

# Achieving Sales Productivity Success: The Ten Necessary Conditions to Highly Effective Personal Selling

By Charles Fifield, MBA

*What is sales productivity? Why should companies pay close attention to sales productivity?*

Productivity, as it applies to sales organizations, is not uniformly defined. Simply put, productivity is maximizing sales results (output) by minimizing resources expended (inputs), where resources are expressed in terms of cost (financial), effort, and time required over consistent periods. Companies generally know how important sales productivity gains can be to the bottom line; however, few companies seem to know how to make this improvement happen.

Sales organizations are naturally driven to fulfill or exceed specified revenue goals. Measuring revenue is necessary but not sufficient to assess long-term profitability or shareholder value for an organization. For sales-driven organizations, it is critically important to focus on incremental productivity gains, since well-formulated and -executed productivity gains have an essential cause-and-effect relationship to improving financial results and sustaining a competitive advantage. The real challenge for individuals and organizations is to find a way to systematically improve sales productivity, period over period.

The primary reason many companies cannot consistently improve their sales productivity has little to do with in-depth sales training, what CRM software is used, or how hard salespeople are working. To consistently advance productivity results, sales organizations should be monitoring and measuring the performance of their sales production against the [Ten Necessary Conditions to Highly Effective Personal Selling](#). In other words, productivity must be managed systematically and holistically. Embodied within the Ten Necessary Conditions are the ingredients needed to achieve productivity gains and sustainable competitive advantage. If the Necessary Conditions for productivity success are incrementally applied, then it is likely that enhanced productivity and other desired outcomes will follow.

## The Ten Necessary Conditions – A Look-Back

For over two years, we have examined each of the Ten Necessary Conditions in the quarterly *Keller Center Research Report*. The purpose of this article is to look-back at each of the Conditions to gain a holistic perspective of the Ten Necessary Conditions to achieving sales productivity success:

1. [The Right Attitude](#) – Do your salespeople demonstrate a positive outlook despite setbacks, respond to requests in a timely manner, and share best practices with co-workers? When should my attitude be *competitive* (win-lose) versus *collaborative* (win-win)?

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2. **The Right Sales Process** – Does your organization manage its sales process and buyer-seller activities from a holistic (total organization) and cyclical view? Is there a regular and consistent attempt by management to encourage effective and efficient sales process performance?
3. **The Right Day-To-Day Operational Focus** – Is your sales organization challenged to minimize their non-selling activity time and trained to maximize selling time by working smarter, working faster, and learning how to perform necessary work right the first time?
4. **The Right Prospects** – Are your salespeople target market-minded? Are they accessing a high volume of qualified prospects? How productively are salespeople engaged in effective and efficient prospecting activities? How often are referred leads generated from satisfied customers?
5. **The Right Approach Priorities** – Do your salespeople understand the high correlation between the first impression and the ultimate buy- or no-buy decision? Do your salespeople understand the need to be *liked*, then *trusted*, and then *respected* to deliver value in the relationship? People want to know you care before they care about what you know – does your training process put too much emphasis on product or technical knowledge?
6. **The Right Approach Plan of Action or Strategy** – Do your salespeople use a progressive, planned sequence to influence customers to make effective buying decisions? How do your salespeople become aligned with the prospect’s wants, diagnose the “pain,” and *then* convey possible buying solutions?
7. **The Right Approach Method** – Although adaptability and agility on the part of the salesperson is important during any buyer-seller engagement, do your salespeople employ a standardized approach to minimize waste and maximize sales productivity? The productivity of a given sales call is largely determined by the pre-call preparation – how much emphasis does your sales organization place on anticipating the buyer’s relationship- and value-driven “wants?”
8. **The Right Outcome** – How do your salespeople demonstrate long-term relationship thinking? How often do buyers become repeat buyers and offer referred leads? Is the sales organization’s mindset or culture focused on helping buyers make “winning” decisions?
9. **The Right Metrics** – Does your sales organization employ metrics to assess long-term productivity? Or is the emphasis more on meeting quotas? How well do your chosen performance measures (e.g., cycle time) enable salespeople to quickly identify and correct productivity weaknesses and waste?

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10. [The Right Commitment](#) – Is your sales organization customer service-minded? Is customer loyalty viewed as the organization’s relationship goal? How do you define customer loyalty and how well is it communicated to the sales organization in terms of performance metrics and compensation?

## Summary

Sales productivity gains have rightfully become a top priority for most companies as they look to streamline their sales organizations and grow revenues from the same or fewer resources. Companies recognize that competent salespeople are difficult and expensive to attract and retain, and the return on even modest increased sales productivity can have a substantial impact in terms of bottom-line corporate performance. So where do meaningful productivity gains come from?

The first step in achieving sustainable productivity gains is hiring the right salespeople who possess the mindset for success. Once on-board, though, consistent productivity gains are often more elusive. Although additional sales skill training and having an effective Customer Relationship Management system installed should produce meaningful short-term gains, these corporate efforts should be viewed as important enablers to an ongoing productivity gain strategy. Embodied in the Ten Necessary Conditions are the tools to achieve long-term, sustainable productivity gains, enhance customer relationships, and gain long-term competitive advantage.

## About The Author

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Chuck Fifield is a Senior Lecturer for Baylor University’s Hankamer School of Business, Marketing Department and serves as the faculty coach to Baylor’s Sales Team and Uproar Music and Entertainment Group, a student-managed business. He joined the faculty at Baylor University in 2001, teaching in the Graduate Business School (Operations Management), the Management Department (Negotiations and Conflict Resolution) and the Economics Department (Principles of Macroeconomics). Chuck has taught or guest lectured at other Texas-based Universities in the fields of sales, international business, money and banking and finance/investments. Professor Fifield has conducted sales research and training for several organizations, including most recently State Farm Insurance. Prior to joining Baylor, Chuck was a financial consultant for nearly thirty years to businesses located throughout the U.S. He owned and operated several financial service businesses in the fields of securities, real estate, oil and gas and insurance.