

COLUMNS

Keeping sales rep turnover from sabotaging your sales pipeline

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Joe Payne is outbound lead generation manager at LeadGenius

By **Joe Payne**

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Whether they are hitting the road due to the promise of greener pastures, termination or a career shift, losing sales representatives from your organization is always tough.

Unfortunately, turnover in the sales world is a fact of life. The average inside sales rep only stays with an organization for two-and-a-half years. For sales development reps, the average tenure is almost half that.

Making whole

If it makes you feel any better, The Bridge Group reports that churn for software-as-a-service (SaaS) sales in 2015 was 34 percent, and one in 10 companies will have a turnover rate greater than 55 percent.

Even if an individual was not performing as you had hoped, turnover still has an impact on your organization.

You have still invested time and resources in training, and the work he or she was doing has to go somewhere. Unlike some other areas of your organization, you are bound to notice a missing link in your sales organization quickly and not in a positive way both internally and externally.

When an individual departs from a sales organization, it leaves a hole.

Whether the person in question left by choice or involuntarily, the end result is the same: the work he or she was doing has to go somewhere. With sales, holes become readily apparent internally and externally rather quickly.

So, following a sales rep exit whether voluntary or involuntary what should you do after you have ended building access and changed passwords?

Follow these five steps to make sure your pipeline does not become a casualty of the inevitable churn in your sales organization:

Steps to protect your pipeline from turnover

1. Re-distribute active opportunities
2. Add new reps to existing calendar invites
3. Take exited reps off the round robin
4. Re-distribute all leads, even if they are in active outbound sequences

5. Monitor the exited rep's inbox for additional communication

All about the connections

Figuring out how the exited sales rep was affecting your pipeline is a lot like putting a puzzle together. You will need to think a bit like a detective: Who she was talking to, what she was talking about, what data is missing and, most importantly, what pieces of this are worth other reps' time to take over?

Over the course of a year or two, a sales rep can build up thousands of contacts in his or her work email. Some will be in Salesforce, but as we all know too well, not all contacts make their way into a CRM tool. The more tools in your sales stack, the more likely this is.

But there is one place that all contacts land sooner or later: The unsung workhorse of every sales organization, also known as the simple email inbox.

You can preserve sales pipeline of departed reps by having a plan for handling the thousands of contacts they left behind.

Download and scrub

The first step is gathering all of the data. Log into the departed rep's email account and download all contacts. This will not give you much information at first, but it will give you first names, last names and email addresses.

Check with your IT or help desk for steps on how to do this on your specific email platform if needed.

Once you have downloaded the contacts, de-dupe them directly against Salesforce or your CRM system. Then, you will be left with one-to-one matches, account matches, company matches (new leads at companies) and net new leads.

The real treasure is in company matches and net new leads.

For example, after removing duplicates and decayed contacts from a batch of departed reps' email accounts, you might be left with 3,000 net new contacts.

If you convert 5 percent of those contacts to leads and 20 percent of leads to opportunities, then 20 percent of those opportunities move to closes or wins, and your average TCV is \$30,000. Not bad.

But if you do nothing to salvage the pipeline of the departed reps, then you just let \$180,000 float away. Do the math with your own funnel metrics and deal size.

Targeting newly recovered contacts

Once you have the contacts in hand, here are a few tactics for targeting these new and un-vetted prospects:

Email marketing: This is the lowest hanging fruit and the easiest way to vet your new leads. Add them to a general nurture campaign and let your marketing automation software take care of the rest. If they inbound again or increase their lead score, then they are yours for the taking.

Twitter: With tools such as Clearbit, you can run all of your new prospects to find out Twitter handles and track down company handles as well. Here are a few ways to leverage this information:

- o Follow them
- o Direct message them
- o Follow their companies
- o Run Twitter ads against them. For this, you actually only need an email tied to the account, not their handle

Facebook: Upload email addresses into Facebook's "Custom Audience" option.

o Since most of these contacts are business-to-business, you might get some misses, but your enrichment could help solve for that.

LinkedIn: As a test, I added people's inboxes to my LinkedIn as if I were going to add new connections. Between all of them, I had more than 2,000 hits that I could add as connections. If you have an SDR willing to clutter up their profile a bit, this can be a cost-efficient way to garner impressions quickly.

WHILE IT IS sometimes hard to look at it as a good thing, when someone leaves your company, it does give you a

unique opportunity to cover ground that was lost and re-start conversations with hundreds or thousands of leads.

The main goal is to get as much value as you can out of the pipeline that you have created.

When the inevitable turnover happens to you, follow these steps to make sure that your carefully crafted pipeline does not go out the door with the departing reps.

Joe Payne is outbound lead generation manager at [LeadGenius](#), Berkeley, CA. Reach him at joe@leadgenius.com.

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