



# How to Create a Strategic Roadmap for Sales Success

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What separates a high-performing sales organization from average and underperforming ones?

Steve J. Martin, author of *Yes!: 50 Scientifically Proven Ways to be Persuasive*, recently conducted an extensive survey to discover the answer and learned that high-performing sales organizations employ a structured sales process and hold their team members to a high level of accountability by consistently measuring their new business activity and results.

In fact, 50 percent of the high-performing sales organizations had processes in place for delivery, quality, and performance that they closely monitored and enforced.

These findings also show that a random approach to business development is dangerous and negatively impacts time, reputation, confidence, and money. Let's look at how you can implement a more strategic roadmap to achieve your business development goals.

## The Art and Science of a Strategic Roadmap

What is a roadmap? It's a means to connect your vision, value proposition, and goals with strategic actions that are required to achieve them.

The process for creating a strategic roadmap will facilitate your ability to develop a dynamic and responsive plan – a system – that incorporates each stage of the sales cycle. The scientific approach to your strategic roadmap includes a rigorous application of process, tools, and strategies bundled into a system that is understood and wholeheartedly embraced by your entire organization.

The art of a strategic roadmap, on the other hand, is all about your soft skills and those of your team, and includes relationship building, presentation techniques, active listening, and guidance that influences decisions. While the science of your strategic roadmap serves as the foundation of the sales platform, the art represents the creative flair and natural talents to which you and your team apply the process and use the tools to achieve success. By itself, the science is inefficient to achieve sales effectiveness. The art of sales – your competence, knowledge and motivation supported by the process – is the ultimate differentiator.

A well-designed strategic roadmap creates buy-in and instills pride in an organization. It is this sense of pride that fuels each associate's passion for excellence and dedication to enhancing the customer experience.

### **Value Proposition**

The first route of the strategic roadmap is your value proposition. A value proposition is the reason for your existence. It describes how you create value for others. It allows you and your team to stand out in a crowded marketplace. When all members of your staff understand and support the value proposition, they become engaged and active contributors to the sales culture.

Without a compelling value proposition supported by a unique process, the planning, development, execution and achievement of business development goals is an uphill battle. A unique value proposition is a concise, clear, and compelling statement that describes why a potential customer should buy your particular product or service, how it exceeds that of the competition, and why it is worthy of the price they must pay.

Your firm's value proposition should articulate the tangible results your customers will receive; the unique benefits you bring to bear that others cannot.

### **The Playbook**

The Playbook represents the capabilities (i.e., plays) of your firm including, but not limited to, client acquisition, account management, and quality assurance strategies, systems, and tools. It is the second route of your strategic roadmap.

In the game of football, the staff and players spend countless hours studying their playbook. The playbook allows the coaches to design and set strategy to enable the players to achieve results within the framework of a system. While the coach never gets on the field, he demonstrates and rehearses strategies to achieve success. When players execute a play properly, the coach rewards their performance. When the execution is lacking, the coach gives them a pep talk and

reviews the play. There are occasions when the coach goes deep into the playbook to adjust the game plan in an effort to alter the outcome of the performance. When the game is over, the players and coaches analyze results so they can continue doing what they did right and learn from their mistakes. With the playbook, the coach is able to execute, motivate and win!

High-performance organic growth agencies understand the importance of play and skill development. It is for this reason they dedicate so much time to building their offensive (i.e., business development) and defensive (client retention/intimacy) systems.

### Prospecting Component

The third section of the roadmap is Prospect Identification, Qualification and Service Delivery. This critical component of your strategic roadmap includes methods to fill the pipelines, criteria filter to screen out “commodity shoppers,” and a planning process that flaunts your firm’s unique capabilities.

Research conducted by Beyond Insurance indicates that the vast majority of agencies lack a strategic approach to prospect identification, research and qualification. In a survey administered to more than 7,000 agency principals and producers, Beyond Insurance uncovered the following:

Statement	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree
My agency’s sales process protects us from getting caught in the “commodity trap” – the 90-day insurance blitz.	16%	10%	74%
My firm has a disciplined, strategic, energized prospect research and qualification system.	26%	11%	63%
Our prospect research and qualification system creates a steady flow of qualified new business opportunities.	30%	5%	65%
My firm’s prospect research and qualification system is able to screen out commodity shoppers.	19%	11%	70%

In this route of your roadmap, Beyond Insurance recommends setting up a disciplined, strategic, and energized prospect research and qualification system that includes a “Prospect Research Evaluation Program (PREP)” Board. A PREP Board is a referral network of loyal, enthusiastic clients and centers of influence who help you and the agency with prospect research, identification, and qualification.

PREP is a four-step system as outlined below:

**Step 1**

Identify your raving fans – these are your loyal, enthusiastic clients, powerful centers of influence, and responsive carrier representatives. They love your game, and they'll be honored and ready to help you.

**Step 2**

Once you've identified your list, pick up the phone and ask them to serve as a member of your PREP board. After you solicit their involvement and support, send a thank you letter or email outlining what you'll be asking of them.

**Step 3**

Now it's time to gather and assimilate information on your prospects. As each prospect is identified, complete a brief scouting report and send it to your PREP board. The members of your PREP board will often have knowledge of these prospects and can offer valuable insights. Even if they do not know prospects on your list, they often will provide you with a referral who's not on your list.

**Step 4**

Repeat this process quarterly by providing a new list for your Board's consideration and review. Engaging your PREP board on a quarterly basis keeps your flow of prospects fresh...and holds you accountable for prospect research. Make sure to provide your PREP board with regular updates about the impact your unique process, target market, and prospecting success. And show appreciation by reciprocating with your PREP Board.

The PREP System will act as a catalyst to allow you to meet your new business goals more efficiently and strategically.

**Success Indicators**

The final route in your strategic roadmap is monitoring the results of your sales system. Critical indicators include, but are not limited to, activity-based performance, sales funnel forecasting, quality of new business appointments, as well as your hit ratio. These key performance indicators allow you to benchmark the effectiveness of your strategic roadmap and achieve results measured against targeted goals and objectives.

The quality and quantity of prospects in your sales funnel is particularly important – it lets you gauge the efficiency and impact of your roadmap.

Once you clearly understand each element of your strategic roadmap, you can use it as a guide toward success. By having this framework, you can better direct your time and other resources to deploy it in a consistent but flexible fashion. The roadmap will help you quickly determine

what decisions need to be made and by when, and translate it into a 90-day project plan that you update once a quarter.

Remember, your strategic roadmap is dynamic and relevant. It must be updated and communicated to be successful. And it must connect visions with current and future actions. The benefits of using your roadmap will be more new business, better relationships with your raving fan clients and centers of influence, and greater accountability for your actions.

Isn't it about time you created a process and roadmap for your business development success?

#### About the Author

Scott Addis, CPCU, CRA, CBWA is the CEO of Beyond Insurance and is recognized as an industry leader having been named a Philadelphia finalist for *Inc. Magazine's* "Entrepreneur of the Year" award as well as one of the "25 Most Innovative Agents in America." Beyond Insurance is a consulting firm that offers leadership training, cultural transformation, and talent and tactical development for enlightened professionals who are looking to take their practice to the next level. Since 2007, the proven and repeatable processes of Beyond Insurance have transformed individuals and organizations as measured by enhanced organic growth, productivity, profitability, and value in the marketplace.