pipedrive

THE ULTIMATE SALES PROCESS GUIDE

We’ve all seen those inspirational posters where people are stood with their hands in the air looking jubilant at the top of a mountain.

You might be inclined to think they are just a cheesy metaphor- and if so, you probably haven’t climbed a mountain recently!

But, we think climbing a mountain is the perfect metaphor to help illustrate the ‘Ultimate Sales Process’.

You have a clearly defined goal to get to the top, of both the mountain and your sales target.

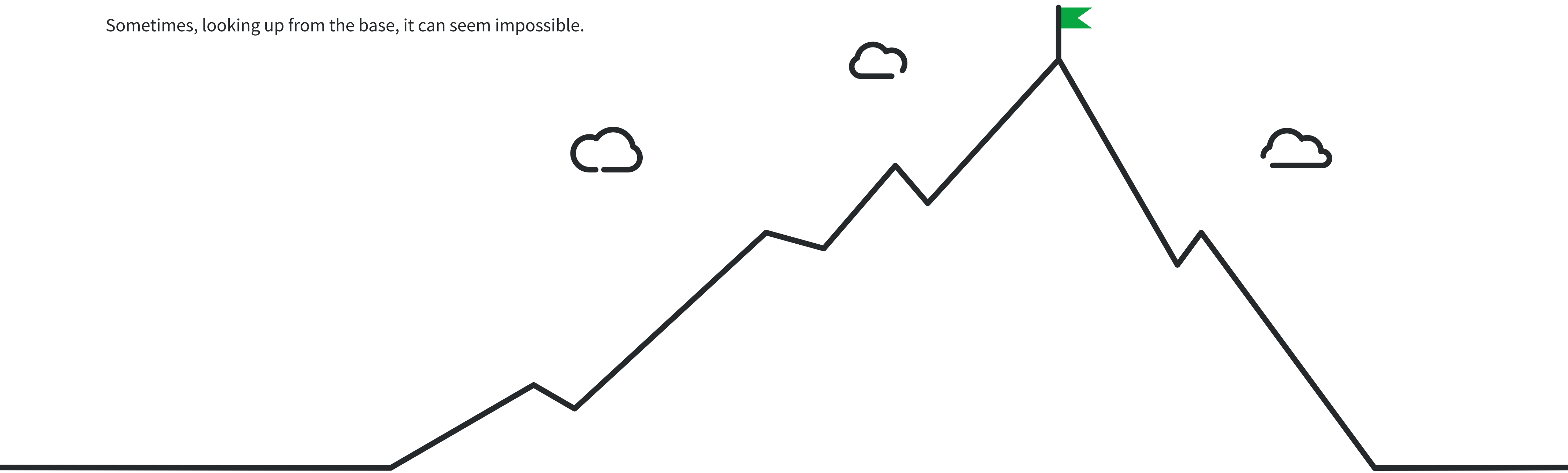
Sometimes, looking up from the base, it can seem impossible.

But we are here to equip you with everything you need, and guide you.

We hope you’re feeling motivated, because your workload has just gotten a lot more manageable.

And believe it or not, you’re allowed to forget about your sales target, for now.

You can stop worrying about getting to your target, and concentrate on exactly what you need to do to get there...



ACTIVITY-BASED SELLING AS A PHILOSOPHY

You should think of the ‘Activity Based Selling Process’ as your map.

First off, let’s break down the whats and whys:

What is it?

In a nutshell, activity-based selling is all about keeping your focus on the actions that make a sale happen.

The idea is that, by focusing on the actions you have control over, you won’t get stressed about the uncontrollable results.

It’s a clear process to follow and although in the back of your mind, you’re still aiming for the sale, you’re not constantly focusing on the close.

There’s a cause and effect relationship between sales activities and business results; this method teaches you to focus on the task in hand, and how it’s imperative towards your final goal.

Need an example?

Say your conversion rate was 10%. So, for every 100 prospects your sales team identified at the start of your pipeline, ten converted into customers at the end.

PROSPECT CHOSEN	MEETING AGREED	PROPOSAL SENT	WON!
10	4	2	1
20			2
60			6

So, instead of basing your sales strategy on trying to attain, say, five new customers a week, you would instead try to identify and contact 50 prospects.

ABS in Practise

Let’s break it down even further:

If it takes your reps, 10 calls to make a sale, then their close rate is 10%.

Now calculate how many calls they need to hit their target.

If you want them to close 50 deals this year, they need to make 500 calls.

Breaking that down into smaller targets means an average of 40 calls per month or 10 calls per week (taking leave into account of course).

Is that possible? How can you make that more attainable?

= A happier more productive sales team.

Why it’s better

First and foremost, activity-based selling puts you and your sales team in control. Control that helps them to feel more productive, as it’s far easier to measure the impact their having.

The process helps you to deliver predictable revenue, creating a sense of security that doesn’t always exist in sales.

It’s also far easier to identify where a salesperson should be focusing their efforts and where they can improve.

Why ABS helps you sell better

In an ABS process, you'll soon figure out which activities are the best use of your working hours and can better assign where to spend your time.

It may be a little bit of trial and error until you perfect it, so allow yourself some time to nail your sales method—this process also allows for real-time monitoring and course correction.

There's nothing worse than looking back on a lead and thinking about what you could have done differently. Activity-based selling allows you to have those light bulb moments before it's too late!

For example, you've been identifying some really great, interested prospects, but they keep going cold during your email conversations—maybe it's time to pick up the phone or even set up a face-to-face.

Why selling is easier with ABS:

+ You'll be using your working hours to maximum efficiency.
+ The process allow for real time monitoring and course correction.
+ You'll be identify if you need to be doing some different- much easier.

Why selling is harder without ABS:

- You get stuck in a constant cycle of calling leads that don't pick up.
- You'll waste hours during your working day.
- You can't predict your revenue.

Why ABS helps you manage

Have you ever wanted to make a point to one of your team in a coaching session or a one-to-one but not had anything to back it up? Well, activity-based selling provides objective data for those tricky interactions.

It also provides the data for predictable sales forecasts, allowing you to keep it all real and attainable for you and your team.

The consistent process allows you to pinpoint specific areas of strength and weakness, allowing you to scale with confidence.

Say you notice one of your sales team isn't hitting the desired conversion rate, but you can see on your shared CRM that they are contacting as many leads as anyone else each week.

That means there is an issue with another part of their pipeline. By measuring each activity in the process, you can identify where. If compared to their colleagues, there's a significant drop in leads after they send proposals to customers, then they might be misjudging a customer's interest or budget, and the proposals being sent through are just putting them off.

Activity-based selling removes the confusion and pressure of a result-oriented team and instead better equipping your precision sellers for success!

Why management is harder without ABS

- If there are problems in your pipeline- it'll be hard to identify them.
- You can recognize where your team may be going wrong.
- You'll have unpredictable sales forecasts.

Why management is easier with ABS

+ The method provides good talking points for appraisals and 1-2-1's.
+ It allows you to create attainable targets for your team.
+ It removes the confusion and pressure from you and your team.

Why ABS helps you scale

With an activity-based-selling process in place, a new staff member knows exactly what they need to do to at each stage of the sales process. The business can maintain a consistent approach and level of customer service because the process is so structured and easy to handoff.

If you don't have an ABS sales process and you scale up with lots of new people, each rep will have their own approach to trying to hit their targets.

This is when things can get messy: data is different or incorrectly entered, tracking becomes an issue, reporting is based on inaccurate data. That's when it's hard to make informed decisions on how to improve or optimize.

ACTIONS

When changing to a different strategy, it's important to take simple and concrete steps—even when you feel as though nothing is going your way. Take a look at the simple actions below to get started:

1. Understand your goals

Okay, okay, you just read 'don't focus on goals' and now the number one action is about goals?

Essentially, you simply need to **know** what your goals are, in order to **know** what activities are required to reach each one.

2. Know your 'why'

Determine the personal meaning behind your goals, and don't make it all about payday—try to dig a little deeper! Job satisfaction? Career progression? Whatever your 'why' is, use it as the driving force behind your decisions.

3. Map your successes

Look at your successes, and find the common elements. List them and apply them to every single lead!

4. Set weekly and daily action metrics

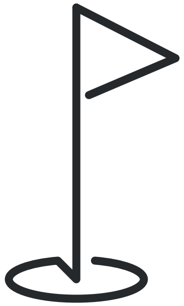
This is crucial in making sure your goals are attainable. While it's good to be ambitious, there's absolutely no point overloading your workload.

5. Take stock

At the end of the week, month and quarter, take stock of what you have achieved. Celebrate your achievements and be honest with yourself about any mishaps.

Right, now that you're warmed up and you know all the whats and the whys, let's get into the hows!

STEP 1: SELECT YOUR SALES PIPELINE STAGES



Before you begin climbing a mountain, you need to make sure you know where your checkpoints are. Otherwise you may get yourself lost!

You should think of your pipeline stages in the same way.

Setting up sales stages that work for your company improves efficiency, productivity and ROI. Your salespeople will have a clear vision and understanding of each step.

But what are the key stages?

1. Create a lead idea

When a lead first enters your pipeline, start by opening up all the lines of communication. Record all relevant contact details and note anything that you'll need to reference during the sales process.

2. Make initial contact with a potential customer

Simply getting hold of your new lead can be one of the hardest parts of the sales process. Follow up any cold call with an email, and set yourself reminders to try and call again later.

3. Find out what they want/need

Once you have made contact with your new lead, start engaging them as soon as possible. Find out what they want/need and explain how you can help them achieve it.

4. Make them an offer that meets their wants/needs

You remember the salesperson who was losing leads at the proposal stage in the earlier example? Use the information you gather during your research and conversations with prospects to make sure that you package up your service or product in a way that will appeal to them.

5. The offer is accepted and a new customer is won!

Time to celebrate! But don't forget to nurture your customer through the closing process.

And, almost as importantly, make sure you hand them over to your account management and customer success team so if your business doesn't miss any later opportunities to sell to them again.

STEP 2: CREATE YOUR SALES PIPELINE

Once you've defined your pipeline stages, you need to create your actual pipeline. Think of this as the rope you use to get to the top of the mountain.

If we're going to get really deep into the metaphor, in most cases, the rope gets to the top of the mountain first.

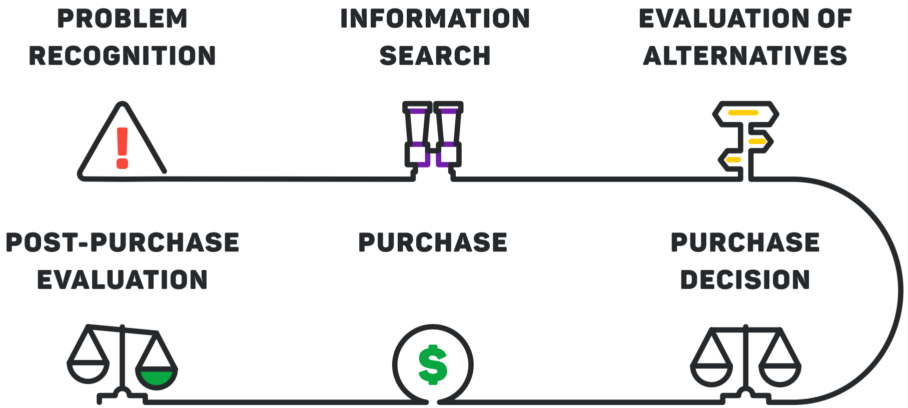
So without your sales pipeline, you simply can't reach your target!

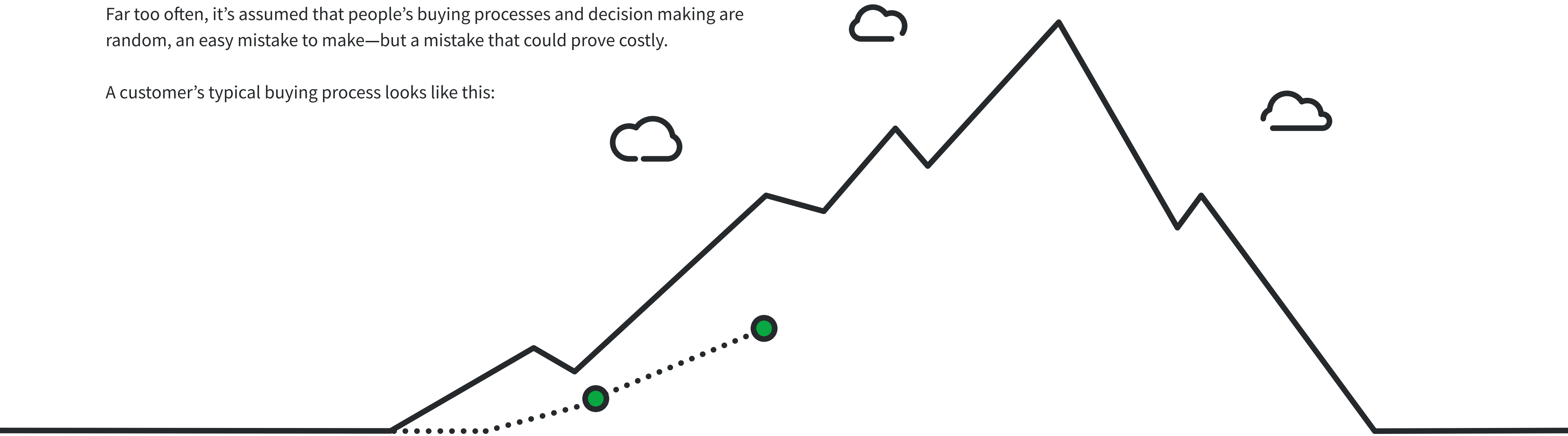
1. Look at it from your customers point of view

It's easy to get a bit self-absorbed when it comes to looking at the selling process. The key is to think about it from your customers' point of view.

Far too often, it's assumed that people's buying processes and decision making are random, an easy mistake to make—but a mistake that could prove costly.

A customer's typical buying process looks like this:





Taking the time to understand the stages of a consumer process ensures that your process addresses each stage, which will lead to higher conversions and long-term customer loyalty.

2. Discuss the stages with your team

There's nothing more valuable than advice from the front line, so do get input and understanding from your sales reps.

Including them in defining your pipeline creation process will make them feel valued, important and on board with your plans!

3. Check that your proposed stages will work for all of your sales scenarios

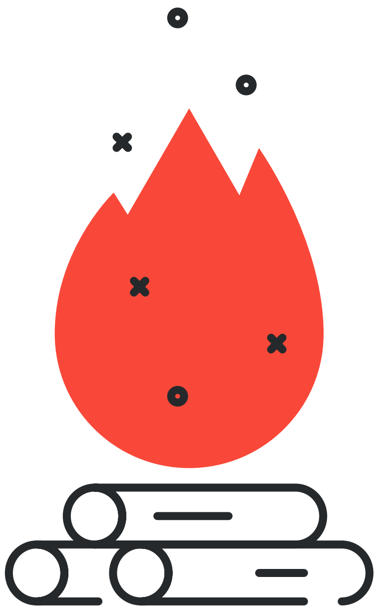
A 'one size fits all' approach might not work for every single one of your customers, so don't be afraid to be flexible where necessary.

In doing so you're creating a tailored sales experience for your leads that they may not be getting anywhere else.

4. Review your decided stages with your team and get a commitment

Once you have your stages set, get a commitment from your team. Hold a meeting where you can openly discuss feedback (good and bad) and address any issues that may arise.

Also, don't be afraid to revise the stages in a month or two if they aren't working. Showing a willingness to shape and mould is not a weakness, it just means you understand your process!



STEP 3: DEFINE YOUR LEAD QUALIFICATION PROCESS

Having a strong lead qualification process is the best way to get leads. It's as simple as that.

But how do you know if your team is qualifying leads effectively? Could your process be better? You don't want your team to be wasting time on leads that are going to amount to nothing.

By developing an effective lead qualification process, you'll be better able to motivate your team. You'll see an increase in good quality leads, which, in turn, will improve results and team morale.

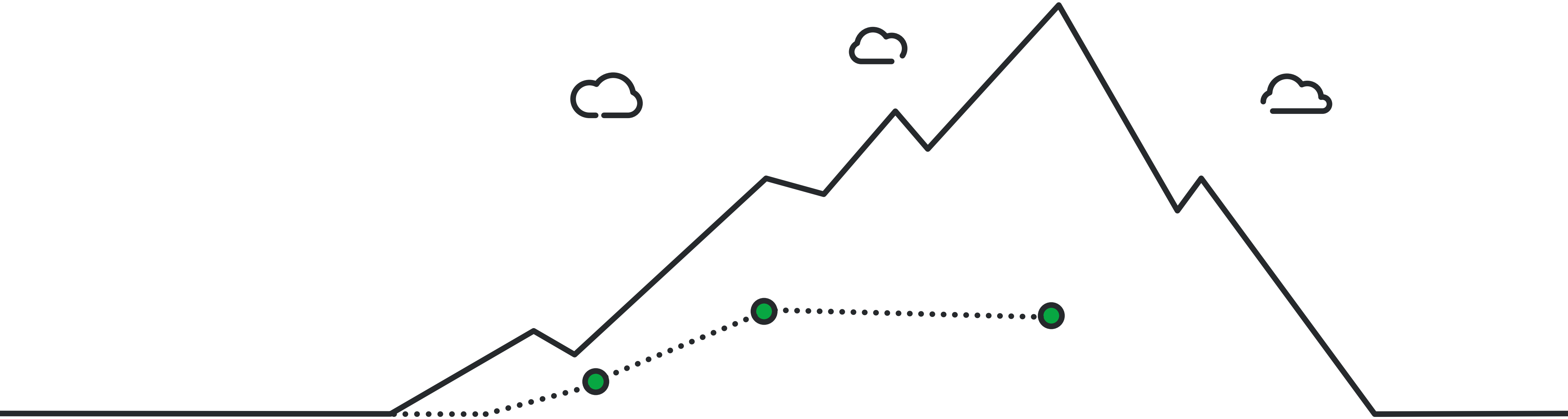
Here are four ways to make that happen:

1. Set the right lead definitions

You'll need to work with your marketing team to nail down what qualifies as a 'good' lead for your company.

The best lead definitions are based on demographics, activities, and behaviors that determine whether a lead is a quality prospective customer or not. You can compare characteristics by looking at your best customers and incorporating the insight into your lead definitions.

Your lead definitions should translate easily into lead qualification questions that your sales team can ask, and input into your CRM easily.



2. Make lead qualification part of your process

Lead scoring needs to be part of your process at every level in order to help improve your sales performance measurement.

You might have heard about BANT (Budget, Authority, Need, and Timeframe), the traditional gold standard of B2B sales qualification. Many qualification frameworks like BANT exist, but whichever you choose just make sure you're asking the right questions.

The right questions help you understand the probability of you converting your lead into a customer at each point in your sales process.

3. Automate some steps of the qualification process

Sales reps have been known to spend less than a third of their time qualifying leads.

To make sure your sales reps are spending more time selling, automate as many functions in the process as possible (without automating anything that still requires a human touch).

With Pipedrive's Smart Contact Data feature, for example, you can pull information on your prospects into the CRM from sites like LinkedIn with just one click, saving your sales team time they would've spent on lead research.

4. Celebrate and refine!

Always remember to celebrate your successes, and remember: fine-tuning your process will lead to constant improvement.

The Benefits of the four-step process:

+ More effective use of time
+ Better follow-up
+ Higher ROI

You and your team will still have to finish the job and close the leads, but being able to find better leads, faster, will free up your time to concentrate on what really matters.

STEP 4: IDENTIFY, ANALYZE AND FORECAST PROBLEMS

It's hard to know when a deal is going to close and sales teams often come up short on their estimates. The problem is, you can't afford to keep getting caught out by mistakes in your sales forecasting.

The average sales conversion rate is 16% but low performers see rates as low as 5%.

Every one of us would love to nail our forecasts and reports the first time, but that's not always going to be the case.

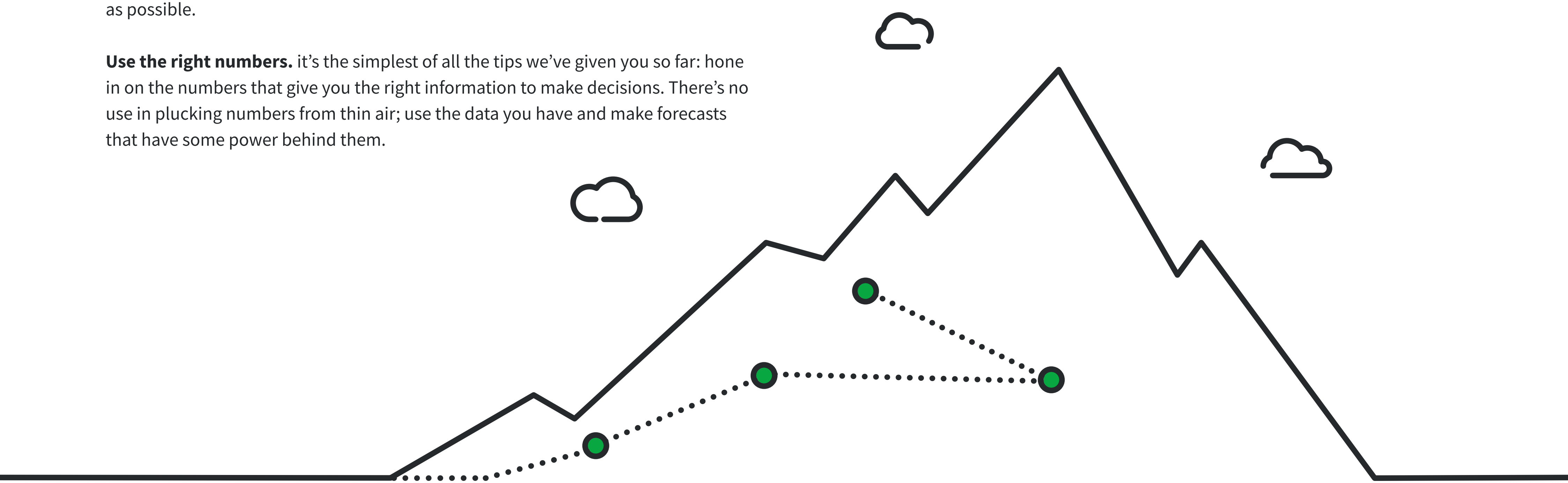
Following a few simple steps can help you to get as close to perfection as possible.

Use the right numbers. it's the simplest of all the tips we've given you so far: hone in on the numbers that give you the right information to make decisions. There's no use in plucking numbers from thin air; use the data you have and make forecasts that have some power behind them.

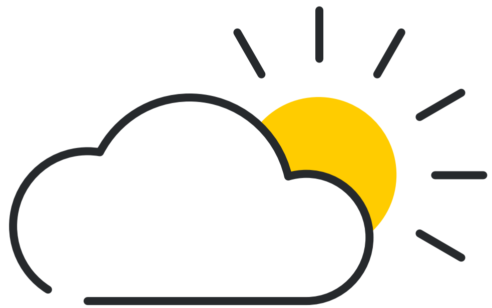
Adjust for variables. Last year's figures can be a great starting point, but they won't be the 'be-all and end-all.' Consider all the factors when it comes to your daily interactions with customers instead of just looking at last year's numbers.

Know your business. You know your business best, so use your statistical data to back yourself up, but don't be afraid to use your intuition

Constantly refine. It's an ever-evolving process, you'll learn as you go and you can refine each year. That's the beauty of it!



Activity-based selling will provide you with the tools and information you need to better identify where you want to be next year. However, analyzing the data isn't enough, you've also got to find the stories it tells to predict next year's results.



Let's take for an example, forecasting—weather forecasting, that is! Let's say your sales last year dropped during an unusually cold start to the year, but meteorologists are predicting that temperatures this January will be closer to the normal.

The story to take away is that weather has an impact on your sales, so you know this January the weather will be better, so your sales numbers will be better, which you can then account for in your forecast.

STEP 5: HOW TO FORECAST DEMAND WHEN YOU’RE SCALING

You can’t scale well unless you can make good decisions for your sales team. But it’s tough to make good decisions without having an idea of what your sales numbers are going to look like at the end of the month, quarter or year.

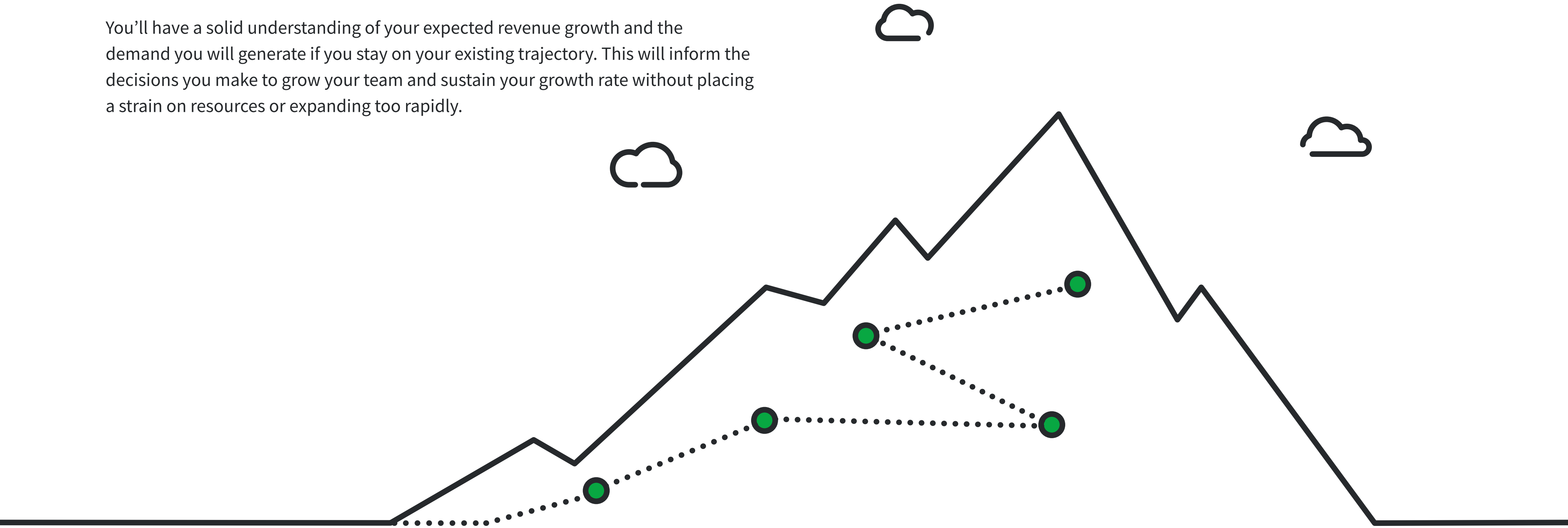
An accurate forecast can also prepare you for bad news, and more importantly – help you get ahead of the bad news. Forecasts indicate what problems are brewing that could prevent you from hitting your target.

If you want to scale up fast, you need accurate forecasting to drive your hiring.

You’ll have a solid understanding of your expected revenue growth and the demand you will generate if you stay on your existing trajectory. This will inform the decisions you make to grow your team and sustain your growth rate without placing a strain on resources or expanding too rapidly.

Forecasting is about creating a picture of the future, taking into account, that everything has to continue as it’s going now. You need to understand where your team is at now, so you can see where they are going.

Thankfully, forecasting is a skill that you can develop! You just need the right metrics, the right tools and a bit of practice.



Quick Tips on Forecasting:

Make sure you're clear on what you're using your forecast for

Knowing its purpose will help you choose the methods you use for creating it.
You can use sales forecasts for:

- **Budgeting-** knowing what revenue you're expecting will help you to be able to plan budgets, hiring, and resource management.
- **Goal-setting-** Knowing whether you're likely to meet your current goals can help you set realistic goals for the next period.
- **Motivation-** How are your sales reps performing? Are they doing well this month? The data provided by a revenue forecast can give your team a necessary boost or reality check.

Define who you're forecasting for

There's a big difference between forecasting for an individual sales rep and a whole team. If you're for forecasting for a rep you need to take into account:

- How many days they are working in a reporting period.
- What's in their pipeline at the moment.
- Historical data for that salesperson.

Decide what kind of time period you're forecasting for- such as:

- Monthly, quarterly or annually
- Each one will have a different process

Nail down the method you're using-

- Opportunity stage forecasting
- Length of sales cycle forecasting
- Historical forecasting

STEP 6: HOW TO REPORT EFFECTIVELY AND OPTIMIZE AS YOU GO ALONG

So you've defined your sales stages, now it's time to get your team onboard. After all, there's no point streamlining your processes to generate better results if your team has a problem with sales process adoption.

If you believe in the sales process and it's proven successful then, more often than not, any barriers your team faces in adopting it, or perceived reluctance can be smoothed over with better clarity on how the process will support them

Follow the below tips to help your team get to grips with the process and up their productivity.

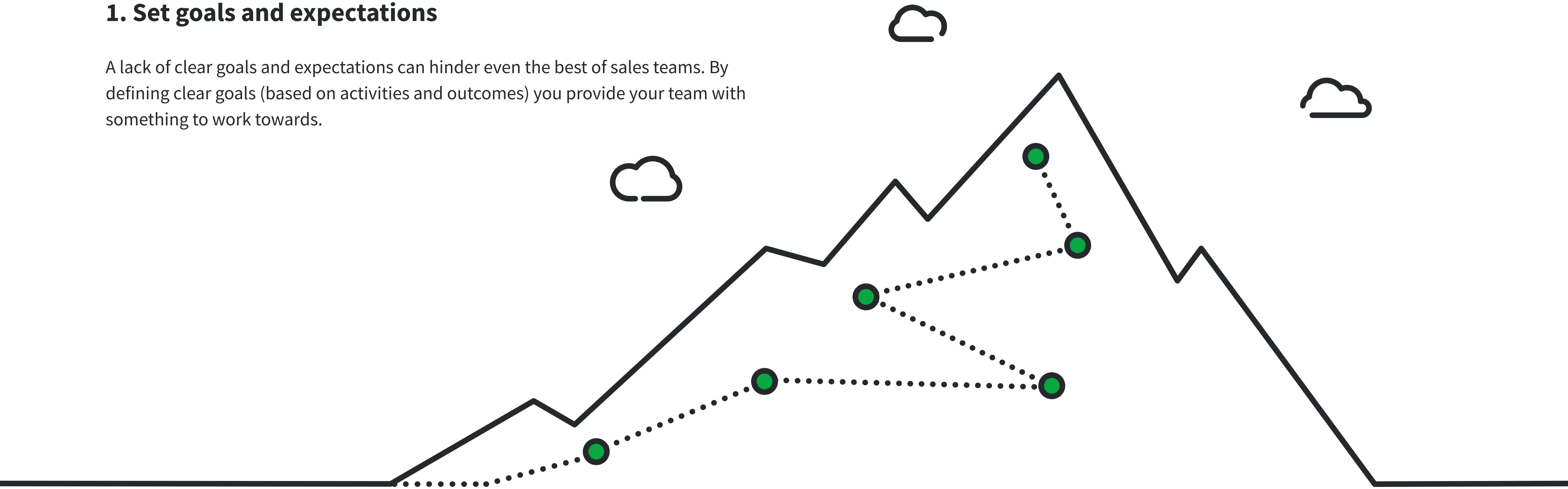
1. Set goals and expectations

A lack of clear goals and expectations can hinder even the best of sales teams. By defining clear goals (based on activities and outcomes) you provide your team with something to work towards.

Precise goals should be set for each part of the sales process and progress should be measured by KPI's.

Involve your team in the creation of the goals, as they may flag any hurdles that you could come across later. Because they've been involved in the process of setting them, your team will feel way more motivated to hit these goals.

Just remember to make adjustments based on performance.



2. Measure both short-term and long-term goals

A dual-focus on short-term task completion and long-term performance is an approach that will help to promote a positive work ethic.

While weekly and daily goals help keep your team on track, the inevitable ups and downs of sales can mean that a bit of demotivation sets in. During these tough times, longer-term goals provide a more realistic measure of success.

On the other hand, if the short-term goals are too easy to achieve but you're not seeing success in the long-term, you'll need to review the long-term goals to make sure everyone is getting the help they need and the results that matter.

3. Develop an up-to-date visual dashboard with every stage of the pipeline

Your sales team should be focused on more than just closing the deal. Every stage of your pipeline needs to be filled, which means prospecting needs to be tracked and leads need to be qualified and nurtured.

But.

It's not a sales manager's job to fill in everyone else's pipeline; it's your job to advise your team how to fill it out correctly. Also, you need to make sure they understand how to fill it out and understand when they've got it right.

You need to have the appropriate metrics so you can see each of your people's sales process at a single glance.

With Pipedrive's customizable dashboards, you and your sales team can create a pipeline view that best suits your needs.

PIPEDRIVE TO THE RESCUE!

Pipedrive is the perfect sherpa to help guide you on your journey to scale your sales summit. Pipedrive's visual pipeline and drag-and-drop interface allow you to manage your entire sales process with ease and simplicity.

+ Get a clear overview of your pipeline to help you forecast sales.
+ Set activity goals and easily measure progress.
+ Keep track of the four pipeline levers we discussed: the number and size of deals, conversion rate and deal velocity.
+ 14-day free trial before signing on to a plan that suits your needs.
+ Integrate Pipedrive with over 130 apps to automate and streamline your processes.

To try our services for free, visit pipedrive.com.

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