

“FROM IMPOSSIBLE TO INEVITABLE” BY AARON ROSS AND JASON LEMPKIN

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A SUMMARY

Nailing Your “Niche”

This means focusing on a specific target customer with a specific pain, not all the things you could do. It also means focusing on your unique strengths – not all of them – where they can create the most value and solve specific pain in a repeatable way with a repeatable method to find and engage them. This helps to bridge the gap between selling to early adopters who trust you and mainstream buyers who don’t. Niche examples –

“Serving B2B companies with at least \$1m in revenue who need to grow, want predictable lead generation and are not outbound prospecting effectively.” OR “Outbound sales specialist for TV based companies with at least \$1m in annual revenue.”

Growing

Consumers don’t buy what they need, they buy what they want. What differentiates the customers who need you from the ones who don’t? Where can you create the most financial value?

“Sell money” means proving to customers that your product will help them make more money, spend less of it, reduce the risk of losing it, or stay legally compliant. Demonstrate how spending money with you will make them more money. Ask prospects what’s equivalent to money in their mind.

Nailing Your Target

Pains include inaccurate forecasts, high customer attrition, lead generation struggles and low conversion rates. Concentrate on one of these.

Your Pitch

What standout function do you have? An elevator pitch isn’t designed to sell, only to give a quick sense of whether they want to find out more. Target example –
“For (prospects) who are dissatisfied with (whatever). My solution is a (whatever) that provides (whatever). Unlike (competitor) my solution is (whatever).”

Remember –

1. How do you help customers?
2. What’s so great about that?
3. So what?

Be very specific about what you do.

Create a predictable pipeline

Predictable lead generation is **the** lever to creating growth, as long as they are turned into customers. Are your prospects experiencing –

1. Unpredictable lead generation and sales?
2. Salespeople explaining about the amount or quality of leads they get?
3. A revenue rollercoaster of up and down growth?
4. Missing revenue goals?
5. More than 30% of your salespeople are missing quota?
6. Low close rates?
7. Unmotivated salespeople?

Sustainable predictable lead generation solves a lot of sales problems.

Customer Success

This is not about increasing customer satisfaction but creating revenue growth. Always visit existing customers in person. A telephone call is not a meeting.

Inbound Marketing

This is very ubiquitous but don't just follow everyone else.

1. Start with your prospect's buying stages –
 - a) Early stage – why should prospects care or change?
 - b) Middle stage – how will your solution be implemented?
 - c) Late stage – which path do your prospects take? Why are you better and how do you ensure results?
2. Remember –
 - a) Content is king. Write for your readers, not you.
 - b) Find their interests.
 - c) Write blogs which lay out step by step introductions about whatever such as “The Ultimate/Definitive Guide to (whatever).”
 - d) Only blog monthly if you've not enough to say weekly.

Outbound Prospecting

Even inbound specialists like HubSpot and Marketo have large teams of outbound prospectors to speed up growth. When you hear or read about 80% of the B2B buying cycle being competed before prospects talk to you, take this with a pinch of salt. Often this is intended to emphasise the importance of inbound marketing, content marketing and social

media. However, this is true **only** for inbound leads and not outbound generated opportunities.

Outbound prospecting works best when –

- 1) You can sell deals over \$10k.
- 2) Your value proposition is easy to understand.
- 3) You're different.
- 4) You're not just trying to replace a competitor.

The Pipeline Creation Rate (PCR)

This measures your growth in qualified leads, monthly pipeline and growth trend.

Always be doing both Outbound and Inbound selling.

Sales Specialisation

Nothing will make a bigger impact on your ability to increase sales productivity and growth. However, closing salespeople should be able to prospect if and when necessary. Ideally you need four categories of sales roles –

- 1) Inbound lead qualification.
- 2) Outbound prospecting.
- 3) Closing new business.
- 4) Account management.

Even if you're a small business you can –

- 1) Block out regular chunks of time in your planner for prospecting.
- 2) Come up with specific goals such as daily, weekly or monthly to do whatever.
- 3) Buddy up with a colleague to review each other's goals.
- 4) Get help by using an outsourced specialist.

This helps people become specialists themselves.

Sales Leaders

Top things a good VP of sales does at a growing company –

- 1) A VP of sales shouldn't sell personally but recruits, trains and coaches salespeople.
- 2) Sales strategy – distribution of money and time as well as target markets.

However, you need at least two salespeople before you hire a sales VP. Then those two salespeople can be compared with each other.

Sales Best Practice

Develop salespeople who are business people first, not salespeople first.

Scaling the Sales Team

If you're churning more than 10% of your salespeople, they're not the problem. CSO Insights show that the average sales team churns 25% a year. This is incredibly wasteful. The CEO and VP sales are ultimately responsible for this. A commonly accepted estimate of the cost of one lost salesperson is up to twice their annual total salary. The three most common causes of sales attrition are –

- 1) Poor lead generation.
- 2) Lack of specialisation.
- 3) Disconnected management - people leave managers, not companies – voluntary attrition should be nil.

Marketing should be measured by the number of leads accepted by sales. Outbound prospectors should be in sales, but inbound response should be in marketing. Your VP marketing should have their salary and compensation plan tied to the leads that make the annual plan work.

Big companies make group decisions and are risk averse. This all takes time for a sale to close – up to a year. It's harder for big companies to buy. Your job is to help them buy. Help your contact to sell internally. Tips for accelerating big ticket sales cycles –

- 1) Find a champion or coach.
- 2) Focus on prospects that need you.
- 3) Clarify your ideal customer profile and target market.
- 4) Don't confuse prospects or they will say no.
- 5) Show, don't tell. Offer free work for proof.

Startups

Don't worry about CLV or CAC as they will be low to start with. Good customers last between 5-7 years. You need to know a startup's top line growth and cash flow.

Going Upmarket

Salespeople must be trusted guides and consultants. However, complex pricing makes it harder for prospects to buy. The problem with being too insightful with a prospect is:

- a. Not knowing their specific needs without asking.
- b. You sound like a commodity vendor.

The best salespeople are coaches and entrepreneurs. Remember to turn your value proposition into a quantifiable business case.

Companies are full of people who need things

There are always lots of problems that need solving. Pick one to do something about. You need to help employees feel like owners so they will take ownership and initiative and not need so much managing. This also helps reduce their boredom and complaints.

Creating Ownership

Ask employees about their likes, dislikes and how they would do things if they could. Act on their replies. Share your company's financial information with employees. Educate them to understand financial reports. Ensure there are career paths for good employees.

Each time an employee comes to you for a decision, decide if it's something that really needs your authority. If not, make it their decision. Give advice at most, not answers. All this will give you more time for real coaching.

Taking Ownership

Give employees a financial stake in your business. Involve them in some of the company decision making.

As an employee, take control of your own career path

Don't get too dependent on other people's agendas. There will always be problems so don't let them divert you. Act like you're running your own part of the business. Find a mentor or coach in the company. Set yourself goals and timescales. Good bosses want you to take the initiative. Remember, boredom comes from lack of learning. If you feel tired or demotivated, announce to others that you will do whatever outcome by a specific date.

Trial close – “Now that you know what we are about and I've answered all your questions, I believe we're a good fit. If you agree, what steps must we take to make things happen?”
Learn all you can about the buyer's steps to purchasing.