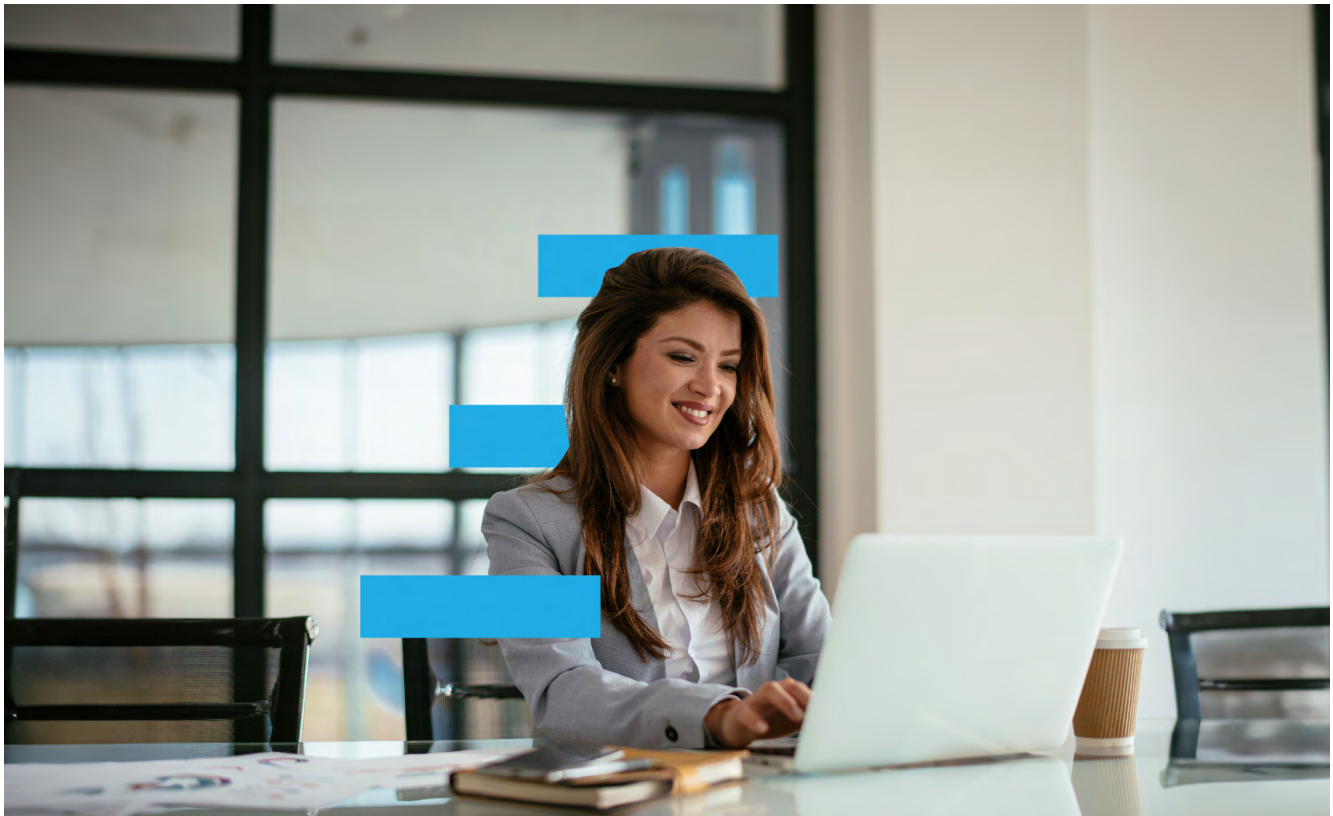




WHITEPAPER

10 Effective Strategies For Closing The Year Strong





It's not over until the ball drops on New Year's Eve. So start making the calendar your friend for big finish to the year.

It's hard to believe, we know, but the final quarter is almost here. How's your year been so far? Maybe it's been a little disappointing and you're looking to improve your numbers while you still can. Or maybe you've had a terrific year and simply want the momentum to continue.

Whatever your situation, here are 10 tried-and-true strategies for finishing the year strongly and positioning yourself to be profitable and productive in the coming year.

01

Actively Engage In Account Planning.

An account plan isn't something you create in January and forget about; it's a living, nimble document that sales teams should consistently utilize, update and share collaboratively in a team selling environment. Account plans act as strategic and tactical guides to help move future revenues into the present, based on clear understanding of client needs and pains.



02

Devise A Mid-Year Strategy.

One component of this is to revisit opportunities from earlier in the year that lost funding or were dropped by the customer. Remember, funding can be restored based on client need changes or the brightening of a financial outlook. Your understanding of client environments increases your competitive advantage and positions you to win deals that your adversaries have dropped from their radar.



03

Understand Customer Financing In Q3 and Q4.

While this is a complex topic, one thing you can do pretty easily is to identify excess budget in your customer's organization through your understanding of their historical spending. This foresight can lead to pre-billing for services yet to be rendered and, in essence, warehousing money for the client to spend in the next year – with you! In many situations for clients, it's "use it or lose it!" Make sure you clearly understand your client's financial calendar and fiscal year. Remember – it's not about you!



04

Set Actionable Goals.

If you're a sales manager, don't tell your team, "We've got to finish the year strong." It's too ambiguous. Instead, set an actionable target such as increasing company revenue by \$500,000. Also connect the personal goals of your team members to the company's financial goals and they'll work that much harder. (For example, if one of them is only about \$100,000 from their next commission increase, let them know!)



05

Optimize Your Team.

Sales managers, now is the time to take action on chronic underperformers while there's still time to salvage opportunity and revenue from their territories. It's also time to onboard new, quality sales representatives to take you strongly through the end of this year. Even without quality replacement candidates ready, tolerating consistently poor performers sends a very negative message throughout your organization. You never hear sales managers lamenting, "I moved too quickly on releasing Tom." It's always the opposite.





06

Establish An Active LinkedIn® Referral Program.

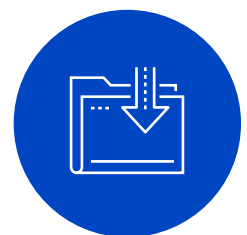
Since we all know that referrals have a much higher close rate, be proactive and go into the LinkedIn profiles of your existing customers. If you see connections that you'd like to be referred into, ask them to do so. Remember to track your client organization's LinkedIn page, as well as those of your individual contacts. Companies present themselves differently on their LinkedIn pages than they do on their websites. And they often update them much more frequently, providing meaningful information that you can act on.



07

Be Ready To Make "Close The File" Calls.

Don't be afraid to get a "no." If a customer has gone dark on you, make a call and say, "Since I haven't heard back from you, I get the feeling that you've gone in a different direction." Prospects who've moved on but never told you so will allow you to close the file. On the other hand, those who simply became distracted will often move forward with a deal after you've reconnected with them in this way. With time a precious commodity in your efforts to close the year strong, you can't afford to be in the dark. Whether you close the file or identify something new that will help you win the deal, you've been given a gift!



08

Practice Strong Pre-Call Planning And Have Clear next Steps.

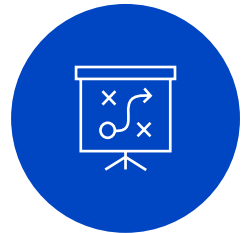
Every call you go on should have a clear purpose. As a manager and sales person you should always be able to answer this question: "Where am I in this deal and what will it take to progress to the next step?" If the scenario is ambiguous for you, it is for your buyer, too. Clarity is key!



09

Have Client Review Meetings.

Now's the time for face-to-face meetings with customers who present an opportunity for expanded business. Figure out who they are and what new products or services you could be providing to them. Use your client knowledge from account planning to identify these situations with the most potential for current business, and avoid sessions focused on the "status quo." The clock, of course, is ticking.



10

Identify A "Monkey's Paw" Or Two.

At Sandler, we refer to small pieces of business that help you get your foot in the door, as "Monkey's Paws." Whether you call them pilots, quick-starts or other descriptive terms, they're a great way to kick off inexpensive initiatives that require minimal client investment, but position you to take advantage of next year's funding and a much larger engagement. Use your client knowledge to identify these opportunities to get engaged quickly.



Finishing the year strongly can make a real difference to your business. So can a systematized approach to sales.

The Sandler Selling System® methodology, in conjunction with the Sandler Enterprise Selling program, offer an effective, proven and measurable way to improve sales performance. They create sustainable success over time with real-world tactics for prospecting, qualifying, making the deal, closing the sale and generating referrals.

Learn more about increasing sales and success with a proven, systematic approach to selling.

About Sandler

Sandler is the worldwide leader in sales, management, and customer service training. We partner with organizations of all sizes, across all industries, to help them improve their revenue performance. Sandler not only provides the initial and advanced strategies and tactics needed to excel, but we also empower your team to develop the attitudes and implement the behavior necessary to reach the highest levels of success.

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