

**The High Performance Sales Environment - An Overview**  
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*"If we do meet our sales goals it is at the expense of the pipeline. Consequently we start each quarter and the new- year having to work from nothing."*

*"Our sales pattern is erratic and unpredictable. Forecasting is a nightmare."*

We have found that many sales organizations operate this way. Many Executives call this the Alice in Wonderland method ("If you don't know where you are going, any road will take you there").

However, when sales executives are able to create a successful sales culture they see results that are highly predictable, measurable, and can be sustained, even in down markets. Further, they are able to create an environment where they see continuous and measurable performance improvement across the organization as a whole. We call this a "High Performance Sales Environment"™ (HPSE), and helping our clients create such an environment is the key objective of Adventace®.

Lets discuss the four integrated components required to create a HPSE, starting with the Client Buying Model.

Perhaps the greatest challenge confronting sales executives today is to change inappropriate sales behavior on the part of sellers. For example, we often hear:

*"Our sellers lead with product."*

*"We are unable to give our buyers a compelling reason to buy."*

Consequently, creating a HPSE begins by developing sellers so that their selling behaviors are fully aligned with the way buyers expect to be sold to.

Thus, the foundation of the HPSE is rooted in a well-defined model on how people buy. The Adventace® model reflects a worst-case scenario where buyers do not know how to resolve their critical business issues, where the "solution" being sold is conceptual, intangible, and perceived to be expensive, where a committee is making the buying decision, and a long sell cycle with many steps is the norm.

Sellers must then utilize a Sales Methodology that reflects the Buying Model. In fact, the Adventace® Sales Methodology was designed to enable sellers to continuously outsell the competition by the way they sell. It is comprised of a well-defined set of sales processes designed to help sellers achieve performance excellence, that is, to successfully utilize the activities and behaviors of the best sellers, whom we call "ACE Sellers". The Methodology provides for improved prospecting and account penetration, a model for determining a buyer's needs in a way that differentiates the seller and methods to define and control the sell cycle. The methodology details a buyer qualification model, methods for rapid access to decision makers, and a process to reshape a buyer's preexisting solution (to overcome situations where the seller is in second place and/or got in late). It outlines strategies to change the rules on RFP's, negotiating tactics, controlling multi-person sales calls, and processes designed to quickly access buying committee members and get them "marching in the same direction".

The High Performance Sales Environment™ extends beyond building excellence in the sales organization to providing a clear roadmap for integration of Related Operations. In addition to marketing, those operations include integrating people involved in proposal preparation, consulting, project management, finance and IT.

The next component is a Sales Management and Continuous Improvement Methodology. Too often sellers view sales training as "training du jour" because managers do not manage people to the training they received. Consequently, sellers drift back to their previous behaviors and the investment in both time and money is wasted. The Adventace® HPSE helps overcome this by providing

managers with the "Four Pillars of Effective Sales Management"™:

1. **Opportunity Assessment and Management:** The HPSE provides a set of management tools to maximize the probability of winning opportunities, disqualifying "loser" opportunities early, and preventing late sell cycle losses. This increases the win rate and reduces the cost of sales pursuit.

2. **Pipeline Management:** Additionally, the HPSE provides management with means to scientifically manage the pipeline and develop accurate forecasts. By analyzing quantity, quality, and balance of the pipeline, management can drive consistent and growing financial performance.

3. **People Development:** Equally important, managers must gain crystal-clear insight to quickly and proactively determine if a sales person is experiencing selling difficulties across any one of eight dimensions (account planning, prospecting, account penetration, need development, qualification, overall process control, negotiating, closing and account management). With this, clear, specific guidance can then be provided to help sellers resolve those difficulties.

4. **Continuous Improvement:** Every well-managed process has a set of metrics that include targets and regular accurate estimates of actual performance. This is a prerequisite to continuous improvement. The HPSE provides for several direct and unambiguous measures that will enhance management's understanding of process effectiveness and individual performance. This enables management, using monthly and quarterly operations reviews to make critical adjustments that will upgrade sales performance. Managers also learn how to design compensation plans that reinforce both corporate and manager-defined goals.

Finally, and in many respect most importantly, is Executive Leadership. Leadership can be viewed as the development and consistent communication of the company's beliefs and values that results in moving the business forward. If establishing a sales culture is the strategic objective, leadership is the ultimate means. Yet historically this has been extremely difficult to achieve. However, through a comprehensive Executive and Sales Management Review Process that is tiered for application at management levels up to and including the CEO, the HPSE provides the tactical means to achieve this strategic objective. This process ensures that the desired sales culture is both built and maintained.