

We **BRING SALES
EFFICIENCY**

and
**DEAL WINS
TOGETHER**



4 Steps to Sales Process Transformation

salesforce





WINNING IN AN UNCERTAIN WORLD

Nobody can predict when the next pandemic, natural disaster, or sweeping political change will dramatically affect the business climate. What we can predict is that the principles of good salesmanship will hold true in any economy.

The most successful sales teams will be those that plan carefully, leverage all their best resources, communicate effectively, and empower the customer with more appealing choices.

BE A LEADER.

This ultimate how-to guide will provide you with four steps to help close more deals in any economy:

-  Plan and execute a winning strategy with living account plans.
-  Keep the whole team informed with opportunity notes.
-  Move deals forward with collaborative pricing proposals.
-  Close more deals with collaborative close plans.



1



PLAN *and* EXECUTE A WINNING STRATEGY *with* LIVING ACCOUNT PLANS

Don't create account plans in Q1 only to ignore them later. Create living account plans that drive pipeline and revenue year-round.

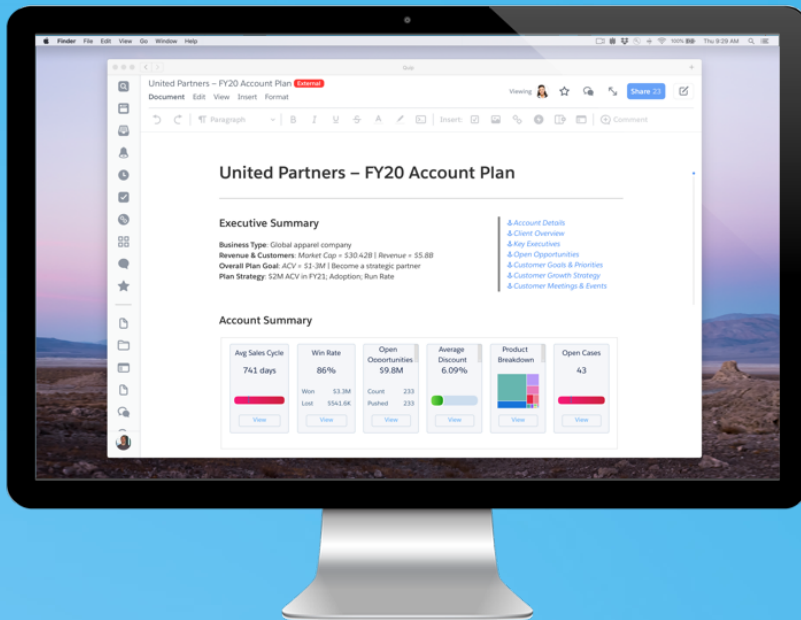
The account plan is one of the most powerful tools sales teams have. Proper account planning ensures that sales teams maximize revenue opportunities, create team alignment, clarify rep goals, and understand customer needs. Account plans are key to building strong customer relationships so you can crush your goals.

The challenge is that most sales teams create static documents, rather than dynamic, "living" account plans that remain relevant all year long. Living account plans work because account information stays up to date, making it easier for sales teams to create actionable strategies to earn the win. Armed with living account plans, sales teams are better able to deliver tangible benefits, eliminate surprises, and predict their ability to hit quarterly goals.



CREATING YOUR LIVING ACCOUNT PLAN

Create and maintain your plan in a shared, collaborative document that team members can reference and revise throughout the year. Ideally, it should have dynamically updated CRM data so that changes in the client's account record are reflected in the plan. If the account plan can't hold dynamic data, information can quickly become outdated, which could lead to confusion, lack of organization, and wasted time. Here's a step-by-step guide to developing a living account plan.



FOR TASKUS, 100% OF THEIR STRATEGIC ACCOUNT PLANS LIVE IN QUIP FOR CUSTOMER 360, HELPING THEM CLOSE DEALS 25% FASTER THAN EVER BEFORE. QUIP GIVES THEIR SALES LEADERS THE DATA AND INSIGHTS TO PUT A SALES PLANNING STRATEGY IN PLACE THAT HELPS SALES BE MORE PRODUCTIVE WHILE GIVING THE EXECUTIVE TEAM MORE INSIGHT INTO THE BUSINESS.

STEP I: PLAN YOUR SUCCESS

Start by gathering information on who your client is, what their goals and needs are, and which opportunities would be a good match for them.

1. BUILD AN ACCOUNT PROFILE

Use the client's website, recent press releases, and LinkedIn profile to gather specific account details such as team structure, key contacts, and opportunities. Learn about decision-makers, champions, and potential blockers. Create a relationship map of key players and subsidiaries, and determine what valuable connections you may already have. Absorb important news and updates, and get a sense of the client's business model. Try to learn all you can initially, and then let the account profile develop over time as new information surfaces.

2. DETERMINE REQUIREMENTS

Figure out your client's wants, needs, and pain points. Find out which solutions they're using and where the gaps might be. Ask yourself: Independent of the solution you offer, what matters most to your customer? Which metrics are important to them?

3. SELECT OPPORTUNITIES

Align your client's needs to your solutions, and align your team to the account. Also, take this time to understand what your competitors are doing as well as what sets you apart. Don't forget to consider the customer's buying process for the solution you're selling.

STEP II: BUILD A SUCCESSFUL STRATEGY

Next, develop your strategic initiatives. How will you actually sell your products or services? There may be multiple plans of attack.

1. OFFERING VALUE

Build a customer journey map to help you visualize the steps a customer goes through during the process from conception to sale. With a map, you'll be better able to understand your customers' priorities, determine how they enter the sales cycle, and plan how they can find success with your products.

By mapping customer initiatives back to your products or services, you can help ensure a full pipeline. Consider building a customer journey map using a Kanban board.

2. SETTING GOALS

Set attainable and measurable short-term and long-term goals for the account, and establish milestones to track key items. This will help you develop your overall strategy. By scheduling a roadmap discussion with your customer, you can find out how their future goals align to your products and offerings.

3. DEVELOPING A PLAN OF ATTACK

Decide how you will sell to your account. Perform a white space analysis regularly using your CRM data for all current customer accounts. This will help your entire sales team understand which products and services have been sold and which can be sold in future sales cycles. Consider using a project tracker or creating a series of tasks so that you can receive notifications that are outcome-specific.

STEP III: MAXIMIZE OPPORTUNITIES

Since a living account plan is an ongoing, dynamic document, your final step is to continue modifying the plan, measuring results, and reassessing your strategic direction throughout the sales cycle.

1. MAINTAIN THE RELATIONSHIP

Routinely reach out to your best customers to let them know you're there to help them achieve success. In the next section of this guide, we'll discuss collaborative opportunity notes, which you'll use to capture the details of client interactions and the action items that result. Other key client insights and competitive intelligence belong in your living account plan.

2. UP-SELL AND CROSS-SELL

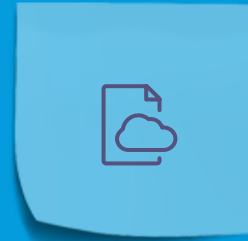
Up-selling and cross-selling can help you increase your revenues and create new connections. As you talk to customers, always document any interest they express in moving into an additional vertical or purchasing additional capabilities.

You can save time and increase your effectiveness by identifying accounts that have similar profiles. When you understand the products and services other customers have purchased, you can work with your account managers, marketing, and operations teams to ensure you are offering these same configurations to new accounts that have similar needs.

3. REASSESS YOUR STRATEGY

Evaluate each account from all angles and prioritize various tasks based on goals and requirements. As you execute your plan throughout the sales cycle, it will become easier to see the big picture and understand where the biggest rewards will be. It's a good idea to check in with your plan on a monthly or quarterly basis to update account requirements and revisit your strategy accordingly.

2



KEEP THE WHOLE TEAM INFORMED *with* OPPORTUNITY NOTES

The most successful sales reps consistently match sales processes to the conversations they're having with their buyers. They set goals for each customer meeting and communicate value regularly. They also keep organized notes – called opportunity notes – about every conversation.





With collaborative selling becoming the norm, reps should organize their opportunity notes in a way that makes them visible to team members and stakeholders. Eighty-one percent of sales teams say a connected view of data across the customer journey is important. This is why it's inefficient to keep opportunity notes strewn across laptops, notepads, text messages, emails, and scraps of paper. Make your opportunity notes accessible to your whole team by following these steps.



COLLABORATIVE OPPORTUNITY NOTES

THE BASICS

There are four simple steps to ensure your opportunity notes have maximum impact:

-  Maintain all notes in a centralized, collaborative environment, ideally in the context of CRM record data. This will give your extended sales team access to the latest intelligence alongside current data.
-  Remember that you're writing notes for the larger team, not just yourself. Anyone – including future account owners – should be able to read them and understand what's going on with the deal.
-  Keep two types of notes: background notes and conversation notes.
-  Make sure notes contain information that follows a consistent format.

Let's now explore the elements that should be included in background notes and conversation notes.

BACKGROUND NOTES

Background notes should contain foundational information about each deal. This information should include:

KEY PLAYERS

Track names, titles, and contact info for all key personnel on the client side, as well as any additional specifics you can reference when chatting with them. Be sure to capture those involved within the purchasing decision and identify their roles in the decision process.

In a second section, list everyone on your extended team who can help move things forward or who might have personal insights about the buyer.

REQUIREMENTS

The more you understand about your buyer's needs and how they want to create a better future, the easier it will be to develop a persuasive plan and earn the win.

Focus on:

- **Financial, technical, or even strategic requirements** stated by the buyer. Count on adding to this section as you learn from multiple conversations.
- **Emotional requirements.** Listen to your customers to understand where they are emotionally within the purchase phase. Emotions and emotional changes can be just as critical to closing a deal as technical and financial considerations.

THE OPPORTUNITY

Map customer requirements to your product or service offering. Use any relevant information from your account plan to list all components that can help add value, and then link each component to the requirements of your customers.

THE COMPETITION

List the strengths and weaknesses of your competitors, and the corresponding strengths and weaknesses of your products. Armed with this information, you can work toward neutralizing the competition.

CONVERSATION NOTES

Conversation notes should document the essence and details of each customer interaction. Here's what you should aim to capture from each meeting or call.

TIME, DATE, AND TYPE OF MEETING

Including this basic information with each note entry helps everyone keep track of the deal's pace and progress.

MEETING TOPICS

Document what you learned about the client's needs and decision process, as well as any competitive intelligence you gained. Include only items that are important, insightful, or actionable.

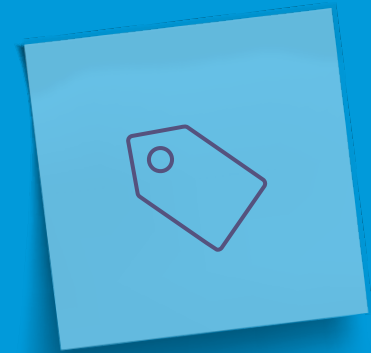
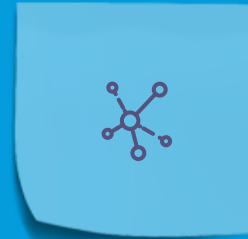
ACTION ITEMS

Did the client ask for a proposal, presentation, or further information? When should you call again? Use this section to help remind you of follow-up tasks for you or the client.

Although creating opportunity notes is important, never prioritize typing over listening. Always pay attention to the client's needs, note where they are in the decision process, and look for opportunities to move the deal forward. Document the essential and actionable items, and let your collaborative notes be a means for engaging your entire team to close the deal.



3






MOVE DEALS FORWARD *with* COLLABORATIVE PRICING PROPOSALS

The make-or-break moment in a sales presentation is not at the end, when you flash a number on the screen. What has a greater impact on winning deals is the setup: how well you frame your solution's value proposition and how you attach a dollar value to all the benefits you'll deliver.

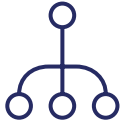
Building a proposal and configuring an accurate, competitive price can take weeks (or even months) of behind-the-scenes work. This process is often drawn out with internal friction that can slow down deals and keep sales reps mired in administrative tasks rather than selling.

The key to avoiding this friction and optimizing the pricing process is collaboration. By gathering input and approvals efficiently from stakeholders such as sales reps, sales managers, solution engineers, executives, and finance and legal representatives, you can keep your momentum.

When collaboration happens in a smooth and organized way, it can help sales teams to:

-  **Produce proposals faster.** Reach internal consensus and quickly put a polished proposal in front of a customer.
-  **Maximize revenue.** Ensure that you've configured the best price and leveraged discounts appropriately to maintain margin.
-  **Reduce frustration.** By keeping things organized, you eliminate internal errors and miscommunication that can lead to unnecessary revision cycles.

Follow these five best practices to optimize your collaborative pricing process.



1. MAKE YOUR PROCESS MORE VISIBLE

The key to faster and more successful collaboration on pricing is visibility. With good visibility, any internal stakeholder involved in a deal can jump into the system of record and, on their own, view its status, related documents, conversation threads, and approvals from other stakeholders. They have the context they need to provide input on a pricing strategy or approval on a discount. It doesn't take a meeting to get everyone on the same page, and that's a major speed advantage.

Rather than relying on email threads and conference calls – and running the risk of sales reps offering unapproved discounts that sales managers don't know about – identify areas of your pricing and proposal process where you can increase transparency to all team members. In the process, you'll also increase speed.



2. CENTRALIZE PRICING PROPOSALS AND DATA

Being disorganized slows down deals. When sales reps can't locate the latest pricing book or they've lost track of the historical pricing data, deals slow to a crawl.

Create a single destination for information and resources related to a deal. Start by consolidating your docs and data within your system of record, making them easy to find and reference. Collaboration on pricing typically takes place across email threads, chat, text messages, and conference calls. A better solution is to let conversations happen within the CRM opportunity page, or even within the pricing documents themselves—while giving access to all stakeholders. Using a CRM that brings communication into your system of record reduces miscommunication and lets you reach pricing consensus sooner.



3. STREAMLINE AND STANDARDIZE YOUR PRICING PROCESS

Once you've taken steps to improve visibility and centralize information and conversation, it's time to re-examine your pricing process to eliminate redundant steps, unnecessary manual efforts, and sloppy practices by individual reps.

Find opportunities to standardize how pricing is developed and presented, with pricing grids, approval matrixes, workflows, or CRM-based templates for proposals or preliminary quotes..



4. ALIGN TEAMS ON PRICING STRATEGY

Sales reps often lack a deep knowledge of the company's overall pricing strategy and the strategic use of discounts to maintain margins. Often, other teams might not understand the pricing tug-of-war that sales reps go through with customers and the pressure on them to close a deal. Make sure these seemingly disparate interests are shared and understood by everyone to drive improved alignment.



5. COLLABORATE WITH CUSTOMERS IN REAL TIME

Building an initial proposal and pricing typically takes weeks, with lots of back-and-forth over calls and emails. To accelerate the process, consider giving your customer visibility into selected CRM-based pages and documents. Using these resources, your customer can view and configure their bundle of products and services in real time.

Giving your customers this level of access can help build trust. But remember the basics: Never lead with price before first conveying value and benefits, and if any documents have internal, company-centric language, be sure to translate them into a customer-focused narrative.



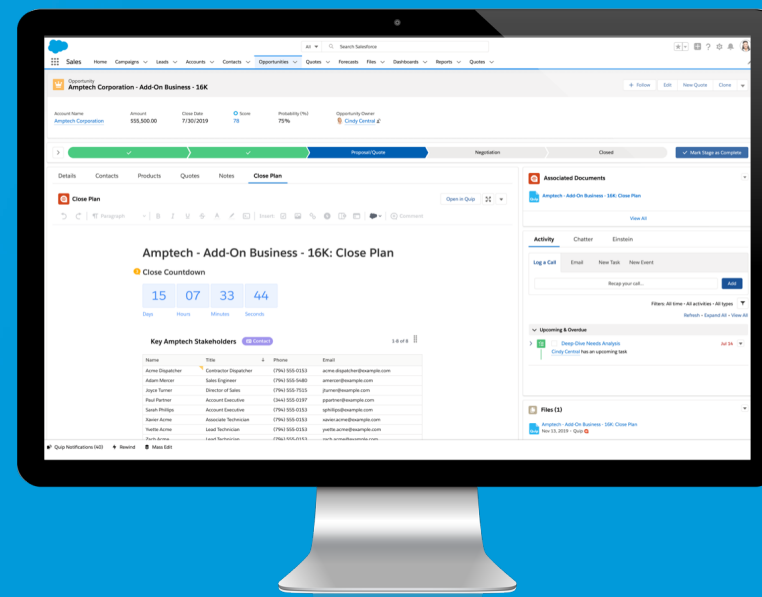
4

CLOSE MORE DEALS *with* COLLABORATIVE CLOSE PLANS

The old sales adage, “Always Be Closing” (ABC), is due for an update. It speaks to an era when sales reps pitched products aggressively, trying to wrangle customers to do what they wanted them to do. Today, the customer is in the driver’s seat and selling is a collaboration between many stakeholders. A better directive is to “Always Be Closing Collaboratively” (ABCC).

In the same spirit, the traditional “close plan” needs a reboot to reflect this new, collaborative reality. A close plan, now called a mutual success plan or mutual action plan, is a roadmap for closing a deal. While success plans have always been a helpful tool to push a deal toward the finish line, they are now indispensable because deals are more complex and involve more people on both the buyer and seller sides.

Here’s how to create an actionable, collaborative success plan that does a better job of keeping deals organized, saving time, and accelerating velocity.



WHY A COLLABORATIVE SUCCESS PLAN GIVES YOU AN EDGE

A success plan outlines milestones and time-sensitive action items for both the seller and buyer teams. Sales reps draw them up in the later stages of a deal, in collaboration with their own managers as well as customers. Today, the best success plans are living, online documents that are continually referenced and updated as the deal progresses.

If you're not using a success plan, you're making life harder for yourself and missing out on these key advantages:



Higher close rates. Deals often die by timing out when the customer goes dark. A success plan keeps them on track.



Fewer hiccups and surprises. A success plan gives you visibility into the buyer's decision and approval process well in advance, so you can avoid unforeseen challenges – or realize sooner that the deal isn't going anywhere and it's time to move on.



Faster sales cycles, better forecasting. With next steps outlined and due dates on the calendar, deals close more quickly. For sales leaders, success plans are key to developing more accurate forecasts.



Greater customer buy-in. A collaborative success plan is developed in close coordination with the buyer, who is more likely to adhere to a schedule she helped create. The process of creating a mutually beneficial plan also builds trust with your buyer.

WHAT'S THE BEST FORMAT FOR A MUTUAL SUCCESS PLAN?

A success plan must reside within your CRM as a living, editable page – populated with live CRM data. It also must be sharable with whom-ever needs to view it and easy to reference whenever you visit the opportunity page. You can save time and ensure consistency by using your CRM system to create a success plan template. You may be able to auto-populate success plan fields with data from the account or create the success plan automatically once an opportunity reaches a certain stage.

Share the plan with your customer and let them edit it, add comments, and update completed tasks and due dates. In terms of format, your plan can be either a narrative document or a spreadsheet, whichever suits your needs.

YOUR STARTING POINT FOR A SUCCESS PLAN

As you create your success plan, begin with the end in mind. Ask your customer to determine the target date that she wants the contract signed and your solution live and ready to use. Setting this date – and getting customer buy-in – is a crucial step that can keep your deal from slipping into the next quarter.

From there, work backwards to fill out your plan. Huddle separately with your customer and your sales leaders to set the milestones and subtasks needed to reach your goal. Create a schedule for when each step must be completed and by whom. In the process, your customer should share names and contact info for key stakeholders at her organization.

KEY ELEMENTS OF A COLLABORATIVE SUCCESS PLAN

Success plan templates can vary greatly, and the level of detail they include can depend on the size of the deal. Above all, try to keep them simple. Success plans are meant to save you time, not create new administrative chores.



TITLE

Include the opportunity name (e.g., “[Opportunity.Name]: Close Plan”).



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Briefly outline the purpose of the plan and frame its value for the customer.



RELATED DOCS

List and link to other helpful documents related to this opportunity within your CRM, such as opportunity notes or an account plan.



KEY STAKEHOLDERS

List the staff and executives who will be involved in the deal from your company and the customer's. Include their roles and contact information.



PROJECT PLAN

Create a schedule or checklist of all milestones and activities – from demos and presentations to executive approvals, legal review, and SOW agreements. Include due dates and completion status, and assign owners to each task.



OPPORTUNITY DETAILS

Include a section with any other need-to-know details, notes, or status updates to keep everyone on the same page and more quickly orient new stakeholders to the plan.



LEVERAGE YOUR SUCCESS PLAN TO CLINCH THE WIN

A collaborative success plan only works when the buyer and seller teams actively use it. That's why creating a visible, shareable, live plan within your CRM is so important.

To keep the plan top of mind, send reminders to your customer about upcoming tasks. If they miss a deadline, remind them of the target date they set. The success plan schedule provides a natural opening to check in with customers and keep the process moving forward. They'll appreciate the clarity and organization you bring to the process. If all goes well, you'll work together to seal the deal quickly.





CONCLUSION

Consistent and transparent communication, concise and action-oriented account notes, collaboration with extended teams, and transparency with your clients aren't new or complex concepts. However, when integrated into your overall deal process, will help your sales teams maintain a more consistent and resilient level of success.

No one can predict what the future holds but by implementing these best practices and standardizing across your entire sales organization, you'll be able to ensure you're meeting customer needs, accelerating deal cycles, and closing more business.

For more resources that can help you transform your sales processes for better results, visit quip.com.

