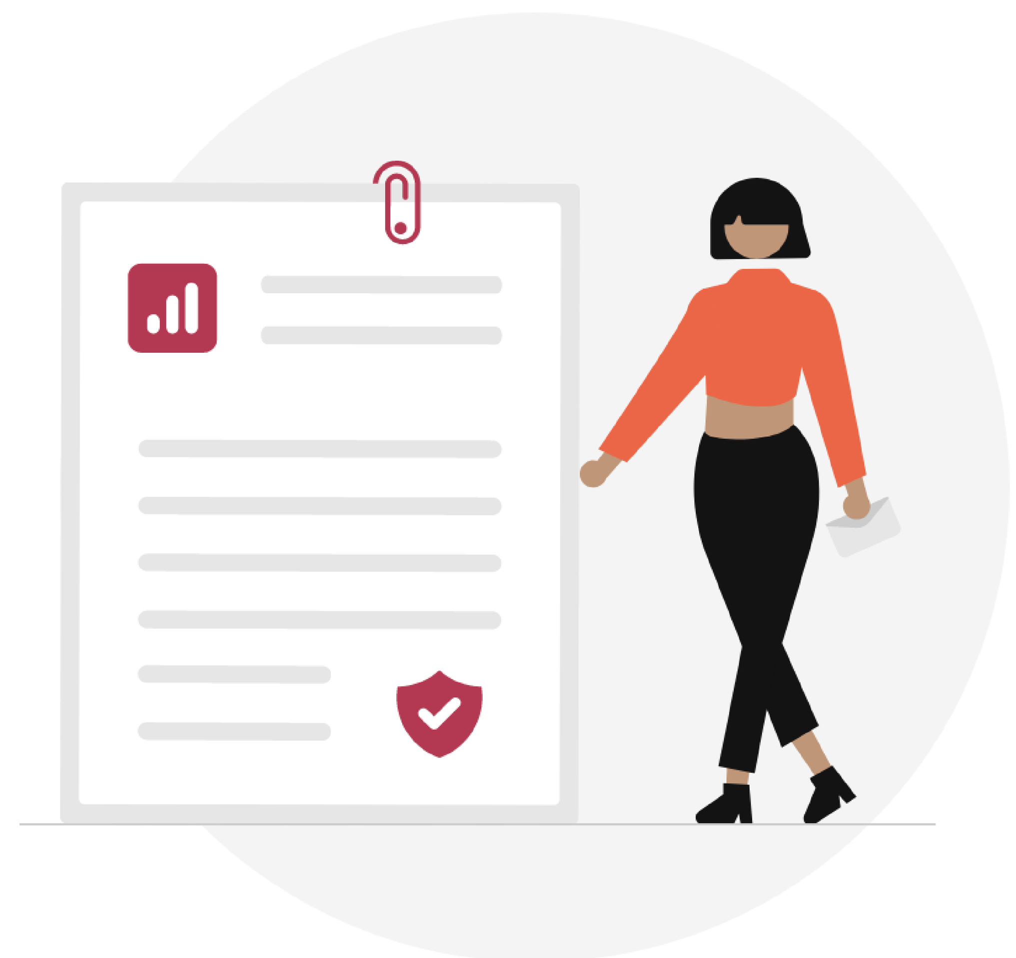
CLARITY STACK

Prioritising your sales pipeline



1 Align yourself with your marketing team.

Too many sales and marketing departments work separately when they should be working towards the same end goal. Speak to each other and find out what feedback each department is receiving so you can learn more about your target audiences and what they're looking for. You can then tailor your sales approach accordingly and the marketing team can adjust their own messaging - it's a win-win and will result in more qualified leads coming into your pipeline and a greater chance of hitting your target.

2 Always, always follow-up on your leads.

If at first you don't succeed, try and try again! Just because you picked up the phone and didn't get an answer this time, or you sent an email two days ago without getting a reply, doesn't mean that that lead is a non-starter. Follow-ups can be incredibly valuable and can make all the difference. According to research by TeleNet in 2007 it used to take an average of 3.68 attempts to make contact with a prospect, whereas today it is more like 8! It's important that you do know where to draw the line, but a follow-up call might be the key to progressing this lead.

3 Move the warmer leads to the top.

Some leads are better suited to you as a salesperson because of their geographical location or industry, some sound more attractive to the wider business in terms of their potential value, whatever category they fall into it's important to prioritise the leads that are of the highest quality. If someone sends a message through a contact form asking for more details on your annual subscription package, pick up the phone now! That person who said they'd be in touch next week will have to wait. If you can filter the leads in your pipeline from freezing cold to boiling hot then you should always go for the hot ones first. The others might warm up over time whereas the hot ones are ready to convert today.

4 Tidy up loose ends.

In your pipeline you might have a huge list of contacts, many of which you might have been working for months - even a year. When you look at cleaning things up and working on your priorities it might be time to tidy up a few loose ends, starting with those who asked for you to speak to them in a few months - they might now be at a point where they're ready to buy, or they might have new priorities and you can remove them from your list to focus on those that are more likely to close.

5 Clean out the dead wood.

Similarly, you don't want to be wasting time on leads that are just not interested. You may have spoken to someone who showed a glimmer of interest initially based on a marketing email they received or a social media post, but now they've had time to think about things they may have misunderstood that you're actually promoting your own business offering rather than a direct offer, or they may have been simply wasting your time. Either way, clean out the dead wood so you can spend your valuable time wisely.

Follow the rest of the steps onto the next page...

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Prioritising your sales pipeline

Continued

6 Review your pipeline and assess your processes.

Once you've tidied things up a bit you can take a long, hard look at your pipeline and look at what's going well, and what could be improved. Take a look at the time you're spending on leads at different stages in the pipeline and think about how you can become more efficient in certain areas to keep things flowing. If all of your leads are at the top of the funnel then there's going to be a blockage somewhere preventing you from closing deals. Similarly, if everyone is halfway through thinking about their options then you can't move anyone at all.

7 Keep track of your progress in a CRM.

Automating some processes will make your life much easier and will enable your sales managers to look closely at what is working for each member and where training or assistance might be needed. By using a CRM system you can create a series of instructions that save time and improve processes, enabling your sales team to focus on what they do best - selling. Leads can be managed and moved to different sections with different messages sent out, or they might be parked for a few weeks until they're ready to pick up the conversation again.

8 Adapt and fine-tune your approach.

Changing your way of working might also help you to optimise your pipeline. If you've been using a tried and tested approach for some time and it's stopped working, look at what you might be able to change and give it a test. If it works, you increase your sales, if it doesn't work, you've tried and you know that this approach is not the right one and it's time to go back to the drawing board.

9 Adopt a standardised strategy for your department.

One of the most effective ways to improve efficiencies is to adopt a centralised approach for your sales team. Yes, every lead is different and they might work in different sectors and have different budgets, but ultimately they all share one thing in common - a need for your product or service. By creating a standardised strategy that the whole team can adopt you can work together to target those leads more effectively rather than a scattergun, lone-wolf approach.

10 Give prospects what they want.

Finally, if you find a prospect is looking for something to help sway their decision - give it to them. Your business is an expert in its field, so call upon the great content you've produced to inform and engage them before returning later to close the deal.

The next steps...

Hopefully these tips will enable you to optimise your sales pipeline and outline your priorities to improve processes and the all-important close rate. The most important thing to remember is always to target those leads that are closest to closing before they get away.