



# The Ultimate Guide to: increasing sales performance

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It's surprising how many Sales professionals forget the fundamentals of good CRM, especially if you've got a new team to train. Yes, it helps with branding and marketing - but at its core it's about driving sales. So we thought the time was right for a reminder of some basic sales actions proven to improve sales performance, month after month.

Many of them won't be new to you. We're repeating them because time and again, even [CRM campaigns that follow good sales strategy](#) fail - for no reason except a lack of focus on the small tactical things. Give your team this sequence of eight actions and you'll see a bounce in the key metrics in no time. Your metrics will be boosted even further by these eight steps as they encourage Sales and Marketing to collaboratively align with one another.

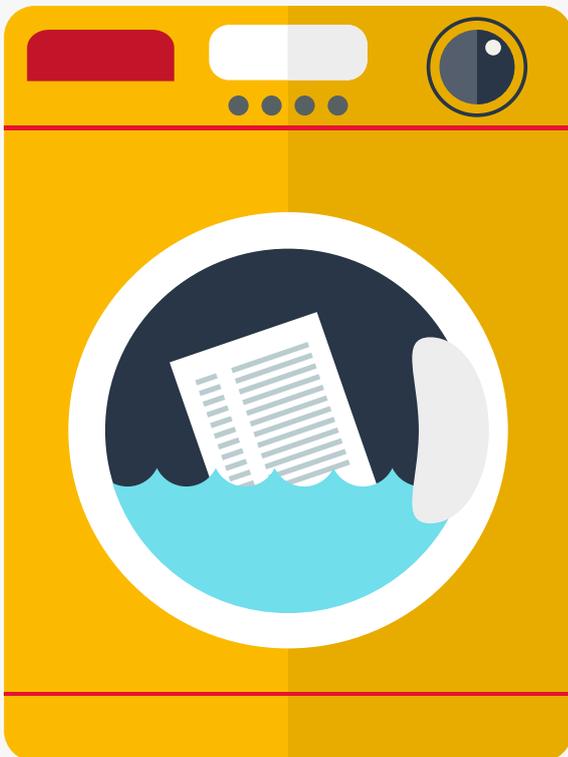
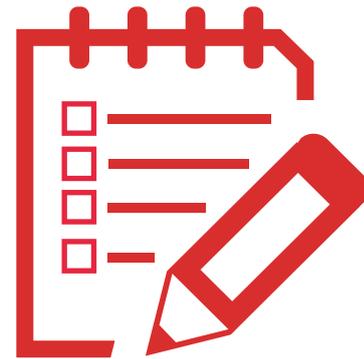


# 1. Look at database cleaning as a sales uplift strategy

It sounds boring, and it can be - but it needn't take excessive resources. A checklist of what not to put into your CRM system can help your sales metrics, such as never entering a new name without checking if it already exists. Best CRM practice implements strict policies on who can enter data and the exact format in which it should be entered as this will keep data clean from the very beginning.

Data inevitably decays over time due to issues you can't control. (For example, most people stay in their jobs less than four years.) In order to minimise stale data, you can send your customers

"confirm-your-email" requests. This will reveal whether or not your customers are still active.... and still ready for the next sales action.



Why make a clean database your top priority?  
If 20% of your list is invalid and you clean it away, that's a 25% increase in response rate **without doing anything else.**

Now that's got your attention, move onto step 2: A/B splits.

## 2. Make every sales campaign an A/B split

Marketing has one purpose: to support sales. One of the best methods for doing that is a good old A/B split - but outside of consumer goods, [even some large companies don't do A/B splits as a matter of policy](#). Yet today's CRM systems make such sales testing simpler than ever.

Take whatever sales communication you had planned for your campaign and change one thing. Aspects changed are usually the call to action or headline selling point. You should send each variant to half of your chosen list and see which pulled best. That's all an A/B split is - so it's time to correct any freshly-minted salespeople who think it's complicated.

Always hammer home the most important point of all: change one thing, not everything. That's the only way to test effectively. By testing a singular change, you can clearly define if that change made a difference. Testing two things at once can be confusing. Changing a single thing and testing it may feel time consuming, but imagine a list of 1,000 names where variant B outperforms A by just a fifth of a percentage point. Over a year of weekly campaigns, that's nearly a hundred extra responses... responses you can turn into sales!



### 3. Bring a sales focus to your knowledge base

Take your learnings from your A/B splits over a year, write them down somewhere, and you've got a cookbook - a list of methods and models you know deliver a certain level of sales. That's a knowledge base everyone on your sales team can leverage, and it's a cheap and easy win. So why not adopt it? You can do it all within your CRM system - if you're not sure how, ask your CRM partner.

A knowledge base doesn't have to be complex. [A single document listing what sells, perhaps with links to the emails themselves](#), is a huge help to your Marketing team. They will get campaigns out

faster and with more confidence. They may even become principal advocates for your knowledge base and start demanding numbers, names and data. This is a great way to foster strong relations between Marketing and Sales.



The numbers again: if that single document lets you double the number of campaigns without response drop-off, you've doubled your predicted revenue too.



## 4. Make the knowledge base a living lesson, not a static doc

The next stage is to make those learnings part of your story. Make clear to your people that you expect them to update the knowledge base every time they have a result, sharing sales stories so everyone knows what success looks like. You can make it easy for them by writing 2-3 templates for the additions you want to see. It can be as simple as:

Once you've got a few of these, you'll start seeing patterns and summarising what works and what doesn't - in fact, it's likely your people will do their own summarising. Sales people will start demanding such sales-focused results from every campaign.



For an A/B split template at [link to the A variant] and [link to the B variant], Variant A returned 6.45% and variant B, 6.65%. The audience was 891 Sales Managers at [link to the list used]. The winning variant, B, used the Call to Action "Make sure to call before 6pm today to secure your 50% discount", while the losing variant A used the CTA "Call us today for a two-for-one offer." The product was [description].



## 5. Stay in control, by celebrating the control

Reinventing the wheel isn't great CRM. (It can be great **advertising**, if you're an advertising agency looking to get into the awards books.

Your interest, however, is in driving sales.) So for you, the most creative campaign is the one that sells hardest.



Think back to your A/B split. Did B outperform A by 10%? That makes B your control: the sales communication nobody's beaten yet. (In CRM, your control may be a set of customised paragraphs for different audiences, but that set is still a control.)

When you issue a campaign to a new audience, your ethic should be: use the control, unless there's a strong reason not to. Avoid creating original content for the sake of it. Basic sales techniques for writing compelling copy have been around since Claude Hopkins' **Scientific Advertising** in the 1920s, because core human motivations don't change.

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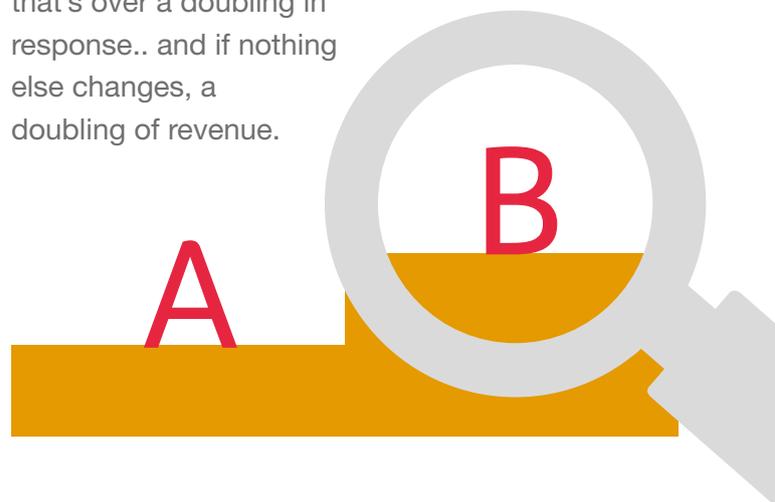
## 6. Make "control competition" part of your culture

Using controls give people a real sense of progress over the year. Take this to the max with the next step: focus your sales team by making clear that their main job is to beat the control.

What does beat the control mean? It means striving to outperform the best sales letter you've sent so far. How? Start with your top-performing variant and do another A/B split based on it. If the new variant outperforms B, that becomes your new control.

It's how direct marketing ("direct response" in US parlance) has worked since time immemorial. The best CRM systems **celebrate** those tested techniques rather than try to replace them.

Continuous incremental improvement of 0.2% per campaign adds up to a nearly 2.5 percentage point uplift in response if you roll out one campaign a month, each an A/B split on the last. If your response rate now is under 2%, that's over a doubling in response.. and if nothing else changes, a doubling of revenue.



## 7. Illustrate how much work your CRM system does for you

EU Law is about to get stricter. An industrial-strength CRM system is a great way to deal with its requirements - without creating more work for your team.

The penultimate stage in improving sales performance is to stress **how much effort CRM can take off your sales team's shoulders.** Many plug-in apps and modules can help set policies and procedures around Data Protection Law - everything from Unsubscribe processes to adding

compulsory legal text automatically. If they're there, why not use them?

Get your team onboard with the principle that everything's easier if it stays in CRM. CRM can provide a single version of the truth and a single resolution of every issue. No forking, no peeling off lists into spreadsheets and no marketing people running their own show from their laptop. Be fair but firm: keep it all within the sales team.



## 8. Share these results regularly with your team

CRM implementations fail for a single reason: not enough people in the company saw the point. That's why, for any good CRM partner, the software is **secondary in importance to the people using it**.

So if your sales team has put in the work of steps 1-7, the finishing touch is to celebrate their success and make it known widely. All the statistics you need are in your CRM system, and your CRM partner can configure those reports any way you want - alerting the right people on the right schedule.

There's a flipside to this: celebrate misses as well as hits. If a campaign didn't pull or a split went badly, make clear it's a learning experience - not a failure. Congratulate the people responsible for trying something new within the sensible limits of your A/B splits and control culture.

That's how to increase sales performance from your CRM system. You've heard many of the above tips before - and you probably use some of them already. But using all eight, in sequence, can make an even bigger difference. As always, your CRM provider can help improve sales performance markedly, every step of the way.



## Takeaways:



CRM best practice involves making a plan and sticking to it.



Make sure tested methods like A/B splits are part of your sales culture.



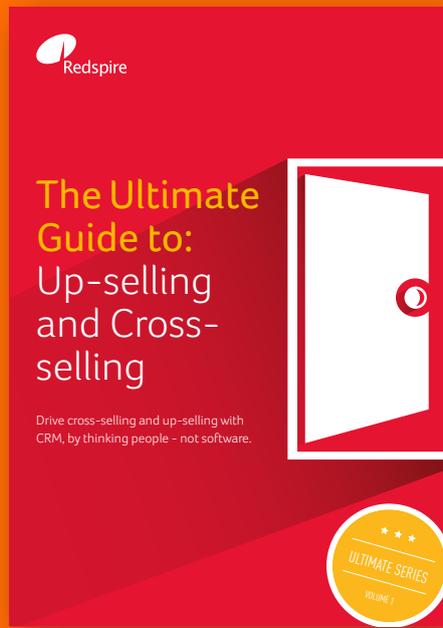
Learn to make each campaign sell harder than the last...



And remember what went wrong with campaigns that didn't...



Make CRM the core of your sales information systems and its benefits will multiply.



Discover further ways CRM can increase sales performance by downloading our eGuide: **The ultimate guide to: up selling and cross selling**

[Learn more](#)