TECH-POWERED SALES

ACHIEVE SUPERHUMAN SALES SKILLS

JUSTIN MICHAEL | TONY HUGHES

TECH-POWERED **SALES**

Achieve **Superhuman** Sales Skills

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"The Machine of Sales Development"

and

TONY HUGHES

Bestselling Author of *COMBO Prospecting*

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The leading sequencer companies, data providers, and LinkedIn have gone to great lengths to enable their technologies to operate ethically and securely. As a professional, you must be committed to operating with integrity and intelligence. Send less but more effective and personalized sequences, and split-test more often to smaller batches. Respect the potential customers you are seeking to help by being human in engagement and making it count with brevity and relevance.

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CHAPTER FIVE

Target for Relevance

Trigger Events

A trigger event is something that creates buyer awareness concerning opportunity for change or the need for what we sell. Trigger events can occur in the client's industry, within their company or department, or in their personal career. Trigger events can also occur in the marketplace and can include competitor activity, environmental or economic changes, reputational issues, new regulatory requirements, and more.

> "Everyone is drowning in the very data that can save them. Yet most don't even notice, let alone take advantage of what is available to them."
>
> **—Tom Rielly, CEO of Triggr.ai**

It is important to understand that an attribute is not the same thing as a trigger. Within your ideal customer profile (ICP) you will have the attributes of organizations that represent an ideal fit for what you sell. This then informs you concerning what you should seek to monitor in terms of trigger events.

Here is an example. Imagine you're a Salesforce rep selling CRM and you've identified "scale-up tech business" as being in your ICP. You've also decided that "Hubspot software use" is an attribute that matters because, as good as Hubspot is, you still have a strong track record of successfully displacing that product for companies with changing needs as they become larger and more complex. Again, an attribute that defines if they are in your ICP is "high growth," and you look for triggers that are associated with accelerated growth. Even though these smaller companies are not listed, and therefore do not publish their financial results, you can identify the growth trigger event by monitoring for 1) capital raising announced in the press or 2) hiring additional sales and marketing roles on recruiting websites or within Sales Navigator. Another trigger around the Hubspot attribute could be forced upgrades, price increases, acquisition, and so on. In the simplest terms, the main attribute within the ICP is the competitor product being used, and the primary trigger event is accelerated growth.

Here are other examples that show the difference between an attribute and a trigger. Remember that attributes help define ICP and triggers equip you to have conversations within the right context with people in those organizations. The trigger event contextualizes why you are reaching out to the potential buyer now.

ATTRIBUTE	TRIGGER
Has role of chief customer officer	Hires new chief customer officer
Based in my city or territory	Opens new office in my territory
Uses a weak competitor product	Competitor supply contract expires
Uses a weak competitor product	Competitor is acquired or fails
Uses a weak competitor product	Competitor rep or relationship leaves
High growth business	Announces strong growth results
Invests in staff training	Hires new head of people and culture
High compliance environment	New compliance regulations
High compliance environment	Major failure or breach announced

Trigger events are essential within our outreach narrative because they warm up the conversation with context. Referencing a trigger event shows them that we have done some research and that we have relevance.

Adding a referral from a common trusted relationship amplifies the effect by layering trust to the context and relevance created by a trigger event. Craig Elias writes about triggers in his book *Shift!* (coauthored with Tibor Shanto) and says that the average CXO deploys $1 million in capital on new solutions in the first ninety days in their role.[1] Now, this number looks incredible, but I'd say for sure the assessment and intent to switch it up happens that quickly. This is because new senior people are hired to effect change, and they also have a limited window of time in which they have high levels of support from their boss.

In our opinion, there are four types of trigger events relevant for sales:

1. **Bad experience with incumbent suppliers.** The decisionmaker has a negative experience with a current provider's product, service, or people. Dissatisfaction makes them open to considering other options, but the window of opportunity is usually small. Time is of the essence.

2. **Role-based change.** A senior decisionmaker or influencer leaves our existing customer or someone new joins a target buying organization. We should follow our supporters to their new employer and also defend our existing account against our competitor doing the same to us with the new person coming in.

3. **Change in results or strategy.** The customer organization has a significant change in results or announces a change in their strategic direction impacting priorities and operations. There is an appetite for change and desire to explore options for improving results.

4. **Operating environment changes.** The decisionmaker becomes aware of the need to change for competitive, risk-avoidance, economic, social, legal, or compliance reasons. There is an opportunity to provide insight and aspire to be a trusted advisor shaping their business case for change and influencing their requirements.

In business-to-business sales, the most powerful trigger event is a decisionmaker role change because executives hired into new roles are expected to drive improvement. The next most powerful trigger event is a change in results or strategy, because it necessitates change. Competitor dissatisfaction can be alluring, but we must ensure their pain or unhappiness is strong enough to sustain the perceived effort and risk of change; never underestimate the power of an incumbent. The weakest trigger events are within the operating environment category because there is usually less urgency.

Role-based trigger events can be interrelated as the changes cascade through an organization and in the market. Here is an example.

1. Our support leaves and goes to another employer. We have a

trusted relationship and congratulate the person on their move and ask how we can help them in their new role.

2. Our supporter is replaced by a new external person. We create elevated engagement with the new person, saying that we were working closely with their predecessor and have some ideas on some quick wins by extracting more value for our existing relationship.
3. That person came from somewhere. As we build a trusted relationship and provide value for them in their new role, we ask about their previous employer and how we could potentially help them also (if not their competitor). This provides us with coaching and a referral.

In the above example we have identified two "new logo" sales opportunities, managed an account risk (competitor follows new executive into our existing client), and created an upsell or cross-sell opportunity in an existing account (elevating the level of engagement with the new person). Although tracking job changes is easy to do in Sales Navigator, it's an underutilized feature. The most basic thing you can do to improve your TQ is to dive deep into Sales Navigator and build saved searches to leverage triggers.

Importantly, the key to working with trigger events is the use of technology. Triggr.ai is an excellent example, with their platform using the internet as the sales pipeline database to search and filter based on intelligent combinations of attributes and trigger events to provide salespeople with context and relevance in their sales outreach. Triggr detects technologies, identifies hiring trends, finds contact details, and more. It then serves those details in a consumable format for sellers in a web browser or pushes the data into CRM or marketing automation systems.

Amidst the tsunami of data in the world, we see what we look for. Modern sales professionals identify triggers and automate detection and notification to open opportunities with "warm" conversations. The very, very best go to the next level in automating at scale to harness the power of technology in driving productivity and accelerated success. LeadIQ or Apollo.io are further examples of how you can also efficiently build lists based on trigger events. For example, you can pull the saved search for job changes last week, suck those leads into a cadence, and you're off to the races.

Honorable mention to SifData and User Gems! According to Nelson Gilliat: "UserGems automates the job change trigger so you can sell to newly hired buyers, especially previous relationships (e.g., champions, users) and achieve personalized, timely, and relevant outreach at scale. Previous customers are more likely to buy again and buy faster. New hires are also likely to optimize things, have unspent budget, and aren't speaking to the competition."[2] It's a Yogi Berra paradox, but "buyers buy."

TQ TAKEAWAY

The fastest path to a sale is found when combining trigger events with referrals. Referencing a common credible relationship starts the conversation with trust and a trigger event provides context. Following trusted relationships creates amazing synergies.

Automation of Ideal Customer Profile Identification

Tom Rielly is CEO of Triggr and believes that data, and how we use it, is everything. "Sales leaders can no longer afford to run their teams on hunches, assumptions, and educated guesses. Being data-driven is therefore essential and must go beyond in-house systems to using data strategically to create opportunity pipeline, inform decisionmaking and drive effective action to transform the way we do business and drive success."[3]

A strong ICP is the foundation of building a solid data-driven sales strategy because it allows you to focus on high value clients where there is alignment and greater propensity to buy. Targeting those within your ICP reduces wasted sales and marketing efforts, and instead increases predictability, increases average revenue, and reduces the cost of sale.

Traditionally, when developing an ICP, sales leaders focus on firmographic attributes of a business such as company size, revenue, and industry as data points to describe what a perfect customer looks like. However, the rapidly growing volume of information available on potential prospects such as technology attributes, news mentions, hiring trends, announcements, financial performance, and much more means business profiles are dynamic.

Technology can search and correlate ICP data in seconds compared with what a mere human could do in days. Triggr employs big data, AI, and algorithms to match characteristics of known ICP customers with new organizations that could become potential buyers. It makes sense of all the information out there and then provides you with a list of targets with whom you can drive contextualized outreach.

With technologies like Triggr you're also able to connect your CRM and the platform, and it will take a look at closed/won and closed/lost accounts over a defined period of time. The platform then benchmarks against public data to automatically generate a constant, up-to-date profile of what an ideal customer looks like to then notify you of key trigger events for driving sales opportunities in real time. The result is that your ICPs never become out-of-date and remain relevant while fueling effective sales activity.

TQ TAKEAWAY

Platforms such as Triggr can automatically analyze ICP based on the URL of a target prospect or customer, to then provide you with a list of look-alike companies to target. This starts you fishing in a pond where they are more likely to bite. Revisit your ICP and buyer personas, as they are always changing. Identify the attributes and trigger events most relevant to your sales success. Evaluate the platforms that can automatically identify the best prospects to contact.

The Role of Pain and Fear Drivers on Effective Messaging

Let's revisit messaging in the context of trigger events. Sales is a game of change management, and we must identify where the pain of the current state is greater than the pain of change. The easiest thing for a prospect to do is consume your time by evaluating and then just doing nothing. The only way to pique interest methodically, almost programmatically, is a pain-centric message. This is true even if that pain is the fear of missing out, of not realizing that killer opportunity in front of them if they open their eyes.

Fear works as a facet of pain: Tony Robbins talks about humans being pain- and fear-driven when the optimal state is love and success. Only a small percentage of buyers will buy for incremental improvements; most have pain that drives a faster sale for another seller. At the end of the day, if there is not a serious problem to be solved, why make the effort? In the land of laziness, fear and pain is the most effective motivator . . . sad but true.

Cory Bray and Hilmon Sorey from ClozeLoop always say that tailoring the message, in a way that addresses the pain that typically exists for a certain persona, provides all of the personalization most prospectors need to find success.[4] For sellers who have large market segments with a seemingly endless stream of prospects, individual personalization is not necessary to get someone's attention. If an email specifically describes the pain points solved for someone like the recipient, and they actually have that pain, enough folks will pay attention to fill the pipeline. If they don't have any pain, a further conversation is likely a waste of time anyway, so "attention-getting personalization" that has nothing to do with the recipient's needs can take everyone nowhere.

The trick is not to come across as a doom-mongering purveyor of fear. We must leverage their pain for their own benefit by setting a vision for a brighter future. There are only four reasons to buy software and most other things in the world of business-to-business sales: make money, save money, reduce risk, or maintain compliance. Steve Richard talks about this with what he calls the four demand types: commodity, better mousetrap, evangelical, and, his favorite, government regulation where the buyer has to take the meeting to cover their tail.[5]

So if you are approaching your market by leveraging fear or pain messaging and targeting stakeholders who have changed jobs, this is the most powerful approach to initiate buying windows. Remember, latent pain—the pain they don't even realize they have—is what creates the interest and drives sales. Steve Jobs, the world champion of predicting consumer desire, once said: "They never knew what they always wanted." He was a phenomenal demand generator, producing inexplicable pent-up demand for risky tech with lines around the corner like a *Star Wars* premier for an iPhone Steve Ballmer at Microsoft panned and predicted would flop.

It is vitally important, however, to use fear and pain in an intelligently nuanced manner. Ensure you have "social proof." This is a concept from Dr. Robert Cialdini, one of his timeless *6 Principles of Influence*.[6] Reciprocity, commitment and consistency, social proof, authority, liking, and scarcity all play a role in powerful automated messaging. Specifically which social proof? Ideally, send both qualitative and quantitative ROI results from very similar customers (optimally direct competitors) in similar verticals. This will achieve the fastest response as no one wants to be left in the dust by their competition.

Relative customer size is also crucial. You don't want your prospect saying: "Of course your solution works for Ford, they're Ford, but we are small and don't have their resources!" Good case studies are stories, and stories sell since the dawn of time. Joseph Campbell, who influenced George Lucas on "The Force" in *Star Wars*, pretty much nailed how to write "bomb sales copy."

According to Sam Feldotto:

> Another approach is to consider the person you are trying to establish your credibility with and provide them with an example of how you helped a similar persona, rather than focusing entirely on the industry they are in. Some prospects could care less about how you solved a pain for another company in their industry. If they're a VP of Sales, they probably care just as much about how you helped another VP of Sales with a specific pain they may also be facing. Even if it's in a completely different industry, that pain and social proof will resonate far better than relying on logos. This is especially true for companies that are targeting SMB-Mid Market companies. If you're using a client like Adobe for your social proof to a company with fifty employees, it's not going to be compelling. In fact, it may do the opposite. Since you may not have social proof for a company similar to them that's recognizable, focusing on the pains of the persona you are reaching out to and drawing social proof from a similar persona can be extremely productive.[7]

We created another set of techniques with job changes that everyone should be using who is new into a sales territory or struggling with the pipeline. First, run the deadwood and find everyone who's considered the product in the past year. Sequence to them en masse with "I see you've considered our solution in the last year . . ." You'll be amazed how many prospects boomerang back. It's a simple play you can execute as automated outbound that creates inbound. Run a report in your CRM of all the opportunities closed/lost over the past year. Find the stakeholders again on LinkedIn, pull their direct emails out of your preferred sales intelligence tool, and design a custom email sequence for win-back.

The other logical corollary technique here is to find every customer who has ever purchased your tech in company history and run a "where are they now" search to locate them currently on LinkedIn so they can be champions for your solution in new places. Sales Navigator has a "past company" advanced search to make surfacing this data simple. Often, past buyers move up in the industry because they succeeded using your tech and understand it the most. The users of today are the decisionmak-ers of tomorrow.

Notes

Chapter Five

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"Modern sales technology is baffling, especially for a CEO like me who has no choice but to embrace it but also has no chance of making sense of it on my own—and I run a sales tech company! This book boils it down to this: Some sales tech gives your reps superhuman skills that empower your business to dominate markets at will. You can do it with the team you have. Read it, follow the advice, and dominate."

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"You can't be afraid of technology. Building a future-proof sales organization requires a deep understanding of the new power couple—humans and technology. *Tech-Powered Sales* explains exactly how to thrive in the fourth Industrial Revolution by harnessing the power of game-changing technologies today and beyond."

—Tiffani Bova, Growth Evangelist at Salesforce, *Wall Street Journal*
Bestselling Author of *Growth IQ*, Thinkers50

"Every sales leader and sales professional needs to read this book in order to thrive in the age of empowered buyers, automation, and disruption. As a leader, I know that the shifts are real, and this book contains the secrets for the operationalization of business-to-business sales at scale."

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"Justin and Tony's book explores the crucial tech stack elements that are table stakes for an effective sales development strategy. We appreciate their exploration of futurism along with grounding their work in practical research from The Bridge Group and others. In a cacophony of voices, their practical advice and predictions ring true. This book is a fantastic resource for all RevOps leaders!"

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