XAIT

Top Priorities
for Sales Teams in 2021

By Kevin Craine

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Over one year ago, the World Health Organization declared a global pandemic. Since then, COVID-19 has upended almost every aspect of our lives, our jobs, and our businesses. Through a long and disheartening 12 months, researchers tracked the impact on businesses across the globe and estimate that the loss to GDP worldwide in 2020 was about 4.5 percent. This amounts to almost 3.94 trillion U.S. dollars in lost revenue.

The disruption of the coronavirus crisis has had a global impact, but the implications hit close to home for individual sales teams everywhere. The transition to remote selling has been a big adjustment for many and not all teams have thrived. HubSpot recently surveyed over 500 sales leaders and found that 40% of sales teams missed their revenue targets last year — a trend that can't continue if businesses are going to survive.

While navigating a global pandemic and surviving the economic uncertainty was priority number one in 2020, the question now becomes: how do sales teams move from responding to the crisis to planning for a recovery and renewal in 2021? Here are three priorities to consider.

> "How do sales teams move from responding to the crisis to planning for a recovery and renewal in 2021?"

#1 Remote Work an Advantage

The ongoing pandemic has forced sales teams to swiftly adjust their selling activities for the virtual environment. Remote work went from a niche decision some companies made to an inevitable and massive shift in the way that sales teams work together. While initially perceived as a short-term adjustment in the sales approach, the uncertain nature of the global market, as well as the promise of cost savings in the future, indicates that virtual selling is likely here to stay. In fact, Gartner research found recently that 23% of Chief Sales Officers plan to permanently shift field sales to virtual sales roles.

Top sales teams in 2021 will require the ability to leverage remote work as an advantage. It can be done. A study conducted at Stanford University found that working from home increases productivity by 13%. By building and leveraging the necessary skills and capabilities – including virtual collaboration tools, seamless information sharing, and systems for remote co-authoring of proposal and sales documents – teams can out-perform their slower-moving competitors. Indeed, team performance can increase by working from home. According to HubSpot, 63% of sales leaders say that virtual meetings are just as or more effective than in-person meetings.

Ultimately, the ability to make remote work an advantage can create unique opportunities to establish more synergy between sales leaders and their workforce. Sales leaders should look for opportunities to connect with their remote salesforce in ways they couldn't when reps were constantly out in the field.

#2 Generating Leads and Revenue

No matter what industry you are in, or what technologies and systems you use to run your business, at the end of the day you've got to make the sale to be successful. Where does that leave us in the months ahead? According to Gartner research, 49% of sales leaders believe that lead generation and management is the most critical factor for success over the next six months. Early on in the pandemic, most sales teams worked to close already advanced deals and doubled their efforts with existing customers. Now, sales organizations are coming to realize that mining existing customers won't offset the anticipated revenue loss moving forward. This has prompted a renewed focus on lead generation and new customer acquisition.

This can be a significant challenge for some large, multi-national sales teams, who struggle to sell large, complex solutions — at least with enough speed, predictability or margin to justify the significant investments to make those solutions possible in the first place. Landing the deal requires navigating an intricate quote-to-contract process – often with millions of dollars at stake – and aligning team members and stakeholders in often very distant and diverse locations and time zones.

Generating revenue relies heavily on the effective alignment of sales content and sales teams. After all, if reps have to hassle to find the information they need, constantly double-check specifications and pricing, or juggle multiple proposal versions internally before responding, they're more likely to miss the mark with potential clients. Ultimately, this lack of connection inhibits the effectiveness of sales teams. The result is a negative impact on the bottom line; especially as the pace of competition increases as countries and communities turn the corner with the coronavirus.

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Sales Enablement

Throughout the pandemic, sales teams have leaned heavily on sales enablement. Sales leaders all over have worked tirelessly to structure their enablement strategies in order to best set up their teams for success and continually optimize the

environment they have created for virtual selling. This focus on sales enablement will gain more momentum in 2021.

According to the Fifth Annual Sales Enablement Study by CSO insights, organizations that have formal sales enablement initiatives achieve a 49% win rate compared to 42.5% for those without. Per the report, a more structured and formal sales process is vital for customers to view the organizations as strategic partners and trusted advisors. The winners master virtual selling with an up-to-date approach to content, tools, and virtual teaming.

Effective sales enablement in the new normal will require a different set of capabilities. Virtual teams, seamless access to information and sales content, and integrated pricing tools will out-perform the competition. A motivated sales team that has the technology tools and content resources they need to excel in a virtual environment will close more deals. However, success will also require that sales teams return to some fundamental business skills. Writing a persuasive business case, thoughtful pricing and integration, and strategic problem solving will all be required to navigate the uncertain course still ahead.
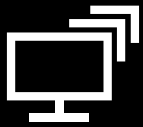
Are there any parts of the business or your sales process that you are still using spreadsheets for? Why is this? (The answer may mean that their current CPQ system is not able to produce quotes to the complexity they need)

Moving Forward

How can you move forward today and empower your sales teams to sell more? One solution worth evaluating is XaitPorter, a progressive database-driven document co-authoring software with integrated configure, price, and quote features. It is an ideal approach for complex tenders, proposals, and contracts. The solution enables sales teams to more effectively and more collaboratively create, manage and produce high-value bids and proposals and other business-critical documents. And the ability to seamlessly and accurately select and price combinations products and services will give you an edge on slower-moving competition.

Want to learn more? Download my latest white paper: "XaitPorter Just Made it Easier for Customers to Buy from You" here.

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Overcoming objections when selling XaitCPQ

By Kevin Geraghty ▬

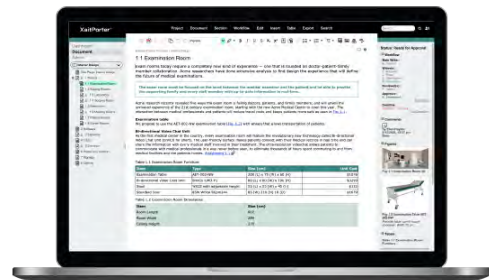## The X factor for winning bids and proposals

XaitPorter is the benchmark team co-authoring and automation software solution. Ideal for complex tenders, proposals and reports. Implemented by major corporations around the world.

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About the author

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Kevin Craine is a professional writer and award-winning podcast producer. He was named the #1 Enterprise Content Management Influencer to follow on Twitter and has listeners and readers worldwide.

Kevin creates strategic content for the web, marketing, social media, and more. He is the written voice for some of North America's leading brands. His client list includes many well-known global leaders. In addition, he is a content strategist for AIIM International.