their day.

#2

Bad days happen.

The prospect could be having a bad day, and you could therefore have

a bad response by calling. That automatically makes it difficult to continue the conversation.

#3

You lose control.

If you are successful in catching the contact on the phone the first time you call, you're in a dialogue lock. You do not have the opportunity to apply any mandated Sphere of Influence pressure. If you don't like how that dialogue turns out, it won't look good when you try to reach out to others in the organization as part of Sphere of Influence. It might appear as if you're going around the person, and that's not what you want.

These are the dangers of engaging in dialogue initially. Traditional teachings say that sales is about talking to someone, but in executing Sphere of Influence, leaving a voicemail is part of the process.



What to Do if Someone Answers the Phone

Now that we understand that voicemail is the first contact approach, what happens if someone answers the phone when you call? Get to voicemail. Here's one way to do it:

“ Amanda, this is Dan from Company ABC. I am sorry, I did not want to interrupt your day. My intention was to leave a voicemail for you, so you're more than welcome to just put me back into voicemail. ”

A common response is not to put the person into voicemail, but to ask what they're calling about. Now you've got their attention and interest. At this point, you

can relay your voicemail message live.

“ I was going to reach out to you, as well as Joe, Matt and Jen, and have a conversation about this solution that we have to help streamline your processes. The reason for my call was to determine who best in your organization you recommend that I talk to, to begin this process of evaluating what we can do for you. ”

This approach invites you to have conversations with other people, and opens the door throughout the process of selling.

Step 3: Send an Email

Your email will be similar to your voicemail approach. Include the standard elements of a quality introduction, as well as making sure to:

- Clearly show that you are CCing others and make reference in the initial sentence of the email that you are doing so
- Draw attention to the voicemail that compliments your email
- Note that you are attempting to identify who best in their organization to connect with regarding your product or service

The last bullet is the most important because it gives the prospect a next step. At the same time, other decision makers and influencers are aware of you and will be curious as to the results of any conversations that take place.

Albeit simple, the clear CC of email addresses, the mention of other intended parties, and the request to find the best contact in the organization, are big impact items.

Step 4: Involve Multiple Contacts from the Start

Oftentimes salespeople put themselves in a corner. They make a call, they're relentless, they leave voicemails, emails, etc., but all of that effort is for one contact. You build a relationship and leave it up to that person to tell you, after you've built some rapport, if your solution is valuable.

If you get passed the demo, what happens next and who else needs to get involved? It's typically around that time that the contact brings in other people for a second demo and if it all works out, you'll get it sold.

What happens if you don't get to the demo stage? You're leaving it up to one person to dictate your path to success. If that person goes dark, what do you do then? Do you call the CEO or the other people your contact has name dropped in

this process? While it could reopen doors, you potentially risk losing your biggest advocate.

Sphere of Influence is all about leaving a voicemail and an email to multiple contact points at an organization, with the intention to identify the best person in the organization to move the process along. You are not putting all your eggs in one basket, and you have plenty of other people to contact if one goes dark. For example:

“ Amanda, this is our second demo, have we thought about inviting Joe? Should we invite Jen? Are they involved in the process? Should I copy them on the quote? ”

There's so much power in taking the time to slow down and implement Sphere of Influence effectively.

How to Involve Administrative Assistants

In this stage, you're interested in gathering a tribe of people that could potentially engage or apply influence. If you need to go through an administrative assistant, lead in with:

“ Nancy this is Dan Hughes calling. I want to reach out to John and I know he's busy, so can I leave him a voicemail? Oh, by the way, I'm going to probably call back and I'm going to have you transfer me to a couple other numbers. Please transfer me to John's voicemail first. ”



Administrative assistants, or those who manage the phones, will hardly ever have an objection to sending you to voicemail. You will get more cooperation from requesting a voicemail over a live call.

Since they know you're going to call back a few times, they will likely give you the necessary extensions or transfer you. When you call Nancy back, let her know you just left a message for John and, as you mentioned, you'd like to leave a voicemail for Michael next.

Confirm Your Data

Leverage administrative assistants and your first contact to confirm or provide missing data. For instance, if you let them know you're going to send an email to the VP of Sales, you can also request confirmation.

“Based on my research, John Miller is the VP of Marketing at JMiller@ABCcompany.com. Can you confirm that my research is accurate?”

This works for a phone number, a title or a name, and more. Again, you'll get more cooperation with this approach over asking to speak directly to the VP of Sales in the moment.

How to Reference Other Contacts in the Organization



For your voicemail to the next contact, consider something such as:

“ Michael, I just left a voicemail for John. I reached out to him, and I'm reaching out to you, and I'm going to contact a few others to determine who I should talk to about what we do...”

Sales Cycle

You can use Sphere of Influence at any point in the sales cycle, but be careful of the risk of antagonizing an existing contact if you introduce this practice midway through the cycle. You know your prospects best, so consider their personality, their organizational structure and the potential negative impacts, as well as the positive ones.



Sphere of Influence Selling ROI

Dan Hughes has gained hundreds of clients using Sphere of Influence Selling and his goal is to teach salespeople and sales leaders how to execute this methodology to achieve their own success.

According to Dan, “I can’t tell you the number of times I’ve heard, ‘Dan, I’m glad you called. We took a look at the content, we think there’s something here, and I’ll be your first point of contact.’”

At the end of this exercise, you can do three or four phone calls in a target organization, hitting on potential decision makers and influencers. You will get a tremendous response back just from that exercise.

By leveraging multiple contacts and aligning yourself with their interests, you will build strategic relationships that will last. Some of Dan’s biggest strategic accounts were built based on this methodology and these clients have been with Dan for years.

“By leveraging multiple contacts and aligning yourself with their interests, you will build strategic relationships that will last.”

Sales Metrics

Many sales organizations have volume call requirements, revenue quotas or other metrics for tracking sales success. Sphere of Influence

Selling is a thorough systematic approach. While it takes more upfront work with research and calls, it is a quality based engagement with a similar foundation to any other sales discipline.

- You have a solution
- You know your target
- You understand the personas of the contacts you're engaging with
- You know the typical path of success

Therefore, the same metrics can be applied such as:

- Volume of callbacks
- Engagement
- Response
- Deal flow
- Opportunity flow

Your comprehension of the target business will far exceed those that are volume based and cold calling based.

It's quality over quantity and it's about an engagement methodology.

Conclusion

This concept is an amalgamation and a customization of Forbes top 25 and top 50 sales training resources, as well as Dan Hughes' sales best practices, and it can result in killer sales results for you and your organization. Take what you've learned and package and architect it to create your own sales practice.

Would you rather focus on three or four quality calls a day or blast through over 80 or 100 calls a day? The choice is yours and the results will speak for themselves. Do your due diligence and start closing more deals.



The fastest way to move contact data into your database.

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Demo



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-  Facebook
-  Twitter
-  LinkedIn
-  Google+
-  Blog



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