

Pipeline Sales Stages Guide

Introduction to Sales Stages

What Are Sales Stages?

Sales stages represent each phase of the pipeline that a prospect must go through to achieve a closed won. Each stage has consistent action steps and exit criteria, so the rep can accurately assess where a prospect is at in the funnel and identify their requirements to progress them forward.

Stages vs. Forecast Categories:

Forecast Categories are a function of reporting accuracy. Forecasting takes into account deal size, likelihood to close, and expected close date to allow reps to estimate and report to leadership.

Sales Stages on the other hand are a function of pipeline management to help reps build a healthy pipeline and improve their win rate. Stages are tied to the action steps between the rep and prospect and specific stage criteria to assess if the deal is ready to progress forward.

Benefits of Managing Deals to Stages

Managing deals to sales stages have several benefits including increased win rate, better pipeline health, and objectivity within deals.

When you are required to move deals through stages, you need to know:

- The outcome of your last action with a deal
- The current state of the opportunity (i.e. sales stage updated, does it meet stage criteria)
- What must happen next (exit criteria)

How To Use Sales Stages Effectively

1. Update your opportunity stages and notes in SFDC after each meeting, and reference the stage action steps and exit criteria often.
2. Validate each item with the prospect before progressing to the next stage. Before you assume that because you've held a demo that all the necessary stakeholders attended, or

that because your POC is knowledgeable about their evaluation that they are your champion simply ask and confirm.

3. Consistently review your pipeline with your peers and sales leadership. Not only can this help you get deals “unstuck” but it also provides you with some necessary objectivity when you’ve been working a longer cycle deal.

Tip: consider positioning your asks as a “give” rather than a “get”. Aligning with your key decision-maker(s)/ stakeholders on what you need and what they need to move forward respects their time, gives them the best possible experience with eFC, and gets them to what they need more effectively.

Qualified Opportunity (First Sales Call)

Stage Criteria

BDR has sent a Sales Qualified Lead (SQL) to their AE

- Lead object will be assigned to the AE, and in “Discovery Call Scheduled” status

OR an AE has created a new opportunity (such as a new logo or expansion) with a meeting booked but not yet held.

Note: in the case of a BDR handoff, this stage criteria & action steps occur prior to opportunity creation. However, you will see “qualified opportunity” as the first stage on the opportunity object. This can be used for expansions when the AE needs to open an opportunity prior to holding the first call, otherwise, the AE can progress the deal straight to “Discovery”.

Stage Action Steps: First Sales Call

- [] **Qualify the Opportunity** to determine if it should be accepted into pipeline
- [] **Identify Basic Use Case** (to tailor the AE demo during Discovery stage)
- [] **Identify Basic Deal Facts:**
 - Timeline to Implement
 - Pain/ Need

- Current State (how they are currently managing documents, associated workflow goals/ problems)
- Current Systems
- Potential # of Users
- [] **Confirm Funding/ Budget Access** and validate with key stakeholders

Optional (Bonus Qualification)

- Align to authority path: key decision-maker(s)/ stakeholders identified
 - Champion: identified that leans our way and gives direction
- If applicable obtain problem document(s) from the prospect (NDA sent if needed for sharing)

Qualification Criteria: if qualification criteria is met & validated by the AE, they should create an opportunity and accept it into their working pipeline

- Willing to take a second meeting with AE
- 50-3500 employees
- Funding/ budget access
- Timeframe to implement a new system is within 9 months (inbound only)
- Pain/ need: pain points that will compel them to buy

Exit Criteria

The goal of the “Qualified Opportunity” stage is to achieve alignment to the opportunity and pain, and qualify for fit.

Scheduled Next Steps -

- [] Completed First Sales Call
- [] Scheduled Discovery Meeting
- [] Problem Documents Obtained

Discovery

Stage Criteria

Prospect meets qualification criteria, and intro. & AE demo has taken place.

Validate/ Define Prospect:

- Requirements
- Documented pain points
- Decision-making criteria
- Process to purchase
- Decision maker/ stakeholders/ champion

Stage Action Steps: Discovery Demo

- [] **Prepare AE Demo:** map demo instance to use case & needs identified in the previous meeting
- [] **Identify Metrics of Business Value/ Impact:** begin to outline business value & impact of these pains
 - Value case: is there buy-in and confirmation on business value & financial impact addressing their needs
 - What was the compelling event and how does it currently impact metrics?
- [] **Identify Pain:** business pain, why we would win or lose
- [] **Identify Economic Buyer:** economic buyer is engaged, budget alignment to the correct economic buyer (whose budget is this coming out of)
 - Pricing socialized (prospect has indicated this matches budget)
 - Confirm the potential # of users
 - [] **Identify Champion:** engaged & motivated
- [] **Identify Needs:** are there needs beyond document management that align with the eFC value prop?
 - [] Security, data migration, and integration requirements are established
- [] **Align to Decision Criteria:** are decision drivers and key evaluation steps known?
- [] **Align to Decision Process:** decision process understood
- [] **Identify Competition:** incumbent document management systems, how the competitors identified are positioned within the account

Qualification Criteria: continue to confirm qualification criteria and align to fit & timeline
Buying timeframe within 6 months
Needs fit eFC's solution set
Pricing matches budget

Exit Criteria

The goal of the discovery stage is to align to the Account's:

- Current pain & environment
- Use case
- Sample document/ workflow (shared in preparation for solution mapping)

- Opportunity Fit
- Decision Criteria

Scheduled Next Steps -

At this time, the rep should share the Mutual Action Plan & schedule the solution mapping section.
(If POC is required, success criteria are shared)

Solution Mapping

Stage Criteria

Prove our solution & team can deliver on the outlined success criteria and requirements.

Present a customized demo presented with their sample document and workflow/ automation, retention/ permissions requirements.

Stage Action Steps: Solution Mapping

- [] **Complete Custom Demo:** with their use case shown using Rubex
 - Demonstrate differentiators based on their requirements
 - Share the recorded custom demo
 - Validate Value Case
- [] **Evaluate Success Criteria:** agreed upon with Champion & Economic Buyer
 - Are there competitive risks still remaining?
- [] **Meet with all Key Stakeholders**
- [] **Understand Deal Timing:**
 - If possible, understand their implementation timing and any details on go live
- [] **Review Requirements:** business & tech requirements, and data migration needs
 - Determine the implementation package matched to their requirements
 - IT and Security requirements gathered
- [] **Validate Funding/ Budget Access:** confirmed with champion/ economic buyer by their expected close date

If this is a POC, SE must also set up users and build out workflows to test Rubex

Exit Criteria

The goal of the solution mapping stage is to complete & review a tech evaluation and progress to a proposal based on the presented demo details.

- Technical Win

Scheduled Next Steps -

- [] Agreement to act on a proposal
 - [] Contract meeting scheduled with the economic buyer
-

Solution Proposal

Stage Criteria

Deliver on a proposal (or quote), and gain the economic buyers buy-in and technical win.

- Security, data, and IT/ integrations needs are addressed during solution proposal and agreed upon

Stage Action Steps: Solution Proposal

- [] **Present the Proposal:** quote/ proposal presented to the economic buyer
 - Understand the approval or legal/ contractual obstacles
 - Discount approvals completed
- [] **Validate Business & Technical Requirements Are Met**
- [] **Ask for Verbal Commitment**

Exit Criteria

The goal of the solution proposal stage is to deliver the proposal and achieve a verbal commit from the economic buyer.

Scheduled Next Steps -

- [] Follow up on the calendar with the decision maker on vendor selection and any additional requirements
-

Selection

Stage Criteria

Account is in vendor selection process.

Stage Action Steps: Selection

Confirmation

- ☐ **MSA Sent:** with their quote/ proposal
- ☐ **Signator Identified & Available:** confirmed they are available within the agreed upon timeframe
- ☐ **Understand Terms & Conditions:** have legal contacts on both sides agreed to the most essential items for the potential agreement
 - Any legal/ contractual obstacles?
- ☐ **Agreed Upon Deal Timing:** are all key transaction processing elements know and confirmed within the confirmed timeframe

Exit Criteria

The goal of the selection stage is to execute on the proposal and contract.

Scheduled Next Steps -

- ☐ Follow up meeting for final T's & C's, scheduled based on availability of signator
-

Negotiation

Stage Criteria

Complete the final contract Ts & Cs. Confirm that we are in procurement with the agreed upon closed date.

Stage Action Steps: Discovery Demo

- [] **Complete Contract Negotiations**
 - [Sales Discounting & Negotiation Skill](#)

Exit Criteria

The goal of the negotiation stage is to receive a signed contract.

Closed Won

Stage Criteria

At the time of a closed won, signatures have been received and approved, and we are initiating delivery and services.

Stage Action Steps: Discovery Demo

- [] Contract Approved: signed contract approved by finance
 - Signed SOW (if applicable)
- [] Complete New Customer Handoff Form: complete in Slack channel and manually assign CSM in SFDC
- [] Booked Order Executed
- [] Kickoff Scheduled

Exit Criteria

The goal of the closed won process is to execute on a signed contract, receive approval, and schedule new customer kickoff.

Revision #2

Created 11 November 2022 20:58:59 by Kaitlin Bell

Updated 11 November 2022 21:20:39 by Kaitlin Bell