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The Chief Sales Officer is a quarterly publication for CSOs looking for the latest insight on leading and managing their sales functions. In this issue, we focus on how you can achieve efficient growth in your organization by effectively managing costs.

Since the financial crisis, costs have outpaced revenue throughout the S&P Global 1200. In fact, from 2010 to 2013, costs grew at 1.05 times revenue growth, accelerating to 1.8 times from 2014 to 2017. It’s no surprise then that an increasing number of CEOs are either undertaking or considering initiatives to deliver improvements in margins to investors. And this cost pressure is trickling down to chief sales officers (CSOs) as well.

Managing sales costs is not merely a minimalist strategy. It’s actually a thoughtful and holistic approach that requires a great deal of discipline and skill to execute successfully. That is why we focused on cost management for this issue of The Chief Sales Officer. We’ll address this topic from a variety of perspectives, which include:

- **Strategies for achieving efficient growth (page 5)** — Read our featured article from Maria Boulden, currently a VP, executive partner at Gartner and former global sales director at DuPont with 33 years of experience creating and leading world-class sales teams. She’ll share some strategies for how sales leaders can tighten an already tight budget and still hit top- and bottom-line targets to achieve efficient growth.

- **Guidance on meeting revenue targets while operating with a reduced sales head count (page 10)** — Ensure you have a strategy for operating with a reduced head count, a problem that is likely to worsen as organizations are increasingly asked to operate on a reduced budget.

- **Lessons in sales leadership from an interview with a progressive CSO (page 18)** — Hear from Myke Hawkins, SVP of global solutions at Kelly Services, as he shares his perspective on how sales leaders can successfully transition from an individual contributor to a leadership role and how organizations can effectively respond to what he refers to as the “changing world of work.”

- **Advice on dealing with increased cost pressures using a disciplined approach (page 22)** — Discover the most common missteps CSOs make when under pressure to cut costs as well as what the most progressive CSOs do to avoid each mistake.

- **Best practice for scaling subject matter expertise (page 28)** — Learn how Airgas built a tool that codifies and scales its subject matter expert (SME) knowledge, allowing for more SME interactions each year without increasing their number.

With organizations now operating in an increasingly uncertain economic environment, cost pressures are likely to worsen. However, as Myke Hawkins, the subject of our “Lessons in Sales Leadership” article, points out, the best leaders are able to help their teams move beyond disadvantage. In fact, he mentions about half of Fortune 500 companies were started during a bear market or recession, one of the worst (if not the worst) disadvantages for a business leader.

In the same spirit, the strategies, insights and best practices in this issue are meant to provide a comprehensive set of tools you can use to address your cost pressures with a thoughtful and holistic approach and move your organization beyond disadvantage.

Enjoy!

Woojin Choi
Architecting Growth Under Selling Expense (Sellex) Pressure

by Maria Boulden

Chief sales officers can learn how to prioritize selling expense (sellex) to hit current top- and bottom-line growth targets and set the sales organization up for sustained success.
The Pursuit of Efficient Growth

Since the financial crisis, costs have outpaced revenue growth for the S&P Global 1200 (the largest 1,200 firms in the world by market capitalization). From 2010 to 2013, costs grew at 1.05 times revenue growth, accelerating to 1.8 times from 2014 to 2017 (see Figure 1).

In this environment, only 5% of large organizations have outpaced industry peers in revenue growth and total cost reduction — a profile we call "efficient growth." As harbingers of an economic downturn loom, the challenge to achieve such growth becomes even more daunting.

Forward-thinking chief sales officers (CSOs) look to act decisively to stay ahead of increased pressures on their selling expense (sales) budgets for 2020 while still achieving efficient growth.

The Reactive Decision Death Spiral

Sooner or later, even the most conservative budgets get squeezed due to a weaker market, trade wars, internal cost challenges or any other type of headwind or market uncertainty. And often CSOs react to cost pressure rather than proactively anticipating it, cutting things that were budgeted for a good reason. While these reactive measures may produce short-term cost benefits, in the medium and long term,

Figure 1: Global Revenues and Total Cost Growth
Median Compounded Annual Growth Rates, S&P Global 1200 Index, 2010-2017

n = 1,141 largest global companies by market capitalization as defined by the S&P Global 1200 Index from 2010-2017
Source: “S&P Capital IQ,” Standard & Poor’s
Note: Total costs include operating costs and the economic cost of invested capital.
these cuts produce inefficiencies that lead to a decrease in sustainable revenue and necessitate additional cuts in the future (see the Reactive Decision Death Spiral in Figure 2).

Leading indicators of this reactive decision death spiral are easy to spot. Some of the most common follow:

- **The “artificial” growth conundrum** — Businesses trying to grow can’t hold onto their base, and businesses trying to hold onto their base can’t grow, as if it’s a choice between the two.

- **Laserlike focus on lagging indicators** — By default, this leaves sales leaders on their heels and relegated to desperate actions.

- **Patchwork organization structure** — This is a product of iterative annual cuts and adds that’s become more a portrait of affordability as opposed to a machine tuned for profitable growth.

If sales leaders overlook these indicators, they are likely to continue seeking quick cost benefits followed by ravaging, hard-to-unwind, medium- and long-term aftereffects that include:

- **Abrupt exits to a sales territory** — All CSOs know the day will come when they’ll need to reenter and close sales as if they’ve never left.

- **Role elimination of resources not generating revenue** — Cutting these roles (i.e., the backbone of sales operations and enablement) will leave sales leaders flying blind or only reactive.

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### Figure 2: Reactive Decision Death Spiral

- **Reactive Cost Cuts**
- **Medium- and Long-Term Decrease in Revenue**
- **Inefficiencies Caused by Reactive Cost Cuts**
- **Additional Cost Cuts**
- **Short-Term Cost Benefit**

Source: Gartner
The one-size-fits-all cut — Applying a single revenue dollar per FTE target to every vertical, region and channel with reductions of all the “excess” FTEs is easy to execute and looks beautiful in a financial spreadsheet but can be a severe detriment to the top line.

And if the self-inflicted injuries weren’t bad enough, functional peers can also hinder the sales team. For example, supply chain counterparts can cut so deeply into their working capital that the sales team doesn’t have enough product inventory to hit its target.

10 Tactics to Achieve Efficient Sales Growth

So how do you tighten an already tight budget to achieve growth on the top and bottom line? Below are a handful of tactics the most progressive sales leaders utilize to proactively address cost pressures. These tactics encompass a wide range of sales topics, including: talent management, indirect channel management, sales coverage model, sales operations and sales expense.

Talent Management

1. Put Underperformers on a “PIP” and Cut Those Who Haven’t Improved

For most companies, if poor performers aren’t already on a performance improvement plan (PIP), it’s difficult to cut them for underperformance. As a result, when rapid cuts are required, sales leaders are likely to sacrifice sellex and be forced to cut core performers caught in the wrong place at the wrong time. This isn’t personal but purely about performance. It’s critical to put PIPs in place now, and those who can’t meet the prescribed goals within a set time need to quickly be let go to get the work in the hands of someone who will execute it.

2. Delay Backfills That Don’t Produce Revenue

While still critical resources, these roles usually don’t have the same long-term impact as revenue-generating resources. A delay is acceptable, but cutting should only occur after carefully considering the consequences (short- and long-term). Sales leaders also need to be watchful of where this work gets distributed to not risk overworking any remaining resources — especially sales operations and enablement.

Indirect Channel Management

3. Rightsize Channel Inventories

It may be tempting for sales leaders to move inventory from their own warehouses to those of channel partners, but doing so destabilizes channel partners by tying up their cash. Channel partners stop making other investments and start selling on price to get the product out of their warehouses.

A growing number of distributors today are also looking to cut deeply into their own inventories to preserve working capital, leaving sales organizations exposed when they can’t meet market demand with the right level of service quality. Sales leaders need to carefully consider what they have and what they need throughout the channel and be ready for the market demand that’s coming.

4. Rightsize Channel Partners

Just like the need to cut underperforming sales reps, now is the time for sales leaders to cut underperforming channel partners or, at a minimum, get the right performance management processes in place within the next six months to have capable partners that don’t just sell on price.

For a capable partner in a difficult situation, the right performance management support will be a welcome relief to get back on track. And for a partner underperforming, now is the time for the two organizations to part ways, though there’s a chance for them to go to a competitor. Once again, this isn’t personal but about execution and performance. All in all, sales leaders must run the numbers — price realization, opportunity capture, product margins, territory coverage — and get the right partners who will deliver on the organization’s needs.

Sales Coverage Model

5. Limit Price Reductions per Sale

This is a good time for sales leaders to reel in price desks or any other sources of price relief to limit what they’re giving. They should also make sure the sales team is a part of that solution
so they’re not “buying” growth and/or causing internal turmoil in their organizations. If they tell the price desk to increase and tighten the range of approvable pricing without the sales team’s buy-in, chaos is likely to ensue with a myriad of back-end credits that circumvent the pricing process.

6. Rebalance High Cost to Serve Territories
Sales leaders should refresh their buyer journey maps and segmentation to ensure they have the territory design, then overlay that with cost-to-serve and profitability analysis. If they’re not already looking at growth opportunity at the profitability level, now is a good time to run the numbers.

Sales Operations

7. Review Rebates and Accruals
This is an easy and often overlooked lever. Sales leaders should ask themselves: Are rebates being earned? Are we overaccruing or underaccruing? This is where sales operations teams can make a significant impact on the bottom line.

8. Study Profitability Analysis to Identify Leakage Points
Unearned bulk discounts, high-cost services or other sources of profitability leakage are other gold mines an effective sales operations team can explore. Sales leaders should consider using interns to explore this data; it can be surprising what fresh eyes can find.

Sales Expense

9. Keep Travel, Limit Expense
Field salespeople need to execute in the field, so edicts that stop travel hurt far more than they help. But sales leaders must be very conservative on entertainment; even the most frugal sales teams have a few entertainment splurges, but in today’s environment, those won’t be very effective unless they’re carefully orchestrated around business discussions.

And while enabling sales to travel, sales leaders must be vigilant about spending behaviors, such as a rep’s own $100 dinner after a tough meeting or long flight. Leverage the sales operations team to regularly analyze travel spend and be sure first-line managers are checking expense reports before approving them so they can have the right conversation when needed.

10. Deploy a Sales Contest for Growth Without Extra Spending
Sometimes, a few operating boundaries and the right contest can encourage sellers to curb their own expenses. But sales leaders should ensure this is self-funded so they save more than they spend. For instance, a contest based on highest profitable growth and lowest T&E spend (both measures as a percentage to maintain equity between regions) encourages best-practice sharing and peer pressure that can be almost as impactful as what the winner delivers.

Note: Don’t attempt to “save” money within the structured incentive compensation. Once that locks down for the year, it should be untouchable, barring any major market or client issues that warrant an appeal/restructuring. Use the contests or incentives as an add-on; it’s far easier to execute and, frankly, easier to reel in if circumstances change again.

Prioritizing sellex spend to hit top- and bottom-line growth targets has to be a matter of routine rather than an annual event. It’s an integral part of avoiding a bullwhip effect from strict or short-term cost measures while setting the sales organization up for sustained success.
What to Do With an Open Territory During Delayed Recruiting or a Hiring Freeze

by Steve Rietberg

When facing prolonged recruiting cycles, chief sales officers must meet revenue targets despite operating with a reduced sales head count. In this environment, sales leaders should use account reassignment, role adjustments and pipeline management techniques to position teams for success.
Successful chief sales officers (CSO) know that controlling attrition and minimizing vacancy time among frontline sellers are critical steps to reaching their sales targets. Sales teams may face prolonged periods of time with open territories during an economic slowdown. Decreases in revenue or profitability sometimes prompts sales leaders to slow or stop their recruiting efforts in a proactive effort to avoid more drastic actions.

CSOs risk falling into a vicious cycle of short-term cost-cutting measures (as shown in Figure 1) if they don’t consider the bigger picture when faced with decreases in revenue. In this scenario, slowing or postponing hiring activity without taking measures to sustain revenue from accounts in open territories will ultimately exacerbate the underlying revenue challenge.

Open territories can mean stalled or lost sales, which puts sales managers and leaders at risk of missing their sales targets. The appropriate responses in this situation must be selected based on multiple factors, including:

- The expected duration of the hiring hiatus, if known
- The complexity of the sales coverage design
- The timing of the next territory-revision and quota-setting cycle

Sales managers who have open territories need a consistent approach to avoid leaving accounts underserved. These managers will be unsure of how long they must endure a vacancy and how aggressively they should respond to counteract its effects. CSOs must equip their sales managers with specific guidance on how

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**Figure 1: The Vicious Cycle of Short-Term Cost-Cutting Measures**

![Diagram showing the vicious cycle of short-term cost-cutting measures](image)

Source: Gartner

Note: Total costs include operating costs and the economic cost of invested capital.
to maximize their teams’ performance during the period of prolonged or postponed hiring. Best practices include:

• Managers taking ownership of select accounts
• Other frontline sellers covering select accounts
• Reallocation of overlay sellers into frontline roles

**Quickly Bridge Gaps in Territory Coverage by Assigning Accounts to a Manager in a Player/Coach Capacity**

In situations where an open territory requires immediate attention from a seller to sustain the momentum of active opportunities and to respond to time-sensitive leads, sales managers are best served when they temporarily step into the seller role themselves. This is the easiest and fastest recommendation to implement, and is typically the default response to normal seller attrition. This approach is appropriate during prolonged hiring periods, when:

• The duration of prolonged/postponed hiring is expected to be shorter than six months.
• The sales manager is already closely engaged in the territory’s more-challenging sales opportunities.
• Key late-stage deals are at risk of faltering without immediate seller intervention.

Unless sales managers are new to the organization, they will not require any time to familiarize themselves with the appropriate buyer’s process or existing sales methodologies. The sales manager simply takes on an additional role of “acting” seller within the open territory. The manager can self-select which deals to pursue based on their existing familiarity with the territory in question.

CSOs must look across their organizations to determine which open seller roles offer an appropriate opportunity for managers to step in and cover a territory temporarily.

**Minimize the Impact on Critical Accounts by Temporarily Reassigning Them to Other Sellers**

While temporary account reassignment seems like an easy solution, this practice can have a negative impact on sales performance if executed improperly. CSOs should guide frontline managers to grant temporary ownership of select accounts to one or more other frontline sellers on their team to protect potential revenue and preserve the relationship with the buyer. This action is most appropriate when:

• The duration of prolonged/postponed hiring is expected to last more than six months.
• The territory design has been rolled out and related account transitions have already occurred.
When sales managers intend to take this approach, they must follow a three-step process before the approach can be communicated to and executed within impacted sales teams.

**Step 1: Choose Which Sellers Will Take On Additional Accounts**

Managers first need to determine which seller(s) will help cover accounts in the open territory. Ideally, the affected accounts will be reassigned to sellers in the same role and seniority as the open position. This ensures that the covering sellers do not require additional training to manage the reassigned accounts.

If territory design is geographically based, the covering sellers should be in close proximity to the open territory so that travel and time zones do not hinder their ability to cover the accounts in question. If territory design is based on customer characteristics or sales channel, sales managers should again seek to have sellers who sell to similar buyers take temporary ownership of the reassigned accounts.

**Step 2: Determine Which Accounts to Reassign**

Managers must determine which accounts should be reassigned to sellers covering the open territory. Limiting the number of accounts that are reassigned to a covering seller will mitigate the risk of overwhelming the seller and negatively impacting the performance of their original territory. There are a few dimensions to consider when determining the scope of the account reassignment, as shown in Figure 2.

Using this framework, managers may decide to only reassign select accounts where there is higher potential for new revenue, instead of reassigning all accounts in the territory. If managers choose to reassign accounts, those accounts should be selected based on a few factors, from the obvious to the less-obvious, such as:

- Potential deal size and close date — Managers should prioritize larger deals with the potential to close in the current or upcoming quarter.
- Sales stage or progression of buying jobs — Late-stage deals are better candidates for reassignment.

**Figure 2: Considerations When Determining Which Accounts in an Open Territory to Temporarily Reassign**

![Figure 2: Considerations When Determining Which Accounts in an Open Territory to Temporarily Reassign](image_url)
• Strategic value of the account — Accounts that represent recurring revenue or can serve as reference accounts for future opportunities should be prioritized.

• Bandwidth of the covering seller — Managers should revisit existing territory plans to ensure that the covering seller is not overwhelmed.

• Strengths of the covering seller — Managers must also evaluate accounts to ensure that the covering seller has the skills to overcome challenges unique to each account. This will not only protect the seller from wasted effort but also protect the credibility of the sales organization for future engagement with the account.

Step 3: Decide How to Handle Temporary Sales Compensation

Finally, CSOs must provide impacted teams with a clear and consistent policy for how compensation will be handled for accounts that are temporarily reassigned to other sellers. CSOs must determine their overall compensation philosophy. Are sellers given additional opportunity to overachieve in return for their efforts to sustain the open territory’s performance? Are sellers accountable if reassigned accounts underperform? Answers to these questions will inform how quota and commissions should be treated, if appropriate.

The questions of commission rate and quota assignment are not independent of one another, again depending on the organization’s overall compensation philosophy. For example, if partial quota is being assigned to the covering rep for owning reassigned accounts, then it is appropriate to pay commissions at a partially reduced commission rate for those deals, as illustrated in Figure 3.

The compensation policy must also specify rules for crediting sellers and calculating commissions once the open seller position is filled. Many sales organizations will continue to pay the

Figure 3: Considerations When Balancing Quota and Compensation for Reassigned Accounts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Seller Reward</th>
<th>Commission Rate Multiplier</th>
<th>Quota Assigned</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Favorable to Seller</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Balanced</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Favorable to Business</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Gartner
covering sellers some level of commission for
deals they worked for a limited time following
the start date of the newly hired territory owner.
To avoid confusion or disputes, it’s critical that
CSOs establish a clear compensation policy
for reassigned accounts, and that managers
communicate this policy in writing and in
advance of any account assignment changes.
Additionally, if the policy includes commission
sharing between the covering seller and the
new hire, this policy must be communicated
and agreed with the seller candidate before
extending any job offer.

Reassign Resources From
Other Sales Roles to Fill
Seller Vacancies

In sales organizations where sellers are
supported by overlay sales roles, sales leaders
may be able to close the gaps left by open
frontline seller positions by reallocating overlay
resources into frontline selling roles. This
approach is most appropriate when:
• The territory design is fully rolled out
  and related account transitions have
  already occurred.
• The ratio of sellers in direct versus overlay
  quota-carrying roles is lower than desired,
  possibly inflating the cost of sales.
• Overlay sellers possess the necessary
  skills to succeed in direct sales.
• Overlay sellers are looking for career
  progression into direct sales roles.
• Sales managers have the coaching skills
  necessary to aid the role transition.

In some industries, sellers in overlay roles view
a frontline seller’s role as the next step in their
career progression. In these scenarios, CSOs
can treat a period of postponed hiring as an
opportunity to promote from within. And if
offered as an interim assignment, the sales
manager and the seller can both benefit from
a try-before-you-buy arrangement.

While this approach does not fully address the
impact of losing a head count, it does shift the
impact of an open position to an overlay role that
presents less risk to revenue. When following
this approach, CSOs should inspect their current
allocation of overlay selling roles to identify
the areas of deepest coverage. These teams
will be best-positioned to absorb the impact
of repurposing a head count, temporarily or
permanently, into a frontline selling role.
Measure, prioritize and improve your sales function’s capabilities

This framework is based on the Gartner Sales Score, an interactive diagnostic assessment of the sales function, including maturity benchmark reports. If you’re interested in deploying that version, please contact your client partner.

Sales Operations

1. Account Management & Growth
2. Key Account Management
3. Sales Development & Execution
4. Early Pipeline & Lead Management
5. Sales Support, Tools, & Technology
6. Commercial Messaging
7. Managing the Sales Operations Function
8. Sales Analytics & Intelligence
9. Sales Process Design and Management
10. Compensation Design and Management

Sales Strategy & Design
11. CRM/SFA Management
12. Strategic Planning and Sales Transformation
13. Sales Force Design
14. Indirect Channel Management
15. Talent Acquisition
16. Onboarding
17. Sales Training
18. Talent Engagement & Retention

Sales Talent Management

19. Sales Manager Effectiveness
20. Coaching

On the scale of nascent to master, where does your sales organization stand?

The Gartner Sales Score self-assessment tool and report help you evaluate your sales organization’s maturity. With an accurate look at performance gaps between where you are today and where you want to go tomorrow, you can:

• See how you measure up across six objectives and 20 discrete functional activities
• Identify sales strengths and weaknesses
• Build a fact-based case for resource requisitions
• Make cross-functional planning
• Define specific initiatives, across sales disciplines, to reach the next level of maturity

For more information, contact us at salesleaders@gartner.com.

Account Management & Growth
We provide sellers with a standardized account planning approach used to assess both short and long-term account growth plans. This approach drives a proactive focus on known and emerging customer needs and incorporates information from beyond the core account team (e.g., operational, support, services).

Key Account Management
We have a key account program to ensure the development and retention of customers critical to our organization’s growth. We strategically tier key accounts, ensuring that customers receive service commensurate with their importance to both short- and long-term company objectives. We also regularly up- and down-tier accounts.

Sales Development & Execution
We provide guidance and support – in the form of processes, training and enablement resources – on sales development activities (i.e., prospecting, opportunity qualification, deal pursuit).

Early Pipeline & Lead Management
We ensure a healthy sales pipeline by partnering with marketing to establish a common definition of a high-quality lead. We also track relevant pipeline metrics and conduct periodic pipeline review meetings.

Sales Support, Tools, & Technology
We build enablement tools and resources around end-user needs aimed at reducing seller burden and driving productivity. These tools are often embedded in seller’s workflows and organized around the customer buying journey.

Commercial Messaging
We provide sellers with standardized commercial messages and talking points that highlight the company’s differentiators and ultimately lead back to us as the supplier.

Managing the Sales Operations Function
Our sales operations team is positioned as a value-added function that is responsible for leading initiatives and driving innovations that create sales success and strategic advantage for the sales organization.

Sales Analytics & Intelligence
We actively capture essential customer and account data and quantitatively analyze it to understand past results, model possible future outcomes and make actionable, insight-driven decisions.

Sales Process Design and Management
Our sales process is extensively aligned to the customer buying journey and ultimately helps managers coach sellers, provides an ecosystem of sales enablement and frames the sales forecasting process.

Compensation Design and Management
We design, launch and govern sales incentives in a way that rewards sellers for outcomes that drive sales strategy and enhances seller trust through stability and transparent expectations.

CRM/SFA Management
We ensure enterprise-wide system value by balancing ease of use with high-quality data and reporting (for leaders and sellers alike). This includes enabling a business-level view of the customer, execution of business processes, and reporting that supports seller guidance, pipeline health and forecasting.

Sales Strategy & Design
We have a clear timeline and systematic process for strategic planning and proactively identify business goals by surfacing, not causing and prioritizing organizational gaps.

Strategic Planning and Sales Transformation
We have a strategic, data-driven process — informed by customer buying behavior as well as market and organizational changes — for determining sales coverage, role design, sales force size and territory design.

Sales Force Design
We provide support to channel partners in taking the company’s products and solutions to market (e.g., product updates, collateral, voice of the channel). We also provide tiered incentive programs as well as exclusive arrangements with key partners, such as private label, OEM, etc.

Indirect Channel Management
We have a clear strategic, data-driven process — informed by customer buying behavior as well as market and organizational changes — for determining sales coverage, role design, sales force size and territory design.

Talent Acquisition
The recruiting and hiring process is governed by specific sales competencies in addition to product/technical knowledge. Training is incorporated into seller workflows to maximize safe, experiential learning opportunities. We also set clear and verifiable performance expectations at key onboarding milestones.

Onboarding
Our onboarding program goes beyond teaching sellers day-to-day workflows to having them demonstrate key skills and behaviors in structured, experiential settings. We also provide tiered incentive programs as well as exclusive arrangements with key partners, such as private label, OEM, etc.

Sales Training
Our training program upsells sellers on critical sales skills in addition to product/technical knowledge. Training is incorporated into seller workflows to maximize safe, experiential learning opportunities. We have formal certification programs to ensure seller proficiency in required competencies.

Talent Engagement & Retention
We actively monitor seller satisfaction by employing a variety of metrics including employee engagement and job satisfaction surveys. We use this information to design a clear and widely accepted employee value proposition (EVP) that taps into the key drivers of engagement and attrition.

Sales Manager Effectiveness
Our frontline sales managers invest significant time on skill-building and coaching. They also encourage team collaboration, leveraging the collective strengths of their sellers to drive sales creativity and innovation.

Coaching
We facilitate ongoing, dynamic and job-embedded coaching interactions between sales managers and their direct reports designed to diagnose and correct or reinforce behaviors specific to that individual.

Sales Operations

13. Sales Force Design
14. Indirect Channel Management
15. Talent Acquisition
16. Onboarding
17. Sales Training
18. Talent Engagement & Retention
19. Sales Manager Effectiveness
20. Coaching

Sample Report Excerpt: Activity Maturity and Importance Scores

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Lessons in Sales Leadership

An Interview With Kelly Services’ Myke Hawkins

by Woojin Choi

Each month, Brent Adamson interviews CSOs on our Lessons in Sales Leadership podcast. He recently spoke with Myke Hawkins, SVP of global solutions at Kelly Services, about the changing world of work and how organizations can effectively respond to it.

As SVP and global sales leader at Kelly Services, Myke Hawkins leads the global sales force in driving innovative workforce solutions for Kelly’s largest clients, accelerating company growth and building a world-class sales culture and team. Myke is accountable for overseeing sales and consulting professionals in over 15 countries within global solutions, a division that comprises more than three-quarters of Kelly Services’ global revenue. He specializes in change management, leadership development, market disruption, strategy architecture and building high-performing growth functions.
What got you interested in sales?
As a kid, I was in the Boy Scouts and tenaciously pursued becoming an Eagle Scout. The way to pay for camping trips back then was selling household items to neighborhood families. I always had the highest sales. And later as an adult, I realized it was because I wasn’t selling features and benefits; rather, I was selling how an item could solve a problem — whether it was a flashlight for storms or waterproof matches for camping. I learned at a young age everyone was selling something. My scouting customers were selling me on what they wanted, and I was selling them on how to get it. This all led me to want a career in sales; I wanted to be in the business of helping people help themselves.

What was it like transitioning from an individual contributor role to a CSO?
I’ve seen so many high-performing sales individuals flat out fail at transitioning into leadership roles. For me, I had to realize it was no longer about me; it was about the people I was leading, what they needed from me and what I needed from them. It was about the company and the strategy I was charged with executing against. I knew that to be successful, I had to quickly learn how to enable and inspire people to deliver their best selves to their customers and the company. I had to learn how to set a compelling mission that everyone could rally around. I had to provide line of sight to our business priorities. Beyond that, I’ve found the very best sales and client management professionals thrive in environments that are urgent, accountable and most importantly fun. Those three items, in addition to strong execution, are perhaps the hardest things for people transitioning from a seller to a leader.

What does it mean to be a successful sales leader?
Any successful sales leader is constantly viewing the world through three lenses: the customer, the shareholder and their people. I’m still asking the same basic questions I did in my first sales leader job. Is this particular customer happy and growing? Will this decision meet the financial performance expectations of our shareholders? Are our sellers as engaged and productive as they can be? When you start asking yourself those questions, it sheds so much light on the direction that a sales leader needs to take their team.

If I’m a sales leader, what kind of questions should I be asking myself to ensure my team is as productive as it can be?
For anyone who’s fortunate enough to lead the entire sales organization, you have to know your metrics. This isn’t an annual process or some quarterly review. You’re looking at metrics all the time because without them, you don’t know what strategic levers you can pull to improve performance. As a team leader, you may focus on metrics like average deal size, win rates or sales cycle length. As an organization leader, you need to focus on metrics like engagement, productivity, turnover and other broad measures that give you leading and lagging indicators of performance. You definitely want to have a pulse on how your people are feeling about their jobs, how they’re feeling about their performance, whether they have the support and tools that they need, etc.

You mentioned earlier that you have a rockstar leadership team, and it seems like you’re excited about the team you’ve built. How do you create such a leadership team, and what makes it so effective?
I tell all the leaders I’m developing that leadership is influence — nothing more, nothing less — regardless of how many direct reports they have or how much budget they command because people buy into the leader, not the title. Our people at all times are listening to the words we use and observing the actions that we take — or don’t take. That being said, as you transition from a team leader to a company executive you have to mentally transition from trying to grow and develop individuals to growing and developing your leaders.

Helping leaders get comfortable being uncomfortable is job No. 1. Helping leaders lead is paramount as you move into senior sales positions; you have to go back in time and think about what you needed from your leader when you were an individual contributor. You have to be absolutely committed to their success for them to get the coaching and guidance they need.
Kelly Services has a front row seat to the world of work and how it's changing. What's your take on the world of work? How is it changing, and why is it changing?

When I was born, half of my hometown in Flint — more than 80,000 people — worked for one major automotive manufacturer. As a kid dreaming about what to become, the choices that were presented were working in an automotive plant, learning a trade or joining the military. But the message to me was that whichever one I chose, I had to stay there for my entire working career because no one was going to hire a job hopper and loyalty mattered. By the time I left for college, two-thirds of those automotive jobs were gone, and as it turned out, loyalty had been a one-way street.

My comments aren’t about this company whatsoever; rather, they’re about the significant and adverse impact the changing world of work has had on talent, families and communities. To reference the emergent notion intimately held by today’s talent: we work to live, not live to work. The war for talent is over, and talent has won.

The days when people used to work at one company for 30 years and collect their pensions are over. Today’s workers are choosing new work styles to fit their desired lifestyles and want to become untethered from full-time employers, and we’re seeing that across all demographics across all industries. So there’s no question that talent is taking control and taking their lives back. In fact, at the worker level, people are quitting their jobs at the highest rate in 16 years, which is twice the rate people are getting laid off. And the average employee tenure in the private sector is now only 3.8 years.

How should organizations be interpreting these shifts?

When you look throughout all industries around the world, the talent shortage is projected to reach 85 million people by 2030 and will cost companies $8.5 trillion in economic opportunity. If companies don’t have a strategy for how they’re going to change the way they recruit, retain, reward and retire workers, they are going to become noncompetitive and potentially obsolete. They need to have a strategy for how they’re going to attract talent because talent, more than ever, has realized while there may be forces outside of their control, there is one thing that is uniquely theirs. And that’s the freedom to choose when, how, where and why they work and who they work for.

When you think about this change, are you bullish or bearish on the future?

It gets me unwaveringly excited. There’s always this image of robots making jobs go away, but every technological change or advancement throughout history has often created more jobs than it has eliminated. For us, we see there are changes afoot, like 5G or AI, that are going to create jobs we don’t even know exist today. We help both companies and talent navigate the storm, just as we’ve been doing for more than 70 years. We’re excited as the next 10 to 25 years might very well see the most significant growth anyone has ever seen since the first Industrial Revolution.

What advice do you have for other sales leaders?

The best leaders are going to put the needs of their company before their team and the needs of their team before themselves, and they’re going to act with deliberation and boldness. They help their teams move beyond disadvantage — both perceived and real. This means helping their people realize that often the obstacle in the path is the actual path forward. Half of Fortune 500 companies were started during a bear market or recession; those leaders focused on the moment, not the disadvantages they might have had.

Talent and skill are typically not the most important attribute for leaders in times of duress or change; it’s grace and poise. You can be extremely educated and intelligent, but it’s the people who are adaptive to change who benefit the greatest throughout their careers. Be proactive in asking for help; find a mentor, share your aspirations. Better yet, find those who you can be a mentor for, even in the smallest ways. Lastly, whatever job you’re doing, approach it with strong values and endeavor to make a difference in every interaction you have with someone. Every discussion, meeting and exchange of words represents an opportunity to make a positive impact.

For more of Myke’s interview, listen to episode 4 of our Lessons in Sales Leadership podcast with Brent Adamson. This excerpt has been edited for brevity and clarity.
Lessons in Sales Leadership
A Podcast With Brent Adamson

Go inside the minds of top chief sales officers. What are their stories? Their challenges? What drives them? On Lessons in Sales Leadership, sales and marketing guru Brent Adamson interviews heads of sales about the decisions made and lessons learned on their journeys to success.

Listen at gartner.com/en/podcasts/sales
Habits of Elite Cost Cutters
by Dave Egloff and Jason Boldt

Ten years after the last economic downturn, companies are enjoying a period of extended growth. As this period is nearing its end, chief sales officers must be prepared to deal with increased cost pressures and act decisively.
The Dangers of Ineffective Cost Management

Cost management has become a rising priority for company executives. Analysis of S&P companies’ annual reports shows a steady upward trend in the use of the terms “cost savings” and “cost efficiency” since 2015, reaching levels comparable to those after the 2008 financial crisis (see Figure 1). This trend suggests an increasing number of company executives are either undertaking or considering initiatives to communicate cost management success to investors.

Cost management can be especially difficult within the context of the economic cycle because, during an economic downturn, the average time before organizations require a material overhead cost cut is three quarters — a very small window compared to the average of seven quarters after the financial crisis.

In short, when companies try to slash costs in a hurry — a temptation even if the enterprise has positioned itself carefully — they tend to do so frantically rather than thoughtfully. These short-sighted decisions focused on securing quick savings often erode longer-term sustainability.

Consider a spectrum with cost cutting at one end and cost management at the other. On one end are companies that focus on cutting costs quickly to achieve short-term savings, while on the other are those that take a more strategic approach to cost management.

Figure 1: Cost Management Mentions in S&P 500 Annual Reports

Number of “Cost Savings” or “Cost Efficiency” Mentions by Year

n = 55,000 S&P 500 10-K filings

Source: Gartner (September 2018)
end are actions that can help meet organizations’ market profitability expectations in a downturn. On the other end are long-term tactics companies pursue to boost efficiency during growth (see Figure 2).

Just because some expenses can be removed more quickly doesn’t mean they’re less harmful to an organization. When businesses must react urgently to expense pressures, regardless of how long it takes to implement, mistakes are more likely. At their worst, these errors can undermine all the hard work companies have done to improve efficiency — the longer-term cost management goals on the right-hand side of the spectrum.

Chief sales officers (CSOs) are prone to making two major missteps when they’re under pressure to cut costs:

• **Pursuing the wrong cost reduction measures** — Without a disciplined and systematic approach to considering cost reduction options, sales leaders can end up making cuts that produce suboptimal returns.

• **Stifling growth investment** — After a downturn, sales leaders are likely to regret investments that were stalled or were never made due to worries about financial performance. This is because during a downturn companies will naturally try to protect what they have instead of trying to grow. In fact, S&P 500 capital expenditures were cut by 25% between 4Q07 and the middle of the Great Recession.

Here’s what sales organizations can do differently to avoid each mistake.

**Follow a Disciplined Approach to Prioritizing Cuts**

Managing sales costs is not a minimalist strategy; it’s a thoughtful and holistic approach that balances sales results with sales investments. While a sales organization will ideally want to perform efficiently, effectively and productively, it can be difficult to identify mechanisms to reduce the cost of sales while ensuring neither productivity nor effectiveness suffers.

**Figure 2: Spectrum of Cost Cutting to Cost Management**

Illustrative Example From a Sales Budget

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time Period</th>
<th>Limiting T&amp;E</th>
<th>Reducing Size of Sales Force</th>
<th>Outsourcing Some Sales Activities</th>
<th>Realigning Sales Territories</th>
<th>Automating Commission Administration Process</th>
<th>Migrating Existing Services to SaaS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>19 to 24 Months</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 to 18 Months</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 to 12 Months</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0 to 6 Months</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Gartner
Progressive CSOs manage sales costs with a multifaceted strategy that spans sales coverage models, compensation and operations. To prioritize areas to reduce costs in, CSOs should consider key elements — ease of execution, immediacy of benefit, potential levels of disruption and challenges to recovery (see Figure 3).

The following are examples of how CSOs can apply this framework to perform disciplined assessments of different cost reduction options.

**Example 1: Limiting Complex Crediting Rules**

Multiple sellers interacting with the buyer and helping to win an opportunity results in multiple sales credits per transaction. In fact, the average transaction in today’s complex selling environments will trigger five sales credits. When the number of credits increases, CSOs might struggle to identify who to hold accountable and who to offer rewards. Accountability and rewards are key to a pay-for-performance culture. As more pay is triggered for the same sales results, the cost of sales will increase.

### Figure 3: Sales Cost Reduction Plan Considerations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Execution</strong></td>
<td>Relative ease of executing the cost reduction plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Immediacy</strong></td>
<td>Speed of cost reduction benefit to the organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Disruption</strong></td>
<td>Level of risk or disturbance caused by executing the cost reduction plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Recovery</strong></td>
<td>Impact of challenges faced when organization returns to a normal state of operation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Gartner
To reduce the number of credits per transaction, CSOs must examine their sales coverage model, including role clarity, organizational design and segmentation (see Figure 4). Hierarchical credits are linked to the number of management layers. Overlay credits are linked to role clarity and the interactivity between sales generalists and overlaid sales specialists.

While some CSOs may be tempted to reduce the number of specialists for a quick cost reduction, this plan might negatively influence sales effectiveness. The goal is to reduce the credits per transaction. Overlay specialists are designed to augment seller knowledge and improve each buyer interaction.

Example 2: Automating the Commission Administration Process

CSOs are drawn to automating the commission administration process for many reasons. Lean processes lead to operational efficiencies, and a robust interface improves the seller experience. However, the most significant cost improvement comes from reducing administrative errors. Many CSOs are drawn to this option since seller effectiveness is not negatively affected. The difficulty in execution and potential delay in commissions are the most notable risks (see Figure 5). CSOs must work with their sales operations leader to minimize the deployment risks and potential seller disruption.

Figure 4: Sales Cost Reduction Assessment
Credits per Transaction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Degree of Benefit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>☑ Favorable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☑ Moderate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ Caution</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Planned Approach</th>
<th>Execution</th>
<th>Immediacy</th>
<th>Disruption</th>
<th>Recovery</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Credits per Transaction</td>
<td>☑ May require changes to sales coverage and organizational design.</td>
<td>☑ Fewer specialists will decrease costs quickly.</td>
<td>☑ Can be isolated but may impact effectiveness.</td>
<td>☑ Varies based on approach and level of change.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Gartner

Figure 5: Sales Cost Reduction Assessment
Commission Automation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Degree of Benefit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>☑ Favorable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☑ Moderate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ Caution</td>
</tr>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Planned Approach</th>
<th>Execution</th>
<th>Immediacy</th>
<th>Disruption</th>
<th>Recovery</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Automation Commission Administration</td>
<td>☑ SPM deployments can be challenging and time-consuming.</td>
<td>☑ Investment is required, and approach has a delayed ROI.</td>
<td>☑ Commission administration process may be delayed.</td>
<td>☑ N/A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Gartner
Counterintuitively, this strategy requires an investment to realize cost savings. CSOs need to purchase a packaged sales performance management (SPM) solution or invest in building something similar. Despite the initial increase in expense, the net benefits accumulate over time.

Close Information Gaps With Proof-of-Concept Testing

After a downturn, sales leaders often regret investments that were stalled or never made due to concerns about financial performance. During good times, strong investment management is based on discovery, learning about the company and its capabilities, customers and markets. In an economic turn, it’s harder to get the necessary information because the conditions for investment success often change.

The solution is to attack these gaps more directly and go after the details needed with proof-of-concept testing — a pilot project designed to collect information that reduces uncertainty about a critical variable in an investment.

Sales leaders can expect to encounter three types of investment projects:

- **Transformational growth investments**, such as incorporating artificial intelligence and machine learning into the sales process
- **Efficiency investments**, such as implementing shared data systems
- **Investments with a mix of revenue and efficiency benefits**, such as rightsizing channel partners

Initiatives in the first category are ideal candidates for proof-of-concept testing because they are typically riskier with a broader range of outcomes, and most companies will not have significant experience to draw on.

Sales organizations can adapt the exercise in Figure 6 to identify the information necessary to reduce the level of uncertainty involved or to decide to abandon the project.

The second example in Figure 6 is a good candidate for proof-of-concept testing because it has significant risk from uncertainty but potential to reduce uncertainty through new information.

Sales leaders can use the likelihood of success at any point — before and during discovery investments like a software pilot program — to determine the size of the proof-of-concept budget.

If sales leaders can’t reduce the largest uncertainties for a given project, they should shut that project down. If, on the other hand, they can increase the probability of success through additional information, they should fund the project.

Through a structured approach, sales leaders can avoid missing out on promising investments while minimizing the risk involved in funding new transformational projects.

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**Figure 6: Comparing Options for Proof-of-Concept Testing**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Illustrative</th>
<th><strong>Investment Type</strong></th>
<th><strong>Range of Potential ROI</strong></th>
<th><strong>Risk From Uncertainty</strong> (Difference Between Best- and Worst-Case ROI)</th>
<th><strong>Actions to Reduce Uncertainty</strong></th>
<th><strong>Cost of Action</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Market Expansion</td>
<td>$400,000 to $600,000</td>
<td>$200,000</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Al-Driven Sales Coaching</td>
<td>$100,000 to $500,000</td>
<td>$400,000</td>
<td>Software Pilot Program</td>
<td>$50,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Gartner

1. 2019 Gartner for Sales Leaders Sales Operations KPI Survey, n = 56
Airgas built a tool that codifies and scales its subject matter experts’ knowledge, freeing up their time and enabling a focus on high-impact activities. Sales leaders seeking to more efficiently deploy SMEs or ensure sellers are equipped with technical knowledge should review this case.

Airgas depended on a small number of welding specialists, essentially subject matter experts (SMEs), to gather customer information and diagnose customer welding needs. However, this time-consuming process severely limited the number of opportunities these specialists could work. To find an alternative, Airgas sales leaders convened a team of welding specialists to create a diagnostic tool that uses customer-provided inputs to identify efficiency gaps in customer welding processes. This tool allowed Airgas’s SMEs to shortcut the diagnosis process and spend more time recommending appropriate Airgas solutions to close identified efficiency gaps. Sales leaders involved in deploying or managing SMEs should review this case to learn how to codify SME knowledge into a scalable tool, enabling SME deployment for more opportunities.

**Solution Highlight**

**Talent constraint reduction:** A digital tool that captures and codifies specialists’ knowledge for the benefit of customers and sellers frees up specialists’ time to focus on a larger number of opportunities.

**Airgas’ Challenge**

Airgas welding specialists are typically brought into a customer site visit to assess a customer’s welding operation and recommend a welding solution to address identified opportunities. Involving a welding specialist in an opportunity significantly increases conversion rate and deal size. However, two major challenges limited the effectiveness of this approach:

- **Limited capacity** — The process of collecting information about the customer’s operation was extremely time-consuming, meaning Airgas welding specialists could only serve a limited number of customers per year.
- **Inconsistent customer interactions** — Each welding specialist had a slightly different approach to assessing the customer’s welding operation, meaning there was some variation in the inputs they used to measure efficiency and
the recommendations they provided. Airgas had a limited process to ensure diagnosis standardization, which led to occasional inconsistency in the customer experience. Therefore, Airgas had a clear commercial imperative to increase its specialists' capacity and ensure a consistent diagnosis process.

**Scaling Expert Knowledge**

*Develop a tool that codifies and scales the collective knowledge of specialists for easy access by the entire organization and customers.*

Airgas sought to augment the sales process's time-consuming diagnosis phase with a tool to streamline data collection and analysis its welding specialists typically performed. To do so, Airgas convened its top welding specialists to share their best practices and approaches to diagnosis with each other, synthesize the findings and convert them into a tool. After reviewing several customer cases studies, Airgas experts found that only a few key drivers accounted for a majority of the average customer's welding costs and that changes to just a few of these drivers could yield significant gains in welding efficiency.

Based on this analysis, the Airgas team developed a tool that partially automated data collection around these drivers and required minimal customer effort. The tool generates a benchmark showing how the customer compares to peers across welding efficiency metrics.

**Talent Constraint Reduction**

*Use a scalable tool that captures SME best practices to free up specialists' time so they can work more opportunities and use their expertise to deliver more value in customer interactions by recommending solutions.*

Instead of replacing Airgas's welding specialists, the tool saved them a significant amount of time in the diagnosis stage and allowed them to refocus their attention toward activities requiring their unique abilities in the postdiagnosis sales stage. While Airgas’s pretool approach relied on the specialist’s past experience and ability to evidence the customer business case for change, the tool arms SMEs with a clear, data-backed picture of where inefficiencies exist in the customer’s welding process. Because this diagnostic tool leverages a growing database of real customers’ past diagnostics, it provides the customer with a powerful business case for change.

Airgas's welding efficiency tool fundamentally changes the nature of SME engagement with customers. The tool ensures customers who engage welding specialists already understand the business-centric argument for change, allowing specialists to focus on building customer confidence around the path to a desired future state. This type of conversation better leverages the welding specialists' unique ability to apply their technical knowledge to help customers.
In particular, the tool allows welding specialists to focus their time with customers on (see Table 1):

- Customizing a solution
- Balancing trade-offs
- Addressing human factors
- Handling outliers

**Results**

Airgas has seen significant benefits from rolling out the welding efficiency analysis tool. First, the tool allowed welding specialists to work more opportunities each year. Because of the significant time cost of engaging a specialist prior to the tool’s development, specialists were previously only used for higher-value deals. The significant time savings associated with the tool allowed Airgas to lessen this requirement; specialists can now be called in for more customers.

Second, using the tool significantly increased the conversion rate of the opportunities specialists worked. While this conversion rate was already high, the consistent accuracy of the tool’s diagnosis and the added confidence-building impact of the data-backed benchmark the tool provides further increased the conversion rate. Taken together, the increases in specialist efficiency and conversion rate have yielded significant revenue gains for Airgas.

Additionally, the tool allows Airgas to deliver a more consistent customer experience. Because the diagnosis process is standardized, specialist recommendations are more consistent across the board, and the justification for those recommendations is much clearer.

**Recommendations**

Sales leaders seeking to make the most efficient use of scarce specialist time and ensure their sellers are well-supported with technical knowledge should:

- Identify instances in which SMEs engage in repetitive, time-consuming and knowledge-based tasks that require a low degree of judgment, and ascertain where these instances overlap with areas of high seller or customer demand for technical expertise.
- Create a tool or resource to codify and scale specialist knowledge in those situations.

**Table 1: Airgas Welding Experts’ New Customer Imperatives**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expert Activity</th>
<th>Description of Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Customizing a Solution</td>
<td>Welding specialists can recommend the solution that closes the most significant efficiency gaps while ensuring the solution fits within the customer’s overall welding operation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Balancing Trade-Offs</td>
<td>When multiple solutions can solve the same problem, welding specialists can help the customer balance trade-offs and evaluate options.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Addressing Human Factors</td>
<td>In some cases, changing a production process or transforming the overall welding operation can be a significant change. Welding specialists can help address this change on a human level in a way that a purely quantitative business case cannot.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Handling Outliers</td>
<td>In rare instances, unique circumstances or outliers require a degree of judgment and creativity the tool cannot provide.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Adapted From Airgas
• Evaluate current SME processes to ensure SMEs deliver a consistent customer experience.
• Aggregate and analyze customer data to produce benchmarks and identify patterns in customer behavior.

Q&A With Steve Hope, VP of Marketing

Why did you create this tool?
Our experts were limited in the number of opportunities they could serve. They primarily served our larger customers and had to spend a majority of their time diagnosing and checking that the customer understood the problem correctly. The tool took away the biggest limiting factor on our SMEs and enabled them to serve more customers.

How has the SME role changed with this tool?
The tool is like a doctor seeing the results of a brain scan versus having to do it. We want our welding SMEs to be the surgeon looking at the brain scan and make recommendations; the tool is the scan.

What does the future of this tool look like for your organization?
We want to make the welding analysis tool self-service and capable of delivering Airgas clients a constant cadence of assessments.
Join us for a day of discussion

Redefining the High-Performing Seller for the Information Era

To increase their influence with customers who increasingly prefer to learn online, sellers must differentiate the experience they provide from the one offered by digital channels. Unfortunately, many sellers are going about this the wrong way.

This meeting helps sales leaders answer the following questions:
• What do customers most value about their interactions with sales people?
• What are the skills necessary for my success in a world of multichannel buying?
• How do I train and hire sales talent with the skills necessary to succeed today?

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