The ultimate sales pipeline guide:

How to build, manage, & measure

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Introduction

The ultimate sales pipeline guide: How to build, manage, & measure

In sales, it's almost like you're the tour guide on a fantastic journey. Every time you pick up the phone to cold call a new lead, it's the start of a new adventure.

Your goal: Take these leads through the sales cycle and convert them into happy customers.

Like any journey, this can be both exhilarating and exhausting. It takes an insane amount of energy, knowledge of your product, and charisma.

But even the pluckiest of tour guides needs a good map to get started.

What's the 'map' you use to take prospects on their journey towards a purchase?

Your sales pipeline.

Using your sales pipeline as a guide, you can smooth out the journey and make it easier for your leads to convert. This not only helps you increase customers for your product: it'll make those customers even more valuable to your company.

If you've landed here, it means you want to know more about sales pipelines. Well then, you've come to the right place.

You're about to learn everything you'll ever need to know (and more) about sales pipelines.

Here's what you'll find in this guide:

- **Chapter 3**: 7 steps for building a sales pipeline + 6 pipeline strategy tips
- **Chapter 4**: Sales pipeline analysis: Key metrics & 3 steps to set up reporting
- **Chapter 5**: Sales pipeline management: How to maximize the power of your pipeline
- **Chapter 6**: How a sales pipeline CRM accelerates sales: 5 tools & how to use them
- **Chapter 7**: 13 sales pipeline templates (Excel + more) to boost your pipeline

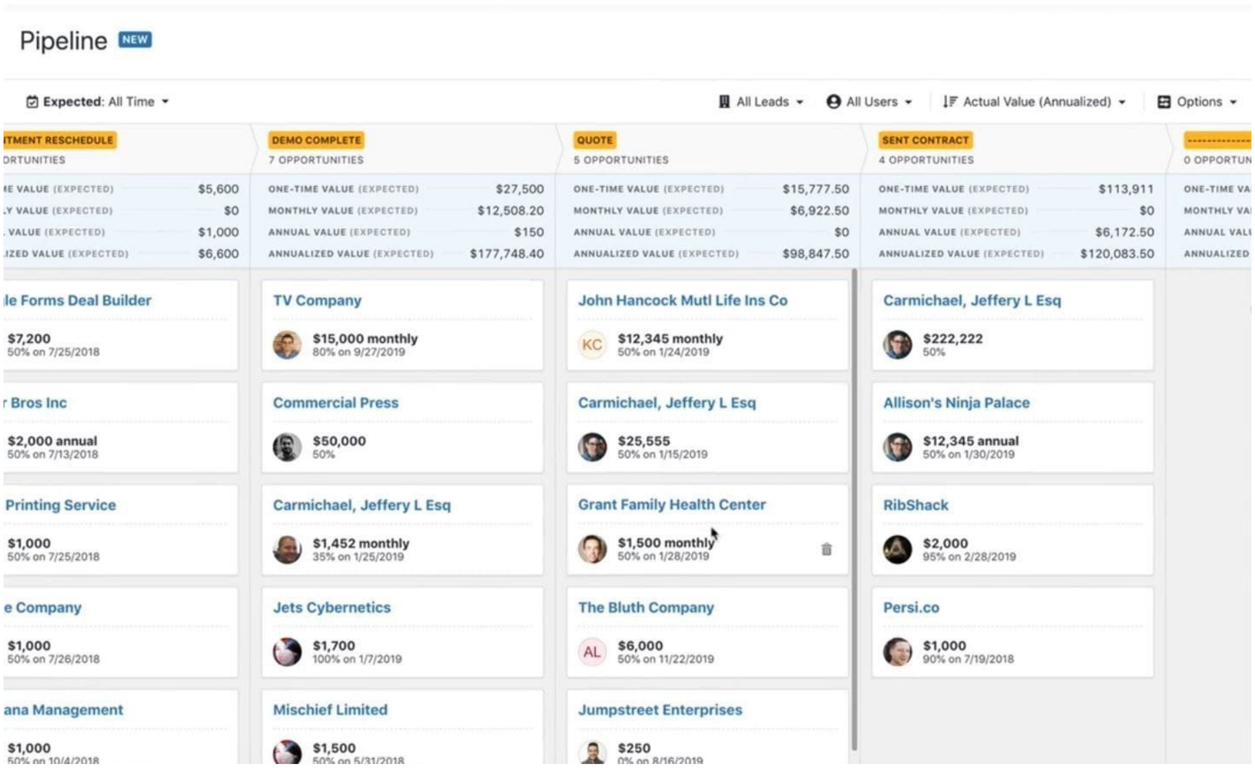
Before we get started though, you'll need to know the answers to these basic questions:

- What is a sales pipeline?
- What are the 6 main types of sales pipelines, and what are they used for?
- Are sales pipelines different based on your industry?
- How do sales pipelines enable sales and benefit your team?

Let's find out...

What is a sales pipeline?

A sales pipeline is a visual representation of your current leads and prospects in relation to your sales process. It's normally set up in Kanban board style, with each column representing a different sales stage. A sales pipeline gives you a clear view of where your leads are in the sales process, how likely they are to close, and what kind of revenue you can expect when they do.



Here's what a sales pipeline looks like in Close

Each business has its own unique sales process. This might include different stages in the buying process or different actions you or your reps take to close a deal.

For a sales pipeline to be truly effective, you need to adapt it to your business, your customers, and your product.

In fact, many companies create multiple pipelines for different purposes, each with their own unique stages and processes.

What are some different types of sales pipelines, and which one(s) should you be using?

What are the 6 main types of sales pipelines, and what are they used for?

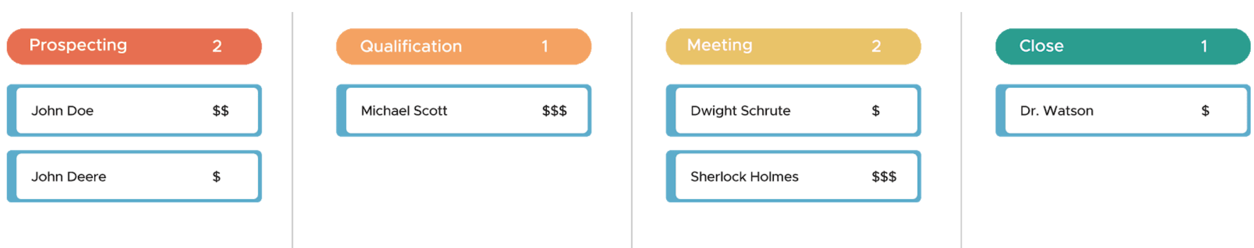
Remember: the type of sales pipeline you choose will depend on how your business works and how your team sells best.

A sales pipeline is only valuable to you if it helps your team close deals faster and convert more customers.

That said, here is an overview of six popular types of sales pipelines:

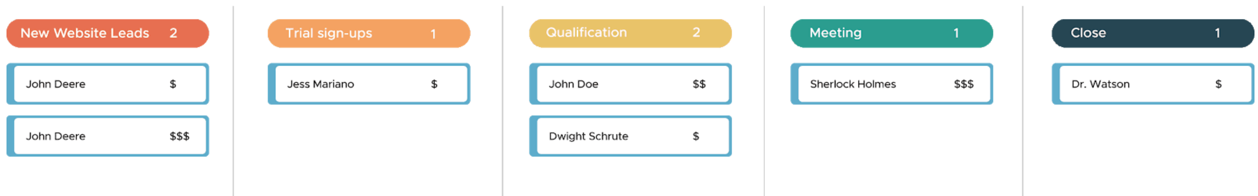
1. Simple sales pipeline

This is your basic visual pipeline with stages such as prospecting, qualification, meeting, and close. This is best for a no-frills sales process that moves smoothly from start to finish. Leads come in, they see your product, and they purchase it.



2. Sales and marketing pipeline

While pipelines are mainly for sales teams, there can be quite a bit of overlap with the marketing team as well. A sales and marketing pipeline bridges the gap between these two teams, giving both access to the areas where they shine. For example, this type of pipeline might include stages at the beginning for lead generation and cater more to the inbound leads generated by marketing.



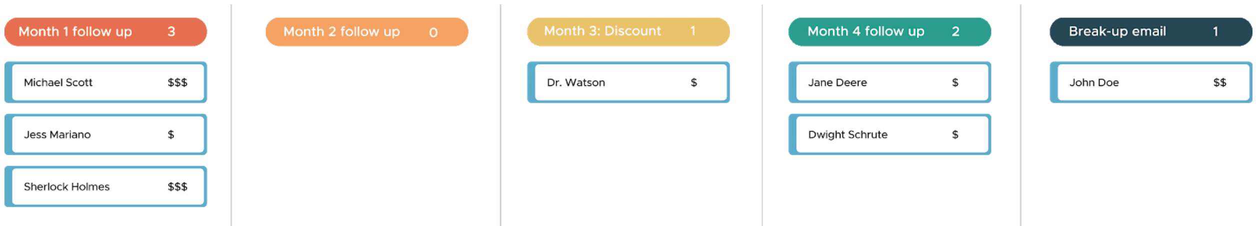
Pro tip: *A sales and marketing pipeline works best with automation, sending leads directly from your marketing tools to your pipeline. That's why Close CRM integrates with marketing tools like MailChimp, Marketo, Hubspot, Facebook ads, Unbounce, and more! Try Close for free today.*

3. Post-sale pipeline

Just because a deal closed, doesn't mean your work is done. Depending on your business, you might need a post-sale pipeline that includes the work you'll do after the contract is signed. This could include creating or designing a product, delivering or implementing it, providing a service, asking for a referral, or providing training.

4. Retargeting pipeline

When you lose contact with a lead, put them into your retargeting pipeline. This pipeline will have specific stages to retarget lost leads down the road with relevant follow-ups.

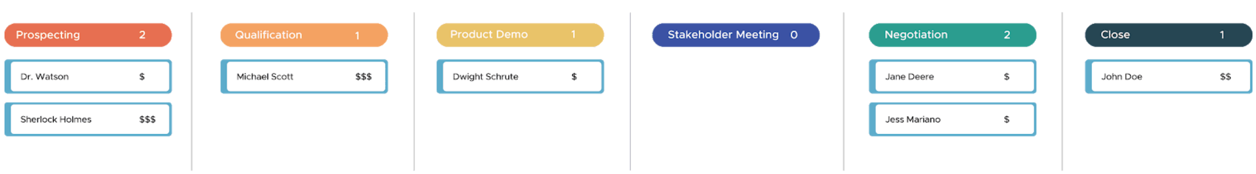


5. Product/service-based sales pipeline

Depending on whether you're a product-based or service-based company, your pipeline can be specifically adapted to what you sell. In fact, some companies create multiple pipelines based on the different selling processes they use for their different products.

6. Profile-based sales pipeline

If you sell to very different customer profiles, a profile-based pipeline will help you sell to that specific type of customer. For example, a business that sells a product to both SMBs and enterprise companies will have a different selling process for each and could create multiple pipelines to reflect that.



These main sales pipelines guide today's biggest businesses toward their next sales (and could be the basis for your sales pipeline).

When deciding whether or not to create multiple pipelines, remember that this only makes sense if the sales process varies greatly. Depending on your business, you may only need a simple sales pipeline that takes your customers on a clear path to the sale.

When it comes to your pipelines, the simpler the better. If you want to sell faster and shorten your sales cycle, don't overcomplicate your sales process.

But how does your industry affect your sales pipeline?

Are sales pipelines different based on your industry?

Yes and no.

It's true: a SaaS company may have a different sales process than a real estate agent or a field sales team. And a company that sells a service may have a different process than one that sells a physical product.

However, the basic sales pipeline stages still remain the same:

1. Prospect to find the leads that will be interested in your product.
2. Qualify those leads by researching them, their needs, their location, or other factors. Ask qualifying questions to see if they'd be a good fit for what you're selling.
3. Contact your prospect and set up a meeting, demo, phone call, or free trial. Sell them on the product.
4. Present your offer with a stunning proposal.
5. Negotiate and close the deal.

These basic sales pipeline stages are the foundation of your sales process and will work in pretty much any business.

Want to know more about sales pipeline stages?
Jump to chapter 2 of this guide.

Of course, different industries may have their own take on these stages. For example:

- In a **SaaS sales pipeline**, the 'contact' stage would likely include a product demo. Check out our SaaS sales guide.
- For a **field sales team**, the qualification stage will likely revolve around a geographic location, and contact will be done in person.
- In a **B2B sales pipeline**, the negotiation stage may be more complex, involving approvals from multiple stakeholders and decision-makers.
- A **real estate sales pipeline** will develop qualification around the type of buyer, and may be adapted based on the properties currently for sale. The negotiation stage will also involve getting a home inspection, taking an offer back to the current homeowner, returning with a counter-offer, and so on.
- For a **construction sales pipeline**, proposals may be in the form of blueprints, and will likely need to be adjusted and approved before the contract is signed.

That said, the basic process remains the same. What really changes are the actions that sales reps take within those different stages.

You can use the same basic process to build a sales pipeline that's adapted to your business, customers, and product. When you do, there are some clear benefits you're bound to see.

How sales pipelines enable sales and benefit your team

With a well-developed pipeline, you'll see at least five clear benefits:

1. Get a clear view of all deals going on

A visual sales pipeline allows you to see what deals are currently in your pipeline, what stage they're in, and how likely they are to close.

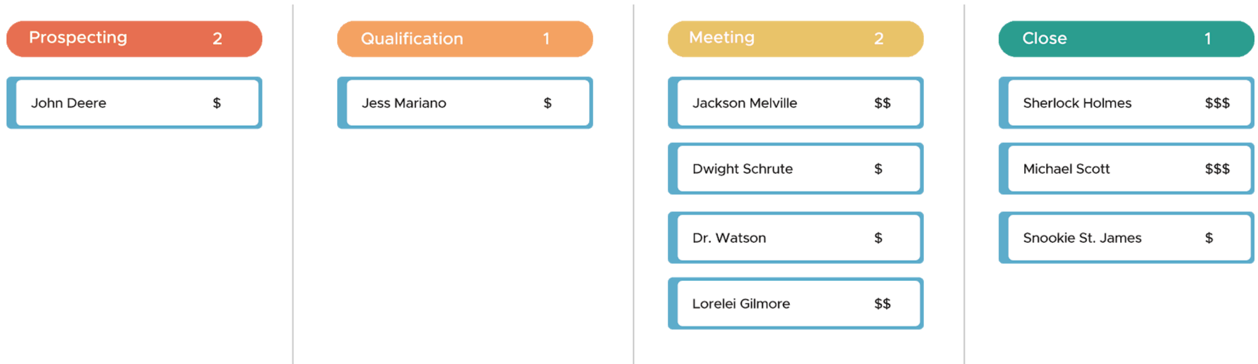
This not only helps your team set reasonable goals but also helps them achieve those goals.

Conduct regular sales pipeline review meetings to maintain a squeaky-clean pipeline that leaves you with no doubt on how to move forward and reach your goals.

2. Know whether or not you're going to reach your goals

Since your pipeline shows you exactly what's going on with your sales, you won't sit around guessing whether you're going to hit your quota or revenue goals: you'll know for a fact.

For example, having a visual pipeline clearly shows you when you're running low on leads. Instead of waiting for your pipeline to dry up, having this visual view allows you to see the drought in advance.



Having a sales pipeline shows you when your pipeline is about to dry up

Then, you can implement the right methods to fix a dry sales pipeline before it even happens.

3. Shorten the sales cycle

A pipeline dictates an exact order for your sales process. Without that, reps are just guessing at what they should do next to push a sale forward. They might be trying to close too soon, or they might be delaying the sale for no reason.

With a sales pipeline in place, reps know exactly what they need to do, as well as the order they need to go in. Actions and next steps are outlined clearly, like a map that helps them take prospects on a smooth journey to purchase.

The rest is just common sense: the smoother your sales process, the shorter your sales cycle will be.

4. Monitor your team's progress

A good sales pipeline will also help sales managers monitor their team.

For example, managers will be able to see the stages where certain reps always get stuck, or where some reps truly excel.

This information helps sales leaders to give relevant training and encouragement, pushing all of their reps to sell better.

5. Focus on the right deals and actions

With the right information in your pipeline, you'll be able to see which deals are more valuable, which ones are losing speed, and which ones are more likely to close.

When you manage your pipeline effectively, your team will focus on the right deals. They'll know which deals hold the most value, and which actions will lead those deals to a sale.

Ready to blow the doors off your competition?

Then let's get into the nitty-gritty of sales pipelines.

When you build a sales pipeline that works, you'll have a smoother process for closing big deals, and your reps will be working smarter to build your customer base.

That's a fancy way of saying you'll be one step closing to beating your biggest competitors.

In this guide, you're going to learn more about what a pipeline is and what it's not, how to build one that works for your business, what metrics you should be tracking, and how to manage your pipeline effectively.

Chapter 1:

Sales pipeline vs sales funnel: Which is best for your business?

When you work in sales, it can sometimes feel like you've learned a secret language.

Gatekeeper, churn, MQL, AE, customer acquisition cost, B2B, unique selling proposition, net promoter score...

This is just some of the sales jargon thrown around the office on a daily basis, and while any outsider wouldn't know an SME from an SMB, we've all learned the code and use these terms as if we learned them as infants.

Among this secret sales language are the terms sales pipeline and sales funnel. And while these terms may be used interchangeably at times, they refer to different things (looks like some of us need to brush up on our sales dictionary terms).

While both are closely related to your sales process, they each have a unique (and important) perspective and role.

That's why in this chapter, we're going to discuss these topics:

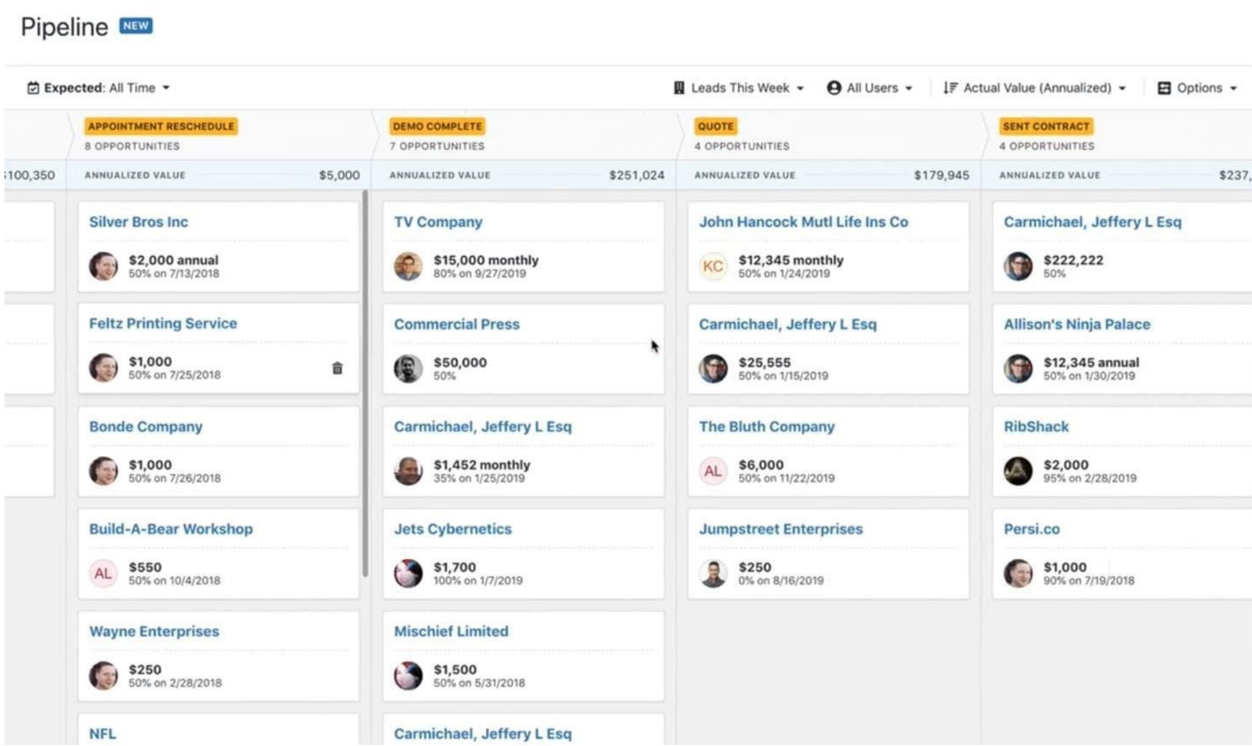
- What is a sales pipeline?
- What is a sales funnel?
- Sales pipeline vs sales funnel: key differences
- Do I need a sales pipeline or a sales funnel report?

Let's define both sales pipelines and sales funnels, and find out which one your business needs.

What is a sales pipeline?

A sales pipeline is built from the perspective of your reps. Your pipeline is a clear overview of how many open deals your team has on the table, and gives reps a clear path to push that deal towards a sale. It's modeled after the different stages in your sales process but focuses on the actions reps take to cultivate and sell to new leads.

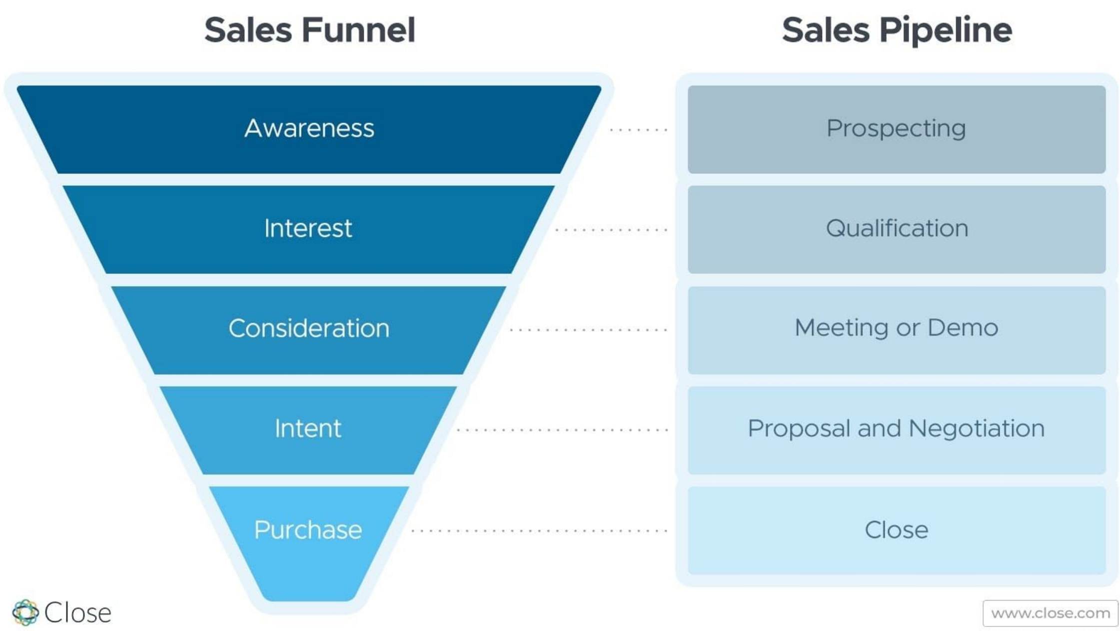
By building stages around rep actions rather than the condition of the lead, a sales pipeline shows your team what actions they need to take to get leads through the different stages and convert them to customers.



What is a sales funnel?

A sales funnel is built from the perspective of your leads. It's based on the stages your leads go through before they become customers, and shows you how your leads are reacting and converting through each stage.

By measuring key sales metrics, a sales funnel report gives you a visual overview of the average conversion rates of each stage in your sales process. As people travel down the funnel, the number of qualified leads will drop. In the end, you're left with the leads who successfully converted into customers.



Sales pipeline vs sales funnel: key differences

Now that we know what each term means, what are the key differences between sales pipelines and sales funnels?

Let's discuss five aspects where these two terms differ:

	Sales Pipeline	Sales Funnel
Track and report	To track the right metrics for your sales pipeline, you can use information from your CRM and other sales analytics tools. Most CRMs like Close include pipeline reports that you and your team can analyze and interact with.	You'll need multiple tools to track the metrics for a sales funnel, but most of the data will come from your website analytics and customer data.
Benefits	A pipeline helps reps have clear guidelines to gently push leads through the different stages and close more deals.	A funnel helps the sales team to see the sales process from the perspective of the customer. It creates a framework to focus on the customer's needs.
Stages	The stages of a sales pipeline are built around the actions reps take during the sales process.	The stages of a sales funnel are bui lt around the stages that a lead passes through before converting.

Roles who use	Everyone on the sales team helps create, interact with, and analyze the sales pipeline. When using a sales pipeline CRM, your reps' actions are recorded automatically and the pipeline is used by all to keep track of deals and move them forward.	Sales leaders use the sales funnel to understand where conversions are happening (or where they aren't). Sales reps use the funnel to see the sales process from the customer's perspective.
Where to create	The best place to create your sales pipeline is within your CRM, where your data lives. You can also export the data to a spreadsheet if you prefer.	The data you need can be exported to a spreadsheet but should be constantly updated to reflect current conditions.

Obviously, sales pipelines and sales funnels are two very different things. So, which one does your business need?

Do I need a sales pipeline or a sales funnel report?

Both sales pipelines and sales funnels can be extremely useful: depending on your situation.

Let's discuss situations when you would need a sales pipeline vs times when you need a sales funnel.

You need a sales pipeline if:

- **Your reps are unclear how to convert leads to customers**: Maybe they're bringing in the demo too early, or they're pushing trials when they should be pushing sales. A pipeline shows reps exactly what steps to take (and the correct order) to close a sale.
- **You don't have a clear view of where current deals stand**: You may know what deals are going on, but what stage is each in? How long have they been in those stages? A pipeline will show you this data, and help you move deals forward.
- **You want to see what actions have the most impact on conversion**: Which is better: a meeting or a demo? Should reps be cold calling or cold emailing? A pipeline that's customized to your business and customers will tell you this and uses inside sales metrics to show you what's working and what isn't.
- **You want to create more accurate forecasts**: To forecast accurately, you need to know how much each lead is worth to you, where each deal stands, and how likely they are to close. You can gather and analyze this information in your pipeline.
- **Your reps are having trouble reaching their quota**: With a sales pipeline, reps can more accurately view current deals, the value of those deals, and where they need to place more priority to close deals and reach their sales quota.

You need sales funnel reporting if:

- **Your team has a hard time getting into the shoes of their customers**: Since a sales funnel shows the sales process from the perspective of the customer, this will help reps understand where their leads are and how best to approach them.

- **You want to see how effective your reps are at qualifying**: How many leads are getting through qualification stages but not converting? Your funnel will tell you that and will help you see where there's room for improvement.
- **You want to see where conversions are happening (or where they aren't)**: At each stage, how likely is a lead to move to the next stage in the process? Knowing this conversion rate and measuring against sales benchmarks can help sales leaders improve their processes to better fit the customers' needs.
- **You need to understand which sales actions are most effective at which stages in the customer journey**: At each stage of the sales funnel, what actions help a lead convert, and which actions make them run in the opposite direction?

In summary, if you want to help your reps have a smooth selling process, reach their quota, and forecast better, you need a sales pipeline.

If you want to help your reps be more customer-focused and see how leads convert through the different stages of the buyer journey, you need a sales funnel report.

Never underestimate the power of sales pipelines and sales funnels

Congratulations: you've just become a bit more fluent in the secret sales language.

After comparing sales pipelines and sales funnels, you may have realized your business is under-utilizing one or both of these important tools.

Want to create a sales pipeline that can accelerate your sales and improve your business?

Keep reading.

Next up, we're going to discuss essential pipeline stages and how to implement them in your sales process.

Chapter 2:

7 essential sales pipeline stages and how to implement them

Have you ever had to deal with a blocked pipe at home?

It's a frustrating situation, and it means that whatever was supposed to go through that pipe isn't getting through easily. This can result in a huge mess in your home, and can cost you valuable time and money.

Unfortunately, the same thing can happen to your sales pipeline.

If that 'pipe' isn't clear, it'll be harder for prospects to travel through it and turn into customers. Without the right processes and stages in place, you and your team could be wasting valuable time and money using a sales pipeline that isn't adapted to your unique needs.

That's why we're going to discuss:

- 7 essential pipeline stages to follow
- How to implement these stages into your sales process

By the end of this chapter, you'll know exactly what stages to include in your sales pipeline to keep it running smoother than ever.

7 essential sales pipeline stages to follow

The stages in a sales pipeline are built around the actions that reps take to turn prospects into customers.

While these stages loosely follow your sales process and buyer journey, they are more focused on rep activity. That way, your whole sales team will have a clear view of how to move prospects towards the sale.

Here's a quick infographic that dives into the seven essential pipeline stages:

Of course, every business is different and will need to adapt these stages to its own needs and customers.

Let's take a closer look at each of these stages and what they include.

1. Lead generation

For the most part, lead generation is a job that's reserved for the marketing team. Does this mean you can forget about lead generation as part of your sales pipeline?

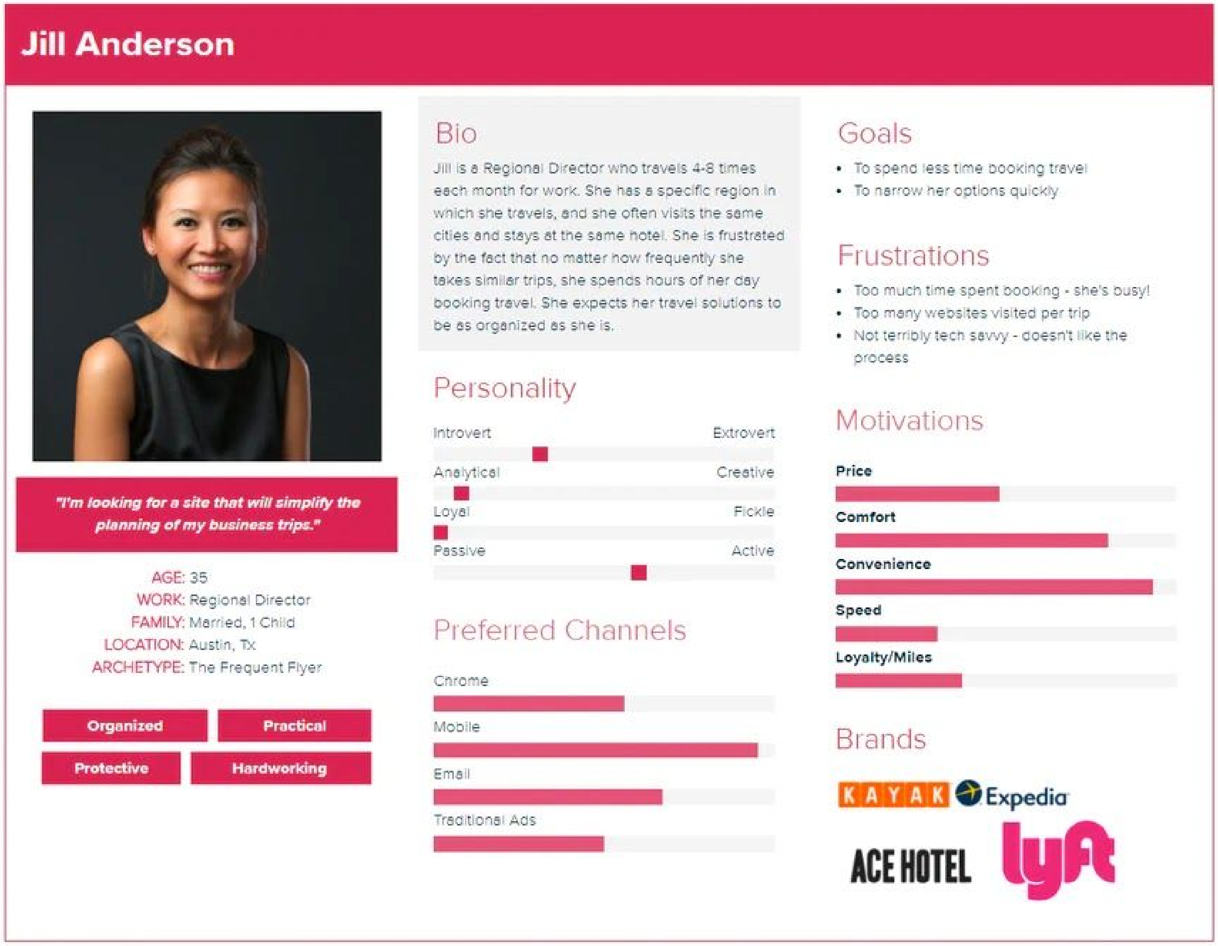
Heck no!

In fact, sales can do a lot to help generate new leads. That's why this should be the first stage in your pipeline.

Here's what your team should be doing at the lead generation stage:

Create clear customer profiles: Take a look at closed deals that have been mutually beneficial to your company and theirs: what common denominators do you see? By defining clear, specific customer profiles, your team will get one step ahead on lead generation.

> *Pro tip: This is a task that both sales and marketing should have a hand in.*



Join forces with marketing to create and promote relevant content: Yes, content marketing makes up a large part of the best lead generation tactics. However, this doesn't mean you should just leave the marketing team to do it on their own. Schedule regular brainstorming sessions between both the marketing and sales teams, and you'll be able to share valuable insights that will make your company's content even more attractive to prospects.

Get better at asking for referrals: Sometimes we don't ask because we're shy. Sometimes we don't ask because we think they'll say no. And sometimes, we just forget. But when you learn referral sales tactics and put them into practice, the resulting leads are likely to be highly qualified.

2. Prospecting

Unlike lead generation which involves reaching out to many people at a time, prospecting is a more one-on-one approach to pull in prospects that may want to buy from your business.

At the prospecting stage, these are the actions you should be taking with your leads:

- Build relationships at industry events: Have a lot of leads heading to an industry event? Make sure your sales team is there and visible. Whether you're making the rounds and having meaningful conversations with people or speaking on a relevant topic, make sure you work these events to your advantage and leave a memorable impression on your prospects' minds. (And if you're unable to attend industry events, you can still leverage them creatively!)
- Share your knowledge as an expert consultant: In the prospecting stage, your leads still have very little trust in you or your business (if they even know who you are). So, don't immediately sell to them. Instead, offer to share your knowledge. Be an industry expert, someone they can trust for good information. Set up a meeting for coffee, just 15 minutes to talk about strategies to reach a relevant goal. Then, your company will be on their radar.
- Do some cold outreach: Ice, ice baby! But seriously, reaching out to prospects, whether through cold emails or cold calls, can (and will) work for your business if you do it right. Once you've created your customer profile

as mentioned above, take to the internet and find companies that fit that profile. Then, reach out!

Swipe now, use later: Download this free resource to discover our secret cold email hacks, plus 14 proven email templates you can steal!

3. Qualification

By now, your pipeline should be full of people who are hungry to buy your product.

Or are they?

Up to 67% of lost sales are a direct result of improper qualifying. If you take an unqualified prospect through the sales process, you're just wasting your time on a deal that will never close.

That's why during the qualification stage, you'll need to make sure that the prospects you've discovered are really a good fit for your business.

These are the things you should be doing during the qualification stage:

- **Use the BANT method**: BANT stands for budget, authority, needs, and timeline. This method, developed originally by IBM, serves to establish the four most important characteristics of a qualified prospect. If your prospect has a big enough budget, the authority to make decisions, needs that are filled with your product, and the right timeline to purchase, then odds are this deal will close.
- **Ask the right questions to match prospects to your customer profiles**: Above, you created clear customer profiles that define the people who are

most likely to purchase your product and benefit from it. So, how do you find out whether your prospect fits that customer profile? Ask questions. Remember, this isn’t an interrogation: but by knowing what questions to ask and when, you’ll be better prepared to qualify this prospect. Download your list of 42 B2B qualifying questions to get started.

- **Gain a deeper understanding of who’s competing for their attention**: It’s essential to find out what other options are currently on the table. When talking to your prospect, learn more about the other vendors they’ve worked with, what they liked or didn’t like about other solutions, and (if you can) find out who else they’re currently considering. This will help you determine whether or not this prospect is really qualified.

4. Contact

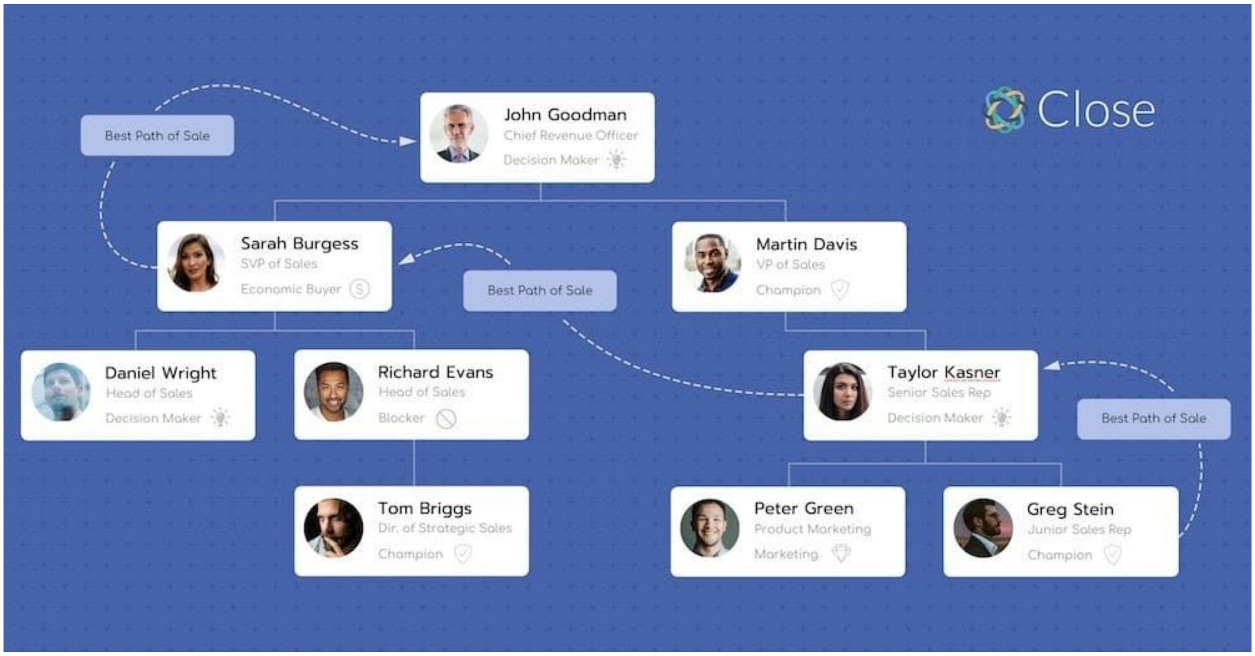
Now that you’ve narrowed down your prospects to the most highly qualified opportunities, you’re left with the people who are interested and may actually buy your product.

It’s time to get in there and really sell it.

This will require contact, whether that’s a phone call, a physical meeting, a product demo, or an email or text message.

Here are some important tips for the contact stage:

- **Make sure everyone has a clear understanding of the goal or purpose of this meeting**: When setting up your meeting, start by making sure you know exactly who is going to be involved, including any relevant stakeholders and decision-makers. (If it's a complex sale involving a large number of stakeholders, account mapping might be necessary.) Then, make it very clear to everyone what the goal of this meeting is. That way, everyone will come into the meeting ready to get things done.



- **Prepare a clear agenda ahead of time, and keep things rolling**: While it's fine to answer questions along the way, don't let your meeting get hijacked by a Chatty Patty in the group. Set your meeting agenda, and keep it handy while you're there. That way, things will continue to run smoothly, and you'll accomplish what you came for. There are many ways to go about this, but a generally good framework is to ask these three questions before your meeting.
- **Have the right resources on hand**: Case studies, webinars, data sets, and other relevant resources can help seal the deal at this point. Make sure you can back up each of your most powerful statements with clear, hard data. We've created a set of ready-to-use templates for resources every sales team should have. Download a free edition of your Sales Enablement Kit today.

- **End with clear next steps, and follow up promptly**: Don't leave the meeting without an exact plan of what's to follow. With this in place, you can send a friendly follow-up email the next day with a brief meeting recap and a summary of the next steps you agreed on.

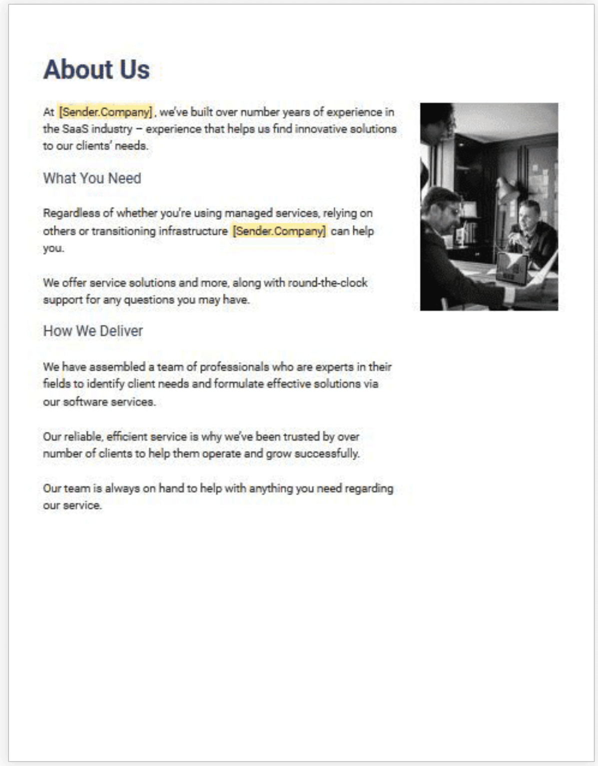
5. Proposal

If you get this part right, you'll knock the ball out of the park and close the deal.

Proposals should generally include information such as:

- A summary of your prospects' key pain points
- The solution you're offering (with specs)
- Clear pricing info
- Timeline for implementation, training, etc.
- Exact terms

To really nail your proposal, you can use the fantastic templates provided by companies like PandaDoc. For example, check out this sleek SaaS proposal template:



About Us

At [Sender.Company], we've built over number years of experience in the SaaS industry – experience that helps us find innovative solutions to our clients' needs.

What You Need

Regardless of whether you're using managed services, relying on others or transitioning infrastructure [Sender.Company] can help you.

We offer service solutions and more, along with round-the-clock support for any questions you may have.

How We Deliver

We have assembled a team of professionals who are experts in their fields to identify client needs and formulate effective solutions via our software services.

Our reliable, efficient service is why we've been trusted by over number of clients to help them operate and grow successfully.

Our team is always on hand to help with anything you need regarding our service.

Don't forget these essential guidelines for the proposal stage:

- **Personalize the proposal to their wants and needs**: Inside your proposal, you have the opportunity to make your prospect feel special. Show off the fact that you personalized this to their needs by including details you gathered during the qualification and contact stages.
- **Be hyper-focused on customer benefits**: This proposal isn't about your product: it's about your customer. Instead of listing features of your solution, dig down into the benefits. Whenever possible, include specific stats on the kind of benefits they're going to get with your product. Don't let them get bored for even a second: keep selling your product!
- **Include an FAQ**: At this point, there are probably some common questions that arise. A back-and-forth discussion at this point could seriously slow

down the sales process. So, include common questions in an FAQ section of your proposal. Problem solved!

6. Negotiation and close

Both sides have put all their cards on the table. A decision is about to be made: so let's make it a yes!

Maybe you'll need to answer some last few questions, respond to discount inquiries, or renegotiate some of the terms.

In the end, if you play your cards right, you'll have closed a deal. And that's worth a bit of celebration.

Here are some tips for the negotiation and close stage:

- **Be prepared to walk away from the deal**: Define the point where you'll walk away and then stick to it: that way, you won't waste your time or theirs. And who knows: you might still get the deal even after you walk away (that's exactly what happened to us, in fact).
- **Make signing the contract easy**: Or in other words, make it digital. Digital signing is super easy for everyone involved, and helps you and your customers keep everything in its place. With a solution like PandaDoc that natively integrates with Close CRM, you can remove friction from the sales process and save your reps and prospects valuable time.

  "If I told our reps we're going back to DocuSign, they'd probably be extremely unhappy with me. Gone are the days of our clunky, inefficient proposal and contract process. We love that we can count on the entire PandaDoc team to help us look our absolute best while increasing our bottom line."

Maggie Taylor Aherne, Director of Operations at KickFire

7. Retention

Just because you closed the deal, doesn't mean your work is over. You need to retain that new customer into the long-term.

Here's why it's important: when you increase your retention rates by just 5%, you can boost your profits by as much as 95%.

That's why customer retention is its own stage in the sales pipeline.

Here's what you should be doing during the retention stage:

- **Help the customer onboard successfully**: Whether through training materials, help docs, or just being available to answer their questions, make sure your customer is getting the best use out of your product with an effective onboarding process.
- **Schedule a time to check-in and see how things are going**: After you close a deal, set a reminder in your CRM to follow up with the customer in a month and see how things are going. This helps show you care about them and keeps them engaged with your product.
- **Ask for feedback**: Not only will this help the customer feel appreciated, but you'll also get some fantastic insights on how to improve your product.

By implementing these seven typical sales pipeline stages, you'll have a smoother process that helps turn leads into happy, long-term customers.

How to implement these stages into your sales process

Of course, there is no one-size-fits-all sales pipeline. We've just outlined the general stages that your sales pipeline should include: but to fully implement these stages, you'll need to adapt them to your own particular sales process.

Let's examine how to do this step-by-step:

Step 1: Define your process for lead generation and prospecting

Who brings in the leads at your company: Sales or marketing?

Obviously, both teams have their roles to play. But, how do those roles work in your business?

It's time to get specific: have both the sales and marketing teams write down a brief list of the ways they generate or prospect for leads. Then, check the data: which of these methods is consistently delivering solid, healthy leads?

Finally, set a clear process for lead hand-offs between marketing and sales.

> 🚀 **How this accelerates your process:**
>
> When both marketing and sales teams have a defined process for lead generation and prospecting, everyone knows what they're supposed to be doing. With the steps for hand-offs clearly in place, your sales pipeline will always be full of valuable leads.

Step 2: Understand your qualification methods and needs

What research tools does your team use for qualification? What questions seem to hit home the most when on a discovery call? What are the most important aspects you need to learn about your prospects in order to qualify them correctly? Is the timeline more important than the budget? What are their priorities?

By defining clear characteristics you need to see in a prospect and analyzing your reps' phone calls with prospects to see what works best at this stage, and you'll be able to set clear processes for qualification.

> 🚀 **How this accelerates your process:**
>
> By knowing exactly what qualities or characteristics your prospects must have to become customers, your reps won't waste time with prospects that aren't likely to buy.

Step 3: Choose your best contact and negotiation strategies

Each industry and field has its own personality and methods. If you're selling to enterprises, or older, more established companies, you may need to add steps in the contact stage to run things past more stakeholders. When selling to younger, more digital-age companies and startups, you might try implementing more video sales calls or interactive demos.

> 🚀 **How this accelerates your process:**
>
> With your customer base clearly in mind, setting rules for the best contact and negotiation strategies will help your reps sell more effectively to that particular group.

Pro tip: If you have multiple customer profiles, you can create adapted processes *for each profile.*

Step 4: Identify stages that are unique to your business

Since your sales pipeline must be unique to you, it's important to adapt the above stages to fit your particular business.

- B2B sellers may need extra stages to include stakeholders
- SaaS sellers might include stages for demos instead of meetings

- Real estate agents might include stages for visits to the property
- Remote sales reps could include specific stages for video chats and sending digital contracts

🚀 **How this accelerates your process:**

When you add the stages that are specific to your business, the process will be smoother and more effective for you and your team.

Step 5: Work out specific steps for post-sale follow-ups and retention methods

What kind of follow-ups seem to resonate more with your customers? How many respond to a ‘checking in’ email as opposed to a phone call? Are they more likely to fill out a survey with their feedback, or would they rather talk to someone about their concerns?

🚀 **How this accelerates your process:**

By answering these questions, you’ll have a clear view of the kind of follow-ups that work best with your customer base. Then, your sales team can focus on those efforts rather than letting their follow-ups fall on deaf ears.

These five sales pipeline steps will help you analyze the stages of your sales pipeline, define your processes, and ultimately create a pipeline that is adapted to your business.

Build your own sales pipeline with custom stages

Your pipes are all clear: it’s time to let the customers flow in.

Above, we highlighted the seven essential stages your sales pipeline should have. They are:

1. Lead generation
2. Prospecting
3. Qualification
4. Contact
5. Proposal
6. Negotiation and close
7. Retention

Then, we developed five steps you can take to define and implement these stages in your sales pipeline:

1. Define your process for lead generation and prospecting
2. Understand your qualification methods and needs
3. Choose your best contact and negotiation strategies
4. Identify stages that are unique to your business
5. Work out specific steps for post-sale follow-ups and retention methods

With these steps, you'll be able to outline a sales pipeline that is effective for your sales team and unique customer base.

Chapter 3:

7 Steps for building a sales pipeline + 6 pipeline strategy tips

Building a high-converting sales pipeline can be like putting together an elaborate puzzle. There may seem to be an overwhelming number of pieces, but when they all fit together, the end result was certainly worth the effort.

The smoother your pipeline is, the faster your leads will convert to customers.

If you want a smooth and effective sales pipeline, you'll need to fit these two delicate pieces together: your business process and your customers' needs.

To create a pipeline that fits these two pieces of the puzzle together, you'll need more than just the essential pipeline stages we discussed in chapter two of this guide. Using those as a basis, you'll need to construct your own highly-adapted pipeline based on your process and your customers.

In this chapter, we're going to show you:

- 7 steps for building a sales pipeline that flows smoothly
- Sales pipeline development strategy: 6 ways to level-up your pipeline

Ready to get started?

7 steps for building a sales pipeline that flows smoothly

Here's how to build a sales pipeline that's adapted to your business and works for your customers:

Step 1: Decide where you're going to build your sales pipeline

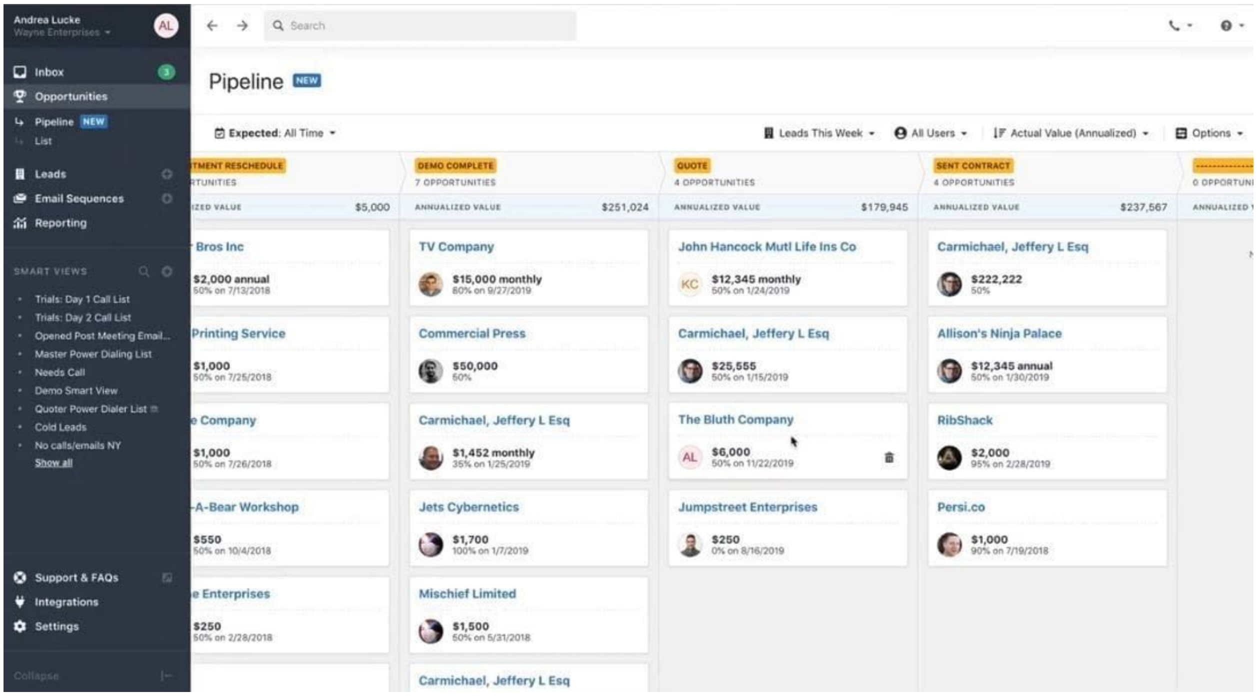
As mentioned in Chapter 1, a sales pipeline can be built in a spreadsheet or a dedicated sales CRM.

Which one is better for your business?

If you're a freelancer or solopreneur who handles less than 10 deals at a time, a spreadsheet might work just fine.

> *Psst… If you're looking for a CRM spreadsheet template for Google Sheets, check out SalesTable. It's free!*

Of course, a spreadsheet lacks the more robust features that a CRM can offer. For example, in Close CRM, your pipeline view shows you a quick overview of all the deals you have on tap, plus the value that's in each stage of your pipeline.



Best of all, the stages in the pipeline are customizable to your needs!

For businesses with more than one salesperson handling more than 10 deals at a time, using a CRM is the best choice for maximum efficiency (and faster conversions).

Step 2: Define the stages of your buyer's journey

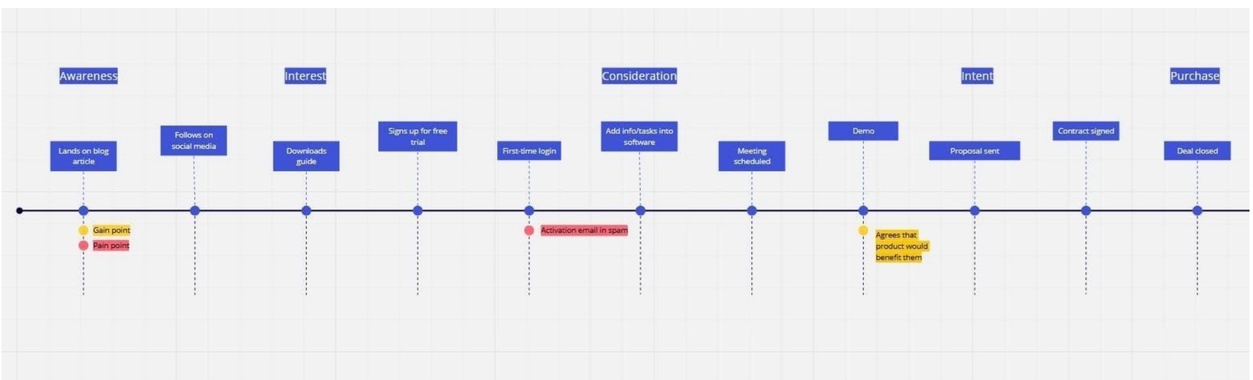
It's true: a sales pipeline is built around the actions your reps take, such as prospecting, qualification, meetings, and closing. (For a full overview of 7 essential sales pipeline stages, check out Chapter 2 of this guide.)

However, when building your sales pipeline, it’s essential to keep in mind the perspective of your customers.

So, take some time and sort through the data to find out how customers come into your business.

Obviously, no two customer journeys are the same, especially in the digital age. However, see if you can find common entrance and exit points; how do people first find out about your business or product, and at what point do they buy?

Once you have the ends, dissect the middle of this journey: where do they look for information? At what point are they willing to speak with a sales rep? How do they decide between you and the competition?



By understanding your customer journey, you’ll be better able to build a pipeline that adapts itself to their needs.

Step 3: Decide how many separate pipelines you need

When analyzing your buyer journey, you may discover there’s more than one clear path to a sale.

If so, don’t panic: this might just mean you need more than one pipeline.

Sometimes this has to do with the product you're selling: if you sell more than one product, each product may have its own unique customer journey.

Or, it may have to do with your customers themselves: for example, if you sell a SaaS product to both small and enterprise-sized businesses, the sales process and customer journey for each will be very different.

In these cases, you'll need to develop separate sales pipelines. That way, your pipeline is always efficient for the opportunities inside it and adapted to the correct customer journey. You don't want your sales reps improvising in the middle of the sales process: instead, build separate pipelines that give them clear guidelines on how to conduct a sale for a certain product or with a certain type of opportunity.

Step 4: Create your sales pipeline stages and review with your team

Using the seven essential sales pipeline stages we discussed in chapter two as a basis, it's time to create your own pipeline stages.

Just as a recap, here are the stages you should include:

- Lead generation
- Prospecting
- Qualification
- Contact
- Proposal
- Negotiation and close
- Retention

For more details, head back to Chapter 2.

Remember: everything is better when it's done with your team! Your reps are in the action every day, and they probably have some powerful insights to help build and adapt these stages to better fit your business.

So, set aside some time as a team to go over the pipeline stages and optimize them to your needs.

Step 5: Calculate your ideal pipeline size

Now that your pipeline is starting to take shape, you'll need to calculate the right pipeline size for your business. In other words: how many opportunities do you need to have in your pipeline in order to reach your sales goals for the quarter or the year?

By calculating this at the outset, you'll make sure you're giving the right priority to prospecting and lead generation, and will be better prepared to reach your goals on time rather than scrambling at the end of the month.

Here's how to do it:

First, determine your target monthly or quarterly revenue (eg: $10,000).

Next, divide that by your average deal value (eg: $10,000 ÷ $100 = 100). Now you know how many deals you and your team need to close to reach your goal.

Lastly, divide that by the average conversion rate for each stage. For example, if 50% of deals in the negotiation stage end up converting and you need to close 100 deals to reach your goal, you'd need 200 leads to reach the negotiation stage every month.

To complete this, move backward through your pipeline following the same steps above and determine how many leads should land in each stage per month. Then, you'll have a clear view of how many leads should be entering the top of your sales pipeline per month.

Step 6: Define trigger behaviors and actions that help conversions at each stage

What are some clear signs that an opportunity is going to convert to the next stage in the pipeline? What are the common behaviors that indicate they're interested in buying, or what rep actions seem to have the most effect on conversion in a certain stage?

Analyze your customer data and try to find these commonalities. This will help you improve your process and build better strategies to close more deals.

For example, let's say that out of the opportunities that go through a product demo, 45% continue on to negotiations. Why that 45%? What was it about the product demo that sold them? Was there a specific feature you showed to that 45% and not to the others? If so, you might be able to increase conversions by showing that feature in all your demos!

By defining these trigger behaviors and actions, you can adapt your sales process and maximize the power of your pipeline.

Step 7: Perform regular sales pipeline reviews and clean-ups

Here's how to do it:

- **Set a time every month to do a quick purge of your sales pipeline**: Start by identifying prospects that have been in your pipeline longer than your average sales cycle, and be prepared to remove them. Just remember to do a quick follow up before you take them out of your pipeline, and leave the door open for future sales.
- **Double-check your data**: Every week, run through your pipeline to make sure the information there is accurate. Do any opportunities need to be moved to different stages (either forward or backward)? Are your value estimates correct? Are your estimated close dates accurate?
- **Meet with your team once a week to discuss the big fish**: While it may not be feasible to sit down and talk about every deal currently on the table, you can set some time to sit with all your sales reps and discuss some of the more valuable deals that are open. This kind of brainstorming session brings all the reps on board to identify risks, come up with responses to objections, and build ideas to move the deal forward.

Using these seven steps, you'll not only build a highly-effective sales pipeline that's adapted to your business: you'll also be able to maintain it.

That said, there's always room for improvement.

Once your pipeline is up and running, it's time to take it to the next level.

Sales pipeline development strategy: 6 ways to level-up your pipeline

Use these seven steps for a better pipeline development strategy, leading to a more efficient pipeline and accelerated sales.

1. Segment your lost leads by the reason they were lost

Just because a lead is lost for now, doesn't mean it'll be lost forever. In order to perform a valuable follow-up down the road, you'll need to know why they were lost in the first place.

Did the lead specifically say they weren't interested in your product? If so, was there a reason (budget, timing, etc.)? Or, did you simply lose contact over time? Did the lead stop responding to calls and emails? Was there just no way to push them through to the next stage?

Maximize your follow-up efforts by segmenting these lost leads by the reason they were lost. That way, you can make a plan to re-engage with them down the road according to their particular circumstances.

2. Create a pipeline with specific steps to re-engage lost leads

When you purge your pipeline of leads that just aren't moving forward, as we discussed above, you don't need to delete them forever. Instead, create a separate pipeline just for leads that have been lost.

Here's why this works:

1. You’re getting lost leads out of your regular sales pipeline and clearing the view. That way, reps can focus on deals that are currently on the table.
2. You’re creating a separate space to focus on leads that were lost, and your pipeline stages can specifically reflect this tailored approach to selling.

   Pro tip: In Close, users on Pro or Business plans can create multiple pipelines. That means you can create a specific pipeline just for your lost leads.

In this separate pipeline, you can set stages that are unique to re-engaging with leads that have been lost. For example, your beginning stages might include steps such as:

- Maintaining contact through social media
- Reaching out with relevant content
- Using the HUCA follow-up technique to turn a no into a yes

When a lead from your regular pipeline gets lost or falls off the radar, move them to your lost lead pipeline and set a date in the future to start following up again.

If you’ve segmented your lost leads by the reason they were lost, you can adjust that first follow-up to fit the situation.

For example, if the lead was lost because the timeline wasn’t right, send a follow-up email in a few months with information on a product update or to congratulate them on a recent event or accomplishment at their company (such as a promotion, anniversary, or even just a killer blog post).

On the other hand, if the lead was lost because they simply stopped responding to emails, you can set a follow-up date in less than a month to reach out over social media, respond to their posts, or tag them in a relevant thread or conversation.

By nailing down your best processes for follow-ups depending on the situation, you can 10x your follow-ups and bring your sales pipeline to the next level.

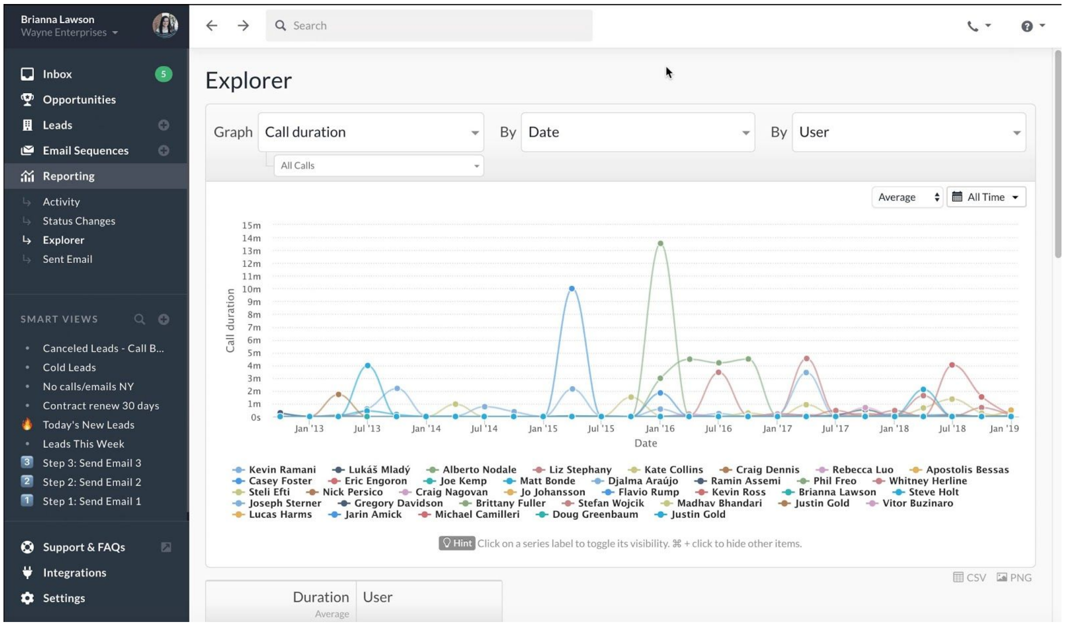
3. Analyze the performance of individual reps

Each sales rep has their own strengths and weaknesses. If you want to give more power to your pipeline, you need to understand those strengths and weaknesses, and use them to your advantage.

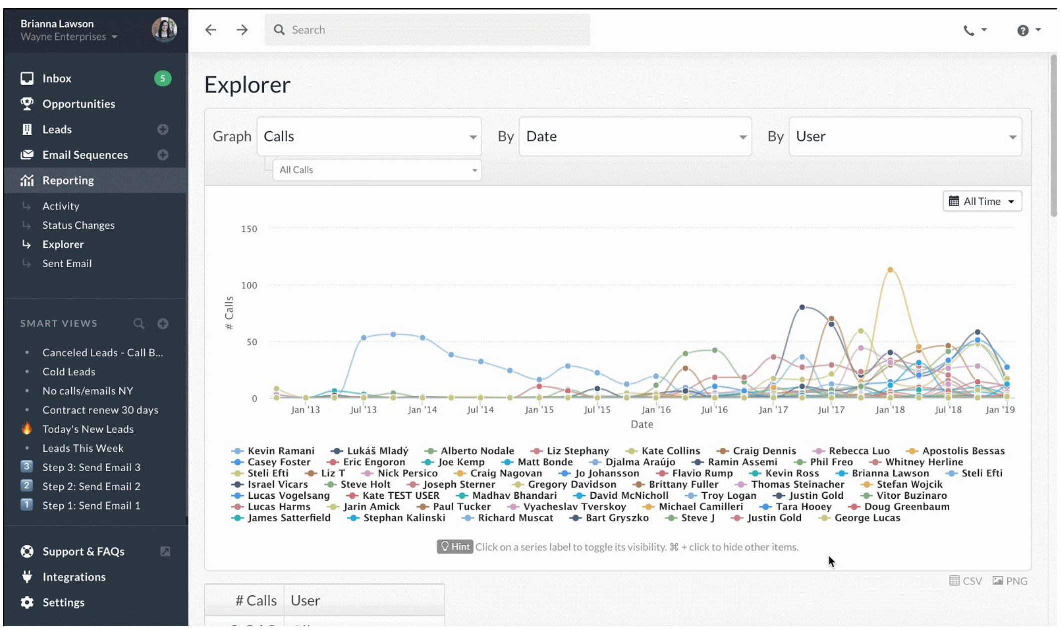
To start, you need to dig into the data.

Using Close, for example, you can analyze data around each individual rep. With the Explorer, you can see specific actions (such as calls made, emails or SMS messages sent, leads created, call duration, etc.) and how each individual rep performs.

First, you'll see a graph with all the reps, and below you'll find a list that ranks them by this action:



Or, you can Ctrl-Click on a rep’s name to see only their information in the graph:



This way, you can analyze what your reps are doing, which actions they perform better at, and the results they’re getting.

Then, use this to your advantage: Match the reps that perform best in certain areas to the right tasks and prospects.

For example, is there a rep on your team that's a stunning emailer? Match her to the prospects that prefer email communication. Is there one rep who doesn't handle product demos very well? Team him up with a rep who excels at this so they can work together to seal the deal.

By knowing what your reps are capable of, you'll know what to give them in the pipeline and maximize the results they get.

4. Prioritize the best leads

You've worked hard to set up a pipeline that runs smoothly and gets filled consistently, but now your reps may start to get overwhelmed by the number of new leads coming in. (If you're facing this problem, it means you're doing something right. Kudos to you!)

To maximize the time your reps are spending on new leads, it's essential to prioritize them based on how well they fit your product and how likely they are to close.

In other words, you need to set up lead scoring.

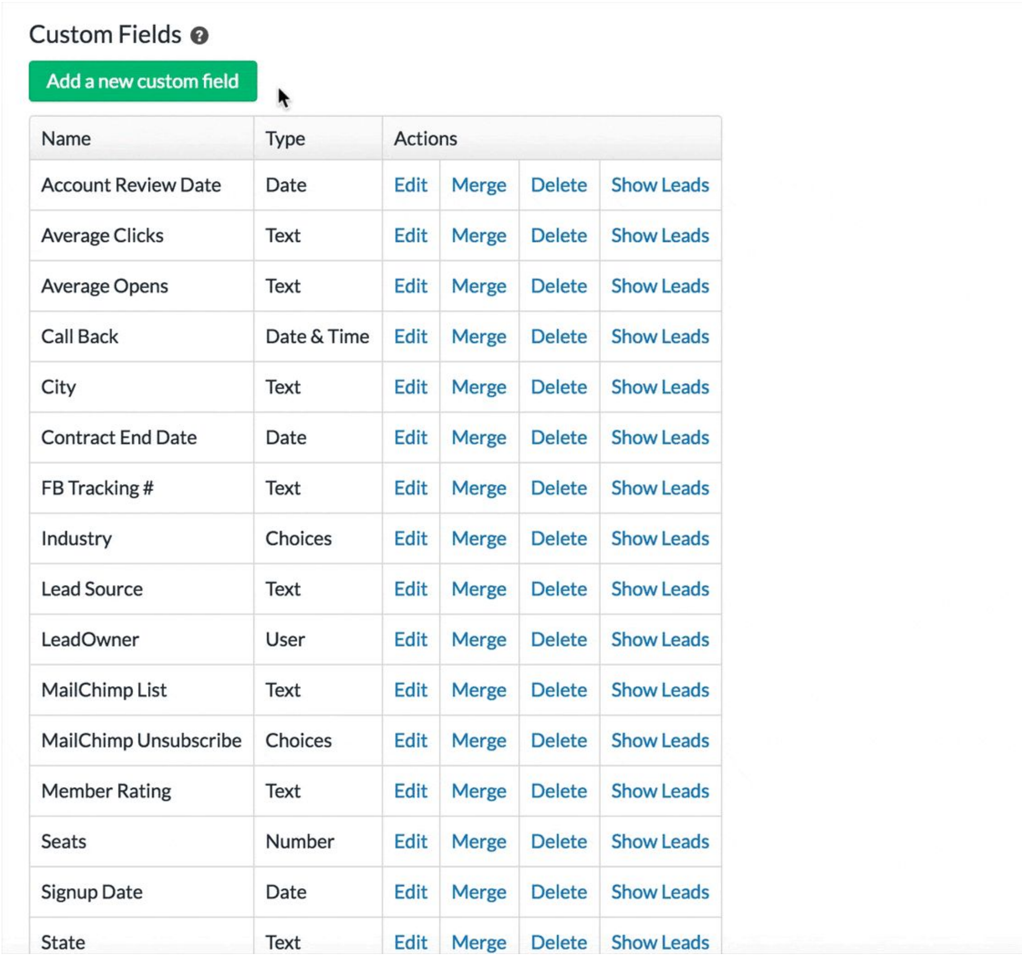
Start by defining specific actions and behaviors that consistently appear in your best customers. Do the majority of your good customers come in when they start a free trial? Are they all coming in through referrals? What about your email subscribers: how do they interact with your emails? Do the subscribers who click through end up being customers?

Once you identify these behaviors, set up a points system that ranks leads based on how they interact with your website or emails. You can also add negative scores for behaviors that indicate a low-value lead.

Your points system could look something like this:

Action	Score
Clicks through newsletter	+20
Visits pricing page	+30
Attends webinar	+15
Signs up for a trial	+45
No-show for demo	-20
Never opens newsletter	-25

To add these scores to your CRM, create a custom field within your lead view.


Custom Fields

Add a new custom field

Name	Type	Actions			
Account Review Date	Date	Edit	Merge	Delete	Show Leads
Average Clicks	Text	Edit	Merge	Delete	Show Leads
Average Opens	Text	Edit	Merge	Delete	Show Leads
Call Back	Date & Time	Edit	Merge	Delete	Show Leads
City	Text	Edit	Merge	Delete	Show Leads
Contract End Date	Date	Edit	Merge	Delete	Show Leads
FB Tracking #	Text	Edit	Merge	Delete	Show Leads
Industry	Choices	Edit	Merge	Delete	Show Leads
Lead Source	Text	Edit	Merge	Delete	Show Leads
LeadOwner	User	Edit	Merge	Delete	Show Leads
MailChimp List	Text	Edit	Merge	Delete	Show Leads
MailChimp Unsubscribe	Choices	Edit	Merge	Delete	Show Leads
Member Rating	Text	Edit	Merge	Delete	Show Leads
Seats	Number	Edit	Merge	Delete	Show Leads
Signup Date	Date	Edit	Merge	Delete	Show Leads
State	Text	Edit	Merge	Delete	Show Leads

Then, you can either add the score manually, or you can update it automatically by linking your CRM to a lead scoring tool like MadKudu.

> *Pro tip: Use Zapier to create automatic lead scores and add them to your CRM, like Close. You can even set up a multi-step zap that alerts reps of a*

new lead's score via Slack, or randomly assigns the new lead in Close.

5. Define when to purge deals from the pipeline

While you want your reps to do as much as possible to salvage leads that have gone quiet, it's also essential to set proper limits and remove dead leads from your pipeline.

Start by defining when to move a lead from the main pipeline to your lost lead pipeline, as mentioned above. For example, if there's been radio silence for more than 30 days, move that lead out of the main pipeline to make room for new, hot leads.

But, when should you purge a lead completely from your pipeline?

There are some obvious signs that it’s time to remove a lead from your pipeline, such as:

- They tell you clearly they’re not interested
- They purchase from a competitor
- They stop responding completely

But you can also set your own definition of a dead lead depending on your experience with customers. For example, has a lead been in your pipeline longer than your average sales cycle without making progress? Or, was a prospect excited about your product but got shot down by the higher-ups at his company?

By defining the right moment to purge your pipeline of dead leads, you’ll keep your pipeline clean and your reps focused.

> *Pro tip: Before you remove a lead from your pipeline completely, send them a breakup email. This gives them one last chance to convert before you end the relationship.*

6. Create templates for your most common actions

To spend more time selling and less time doing repetitive, manual actions, it’s essential for your pipeline to include templates for your most common actions.

With a well-built pipeline, reps will always know what they should be doing. But by including reusable templates, you'll help your reps complete these actions more efficiently, moving deals through the pipeline faster.

For example, when dealing with new leads in the prospecting or qualification stages, reps should have access to cold call scripts and email templates.

Or, when reps are ready to send proposals, pitch decks, and contracts, these should be pre-made and ready to adapt to the current customer.

All of this internal sales content is essential to moving deals quickly through the pipeline. You can use a sales enablement tool such as Showpad to manage and surface relevant content right when reps need it the most.

> *Pro tip: Need help building this essential sales enablement content? Get a head start by downloading our Sales Enablement Toolkit, with customizable templates for all the sales enablement content you need!*

Build your sales pipeline, then take it to the next level

We've just given you the pieces to the sales pipeline puzzle: it's your turn to put them together and build something incredible.

Above, we gave you seven key steps that you can use to build your own sales pipeline:

1. Decide where you're going to build your sales pipeline
2. Define the stages of your buyer journey
3. Decide how many separate pipelines you need
4. Create your sales pipeline stages and review with your team
5. Calculate your ideal pipeline size

6. Define trigger behaviors and actions that help conversions at each stage
7. Perform regular sales pipeline reviews and clean-ups

Then, you saw 6 ways to level-up your pipeline, including smart ways to organize and follow up with lost leads, prioritize hot leads, and use sales templates.

Using the methods and tools we've discussed above, you can get a headstart on creating a pipeline that not only works for your team but also works for your customers.

But once your pipeline is up and running, how can you analyze it and keep it as healthy as possible?

Keep reading to discover the most important metrics you should be watching in your pipeline, as well as proven methods to analyze the health and efficiency of your pipeline.

Chapter 4:

7 Steps for building a sales pipeline + 6 pipeline strategy tips

By now, your sales pipeline is starting to take shape. You've taken the basic pipeline stages we discussed in Chapter 2 of this guide, and customized them to your own unique business process and customers, as we learned in Chapter 3.

But once your pipeline is up and running, that's not the end of the story.

Building a sales pipeline is just the beginning. To make sure that pipeline is effectively helping your team close more deals, you need to know how to analyze it.

Analyzing and maintaining your pipeline is essential: That way, your sales pipeline will stay healthy well into the future. With proper sales pipeline analysis, you'll empower your team to reach their sales goals and make sure no deal gets left behind.

In this chapter, we're going to discuss:

- Sales pipeline analytics: what to track and how
- Sales pipeline analysis: how to set up reporting
- How to know if your sales pipeline is healthy

By the end of this chapter, you'll know exactly what to track, how to track it, and how to use that information to make better decisions with your pipeline.

Sales pipeline analytics: what to track and how

There are scores of sales metrics that you can track in your sales pipeline. But let's face it: who has the time to analyze all that data? (Not me.)

So, let's talk about some of the most important metrics you should be tracking, and how to do so:

Pipeline value

Your pipeline value is exactly what it sounds like: the value of the opportunities in your pipeline. Knowing this will help you accurately forecast your goals, and be better prepared to reach them.

How to calculate pipeline value:

Start with the number of deals in your pipeline. Then, multiply that by your average deal size.

The calculation would look like this: 50 deals x $5,000 average deal size = $250,000

Sales pipeline velocity

This shows you how much money is passing through your sales pipeline every day, based on how fast leads are going through your sales pipeline. This metric helps you understand how healthy your pipeline is and identify opportunities that are taking too long to close.

How to calculate sales velocity:

First, take the number of deals in your pipeline. Multiply that by your average deal size, then divide it by your average sales cycle length in days.

Here's an example calculation: 50 deals x $5,000 average deal size ÷ 60-day sales cycle = $4,166

So, in this case, there would be $4,166 moving through your sales pipeline every day. (The higher this number, the better!)

> *Pro tip: To improve this number, try these methods to create urgency and close deals faster!*

Conversion rate per stage

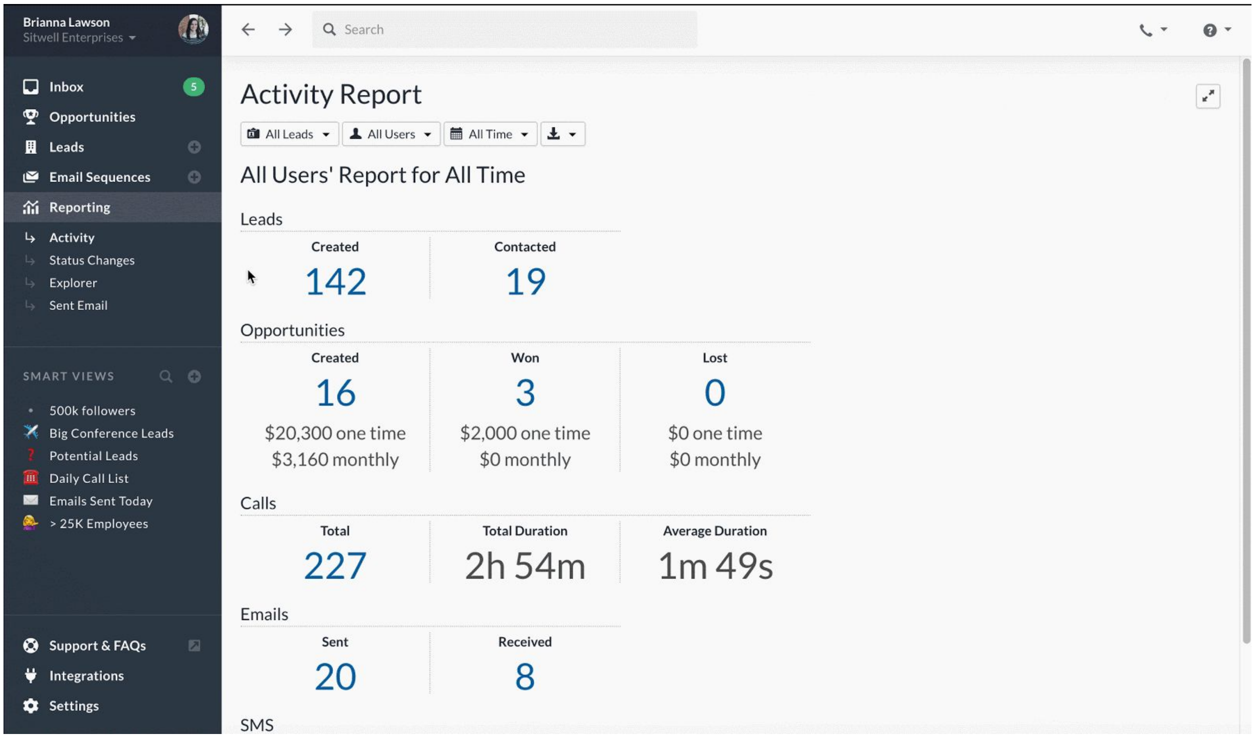
To make sure your pipeline is healthy as a whole, it's essential to keep an eye on the conversion rate for each stage. In other words, what percentage of opportunities in a certain stage will convert to the next stage?

Keeping track of this metric will help you ensure each stage of your pipeline is working well, and will also alert you to any potential shifts in the market or with your customers.

How to calculate the conversion rate per stage:

Most CRMs will calculate this for you. Keep track of historical data so that you can compare the conversion rate over time.

In Close, you can customize your view of the Status Change Report to see how different stages convert over time.



Sales rep pipeline performance

Tracking how each rep performs within your sales pipeline tells you where each rep needs help and encouragement individually.

For example, if a certain rep moves a higher-than-average amount of opportunities through the qualification stage but then has a lower close rate, they may need help qualifying better. Or, if a certain rep struggles to get new leads into the prospecting stage, they may need direction on where to identify and contact potential customers. Using this sales data, you can build actionable insights that help your team improve.

How to calculate rep pipeline performance:

Separate your pipeline view to see only a certain rep, and then see the average conversion rate per stage. Then, compare this to the overall average conversion rate, and see how each rep is performing.

So, now you know what you should be tracking. Let's talk about how you can set up your sales analytics.

Sales pipeline analysis: how to set up reporting

Once you’ve got your sales pipeline set up and you know what metrics to track, it’s time to set up reporting. With automated sales pipeline analysis, you’ll not only see the right data at the right time. You’ll be able to take that data and turn it into powerful action items for your team.

Here’s a simple, three-step process to set up and automate reporting:

1. Set up automatic opportunity confidence reporting

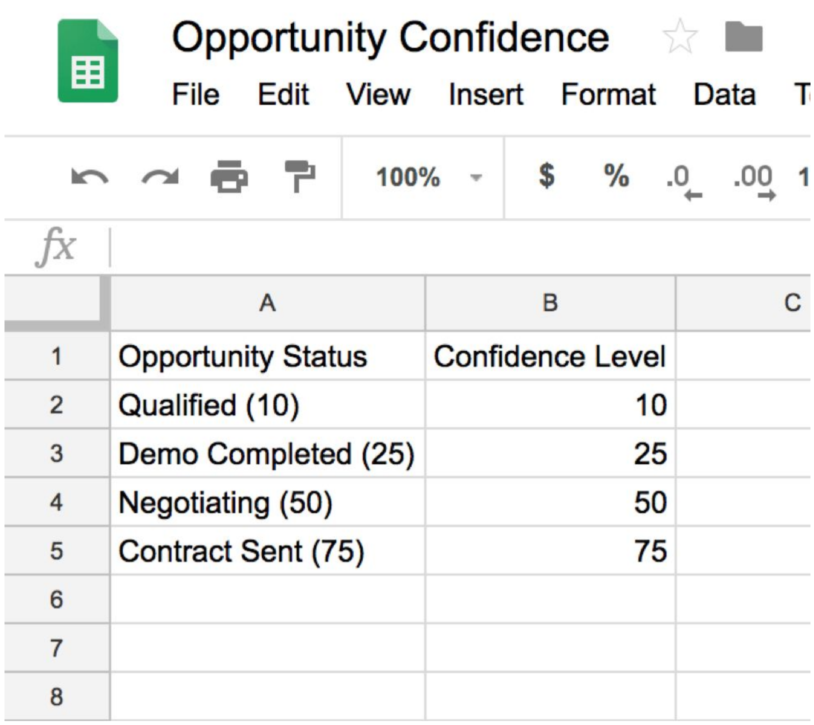
Using what you already understand of your conversion rates for each stage, you can create automatic confidence levels for each of your opportunities.

Here’s what you’ll need:

- Close CRM
- Zapier
- Google Sheets

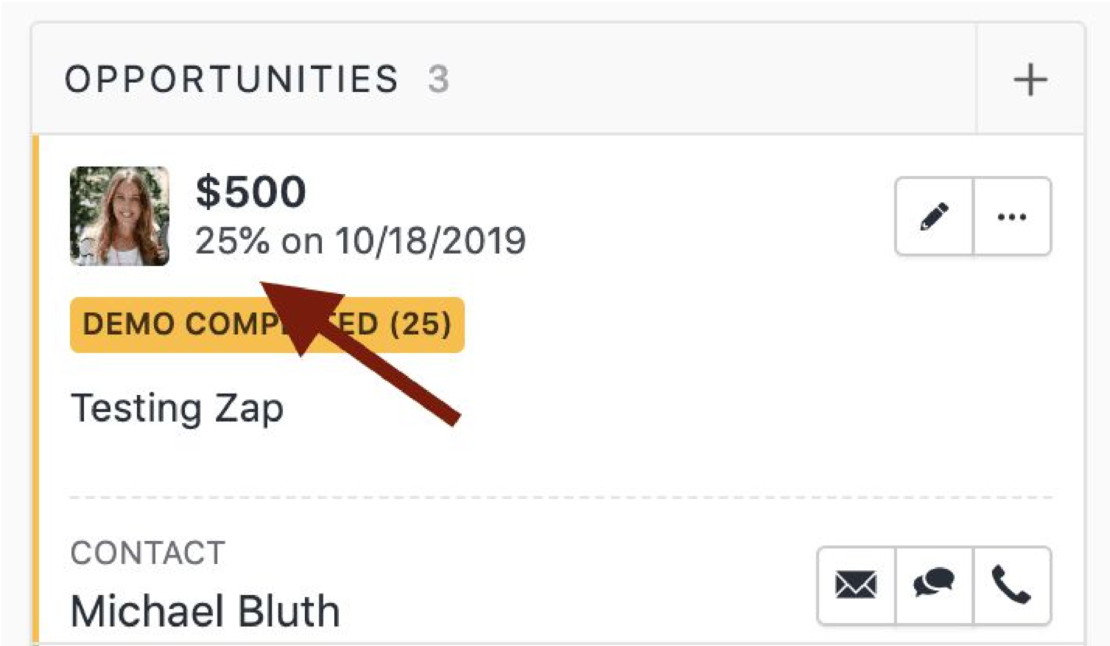
First, set up your Google Sheet with a percentage of confidence for each stage in your sales pipeline. For example, if 50% of leads in the negotiation stage eventually convert, then opportunity confidence at this stage would be 50%.

It should look something like this:



	A	B	C
1	Opportunity Status	Confidence Level	
2	Qualified (10)	10	
3	Demo Completed (25)	25	
4	Negotiating (50)	50	
5	Contract Sent (75)	75	
6			
7			
8			

Next, connect that Google Sheet to your Close account using Zapier. When an opportunity status in Close changes, run a zap that will search for the opportunity confidence level in your sheet. Then, set up a second zap that will translate that data into a custom confidence level and update the opportunity in Close.

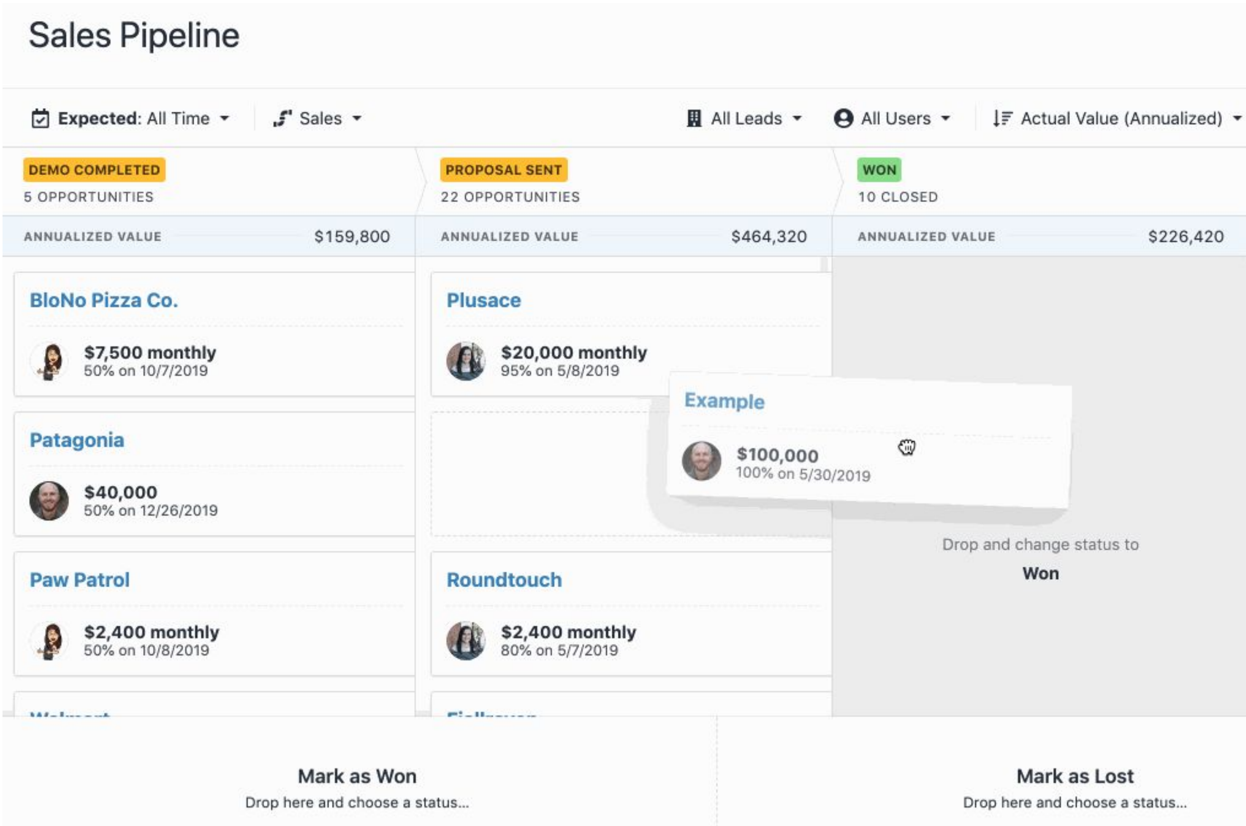


2. Automate pipeline value calculations for each stage

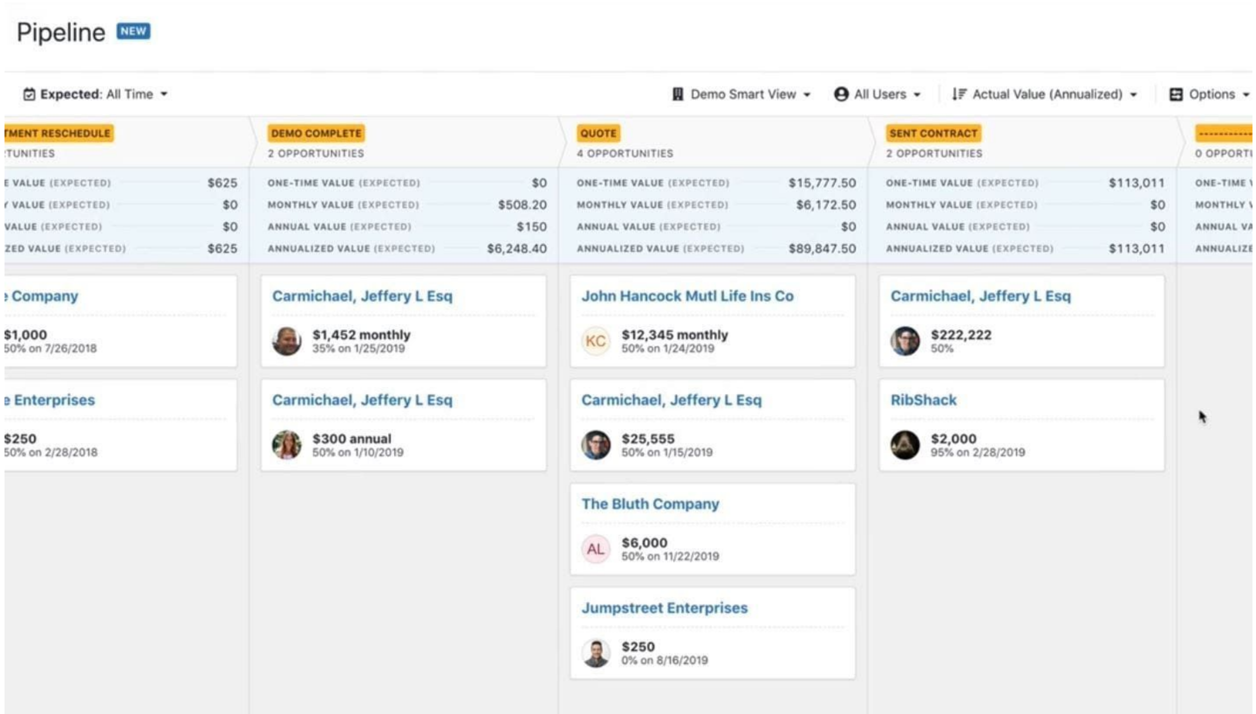
Understanding your pipeline value is essential to understanding where your deals stand and how close you are to reaching your goals. It also helps you see whether or not your pipeline is healthy.

In Close, these pipeline value calculations are done for you, automatically.

That means you don't need to recalculate everything when an opportunity moves to a new stage. Pipeline value is calculated in the moment and adjusts automatically when you move opportunities to different stages.



You can also see different types of values, including annualized value, monthly value, or one-time value.



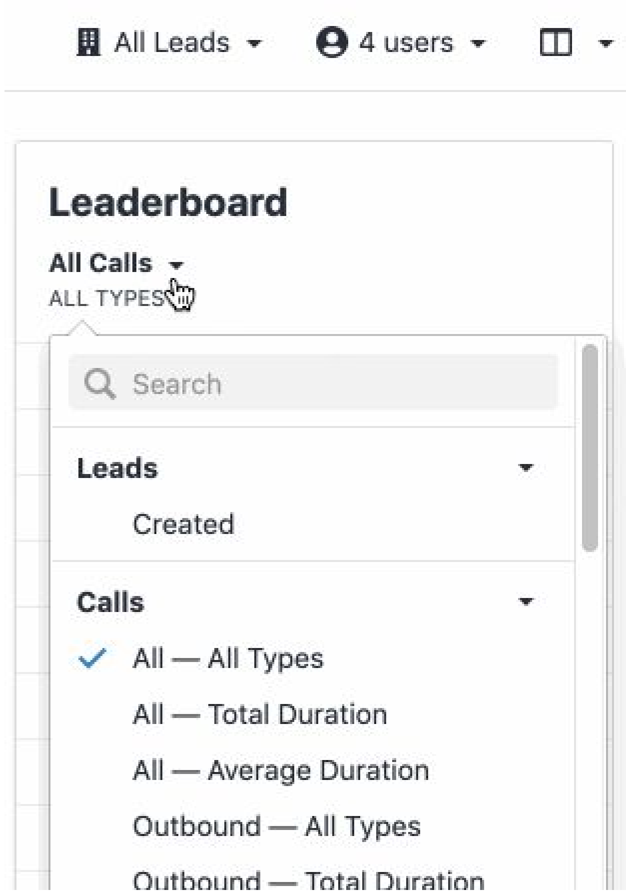
With Close, your pipeline value is always at hand.

3. Analyze the performance of individual reps within the sales pipeline

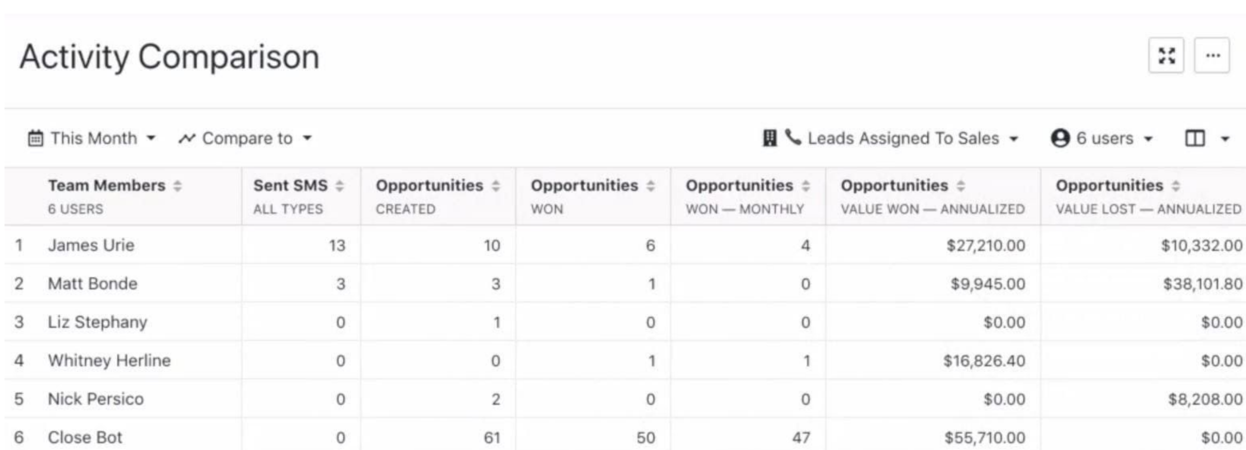
For this, you'll need an activity-based CRM that your reps are using to track and record their actions, like Close.

In Close, reps can send emails, text messages, and even make phone calls. These actions are all automatically recorded and can be reported on later.

For example, on the dashboard, you can set up your own custom leaderboard to see how your reps are performing.



You can also see different types of values, including annualized value, monthly value, or one-time value.


Activity Comparison

This Month · Compare to · Leads Assigned To Sales · 6 users

	Team Members 6 USERS	Sent SMS ALL TYPES	Opportunities CREATED	Opportunities WON	Opportunities WON — MONTHLY	Opportunities VALUE WON — ANNUALIZED	Opportunities VALUE LOST — ANNUALIZED
1	James Urie	13	10	6	4	$27,210.00	$10,332.00
2	Matt Bonde	3	3	1	0	$9,945.00	$38,101.80
3	Liz Stephany	0	1	0	0	$0.00	$0.00
4	Whitney Herline	0	0	1	1	$16,826.40	$0.00
5	Nick Persico	0	2	0	0	$0.00	$8,208.00
6	Close Bot	0	61	50	47	$55,710.00	$0.00

This helps you see how reps are performing with the opportunities in their pipelines. You can also see the actions they're taking, such as with calls, emails, SMS messages, and relate these to the opportunities that have been won, helping you identify the methods that are working within your pipeline.

Once you've got your reporting set up, though, how can you tell if your pipeline is healthy or not?

How to know if your sales pipeline is healthy

Maintaining a healthy sales pipeline takes constant analysis and effort. A healthy pipeline can't be judged by how many opportunities it has or the total value: you'll need to evaluate all the key metrics we discussed above to understand the health of your pipeline.

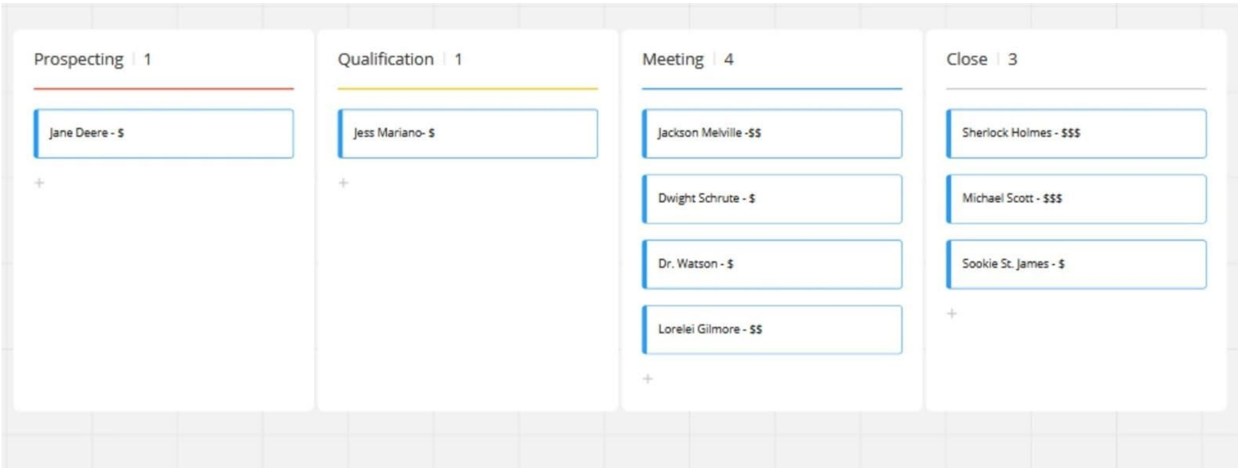
With good reporting in place, you'll be able to answer these questions and determine the health of your sales pipeline:

Where do you see the most significant drop-off?

Is there a certain stage that is seeing more drop-off than normal? In general, the stages towards the left of the pipeline will see more drop-off than those to the right. If you're seeing something different, you may need to make some changes.

Are prospects spread out through the different stages of the pipeline, or are there more on one side than the other

Typically, you'll have more leads on the left of the pipeline than on the right. In reality, if your leads are evenly spread across all the stages or if there are more leads on the right, this could be a sign that your pipeline is going to dry up. Use the pipeline size calculations we discussed in Chapter 3 to know how many opportunities should be in each stage, and work to make that a reality.



An unhealthy pipeline has too many leads on the right, and will probably dry up soon.

Is your pipeline velocity increasing or decreasing?

How much money is going through your pipeline on a daily basis? Using the calculations we discussed above, keep a constant eye on your pipeline velocity. That way, you'll be aware if it starts to drop.

Are reps actively using and updating the sales pipeline?

Another way to measure pipeline health is by its adoption rate on your team. Are your sales reps really using the pipeline? Is it up-to-date, or have they fallen behind in updating the opportunities they're working with?

Using these questions and the data you've collected, you'll be able to see whether or not your pipeline is healthy, and adjust where needed. Run through this check once a month or so in order to keep a constant eye on how your pipeline is doing.

Use sales pipeline analytics to boost productivity

A good doctor analyzes the symptoms to give an accurate diagnosis before it turns into something more serious.

Just like that doctor, you can use your sales pipeline analytics to regularly check the health of your pipeline. This allows you to ‘diagnose’ any issues in your pipeline, and correct them before they cause issues with your team or your sales.

Above, we showed you the essential metrics you need to watch in your sales pipeline, including pipeline velocity, conversion rates for each stage, pipeline value, and rep performance, as well as how to track these metrics and draw conclusions from the data using your CRM.

We’ve also seen what questions you need to ask in order to assess your sales pipeline health.

By keeping up a regular routine of pipeline analysis, you’ll be in a better position to manage your pipeline effectively.

Chapter 5:

Sales pipeline management: How to maximize the power of your pipeline

You've built a thing of beauty. Your sales pipeline is practically gleaming, and all that effort you put into building it is certainly paying off.

Or is it?

The real question is: are you taking full advantage of your sales pipeline?

For a sales pipeline to remain valuable in the future, you need to learn how to manage it correctly.

In fact, sales pipeline management has been proven to have a huge effect on revenue: according to a study by the Harvard Business Review, companies that had effective pipeline management saw their growth rate increase by 15%.

Want to see that kind of increase for your business?

In this chapter, we're going to discuss:

- Sales pipeline management: what it is and how it works
- 5 essential aspects of sales pipeline management
- How to hack the sales pipeline process with trackers, forecasting templates, and more

With the skills you'll learn in this chapter, you'll be able to effectively manage your pipeline over a long period of time, getting the most out of it now and into the future.

Sales pipeline management: what it is and how it works

Put simply, sales pipeline management is the act of analyzing, tracking, and organizing your pipeline so that it runs smoothly and stays clean.

It’s the job of sales leaders and managers to take care of the pipeline, make sure it’s up-to-date, and improve it over time.

Why is this so important?

Because your pipeline as it is now will not continue to serve you well in a year or five years or ten years. The market is under a constant state of change, and your sales process needs to change with it. When that happens, your pipeline must adapt to fit current conditions.

When your pipeline is updated, improved, and cleaned over time, this allows reps to focus on selling and not get lost in the noise of the pipeline. It also helps sales managers and leaders to see exactly what’s happening in the pipeline, where the most important deals are, and how their reps are performing at each stage.

So, what specifically does sales pipeline management involve?

5 essential aspects of sales pipeline management

Basically, managing your pipeline requires you to do these five things:

1. Build and maintain a clearly defined sales process

Building a sales process that involves developing a collection of repeatable steps that your team can use to push leads through the pipeline and convert them into happy customers.

When your sales process is clearly defined, that will help you understand what needs to happen in your sales pipeline.

For example, perhaps your process needs to be adjusted because of a change in the market or to your product. Maybe the customer journey has shifted, and the way people discover or interact with your business has changed.

In that case, you'd need to adjust the sales pipeline stages to match current market conditions.

Just make sure they always revolve around these seven main pipeline stages:


Sales Pipeline Stages
For your sales pipeline to be clear and effective, it should include these 7 stages.
Lead Generation
Marketing and sales can work together to discover new leads and add them to the pipeline.
Step 01
Step 02
Prospecting
Now, it's time for sales to do some cold outreach and build relationships
Qualification
Gather the right information to discover whether your leads are really good to buy.
Step 03
Step 04
Contact
Whether it's a meeting, a demo, or a call, it's time to talk to your prospects and sell your product...
Proposal
Get all the relevant information in one document, and get it approved.
Step 05
Step 06
Negotiation and close
Answer their questions, and get that contract signed!
Retention
Keep your customers happy with regular follow-ups.
Step 07
Close
www.close.com

Pro tip: Want more information about these essential sales pipeline stages? Jump back to Chapter 2 of this guide!

2. Forecast like a pro

Your sales pipeline should not involve any guesswork. To successfully manage your team and what's going on inside your pipeline, you need to use the data you have to forecast accurately.

Never be left wondering what's going to happen with your sales.

To forecast like a pro, start by tracking your sales process and goals for your team. Next, take into account information about your product costs, what you spend per lead, the potential market, and any upcoming fluctuations in price.

Finally, collect data on your pipeline and conversion rates.

With this information and an effective CRM, like Close, you'll be able to translate this data into accurate forecasts.

Since there are several different sales forecasting strategies that are equally valuable for different teams, you'll need to decide what kind of forecasting you need to reach your goals effectively.

3. Eat your key metrics for breakfast

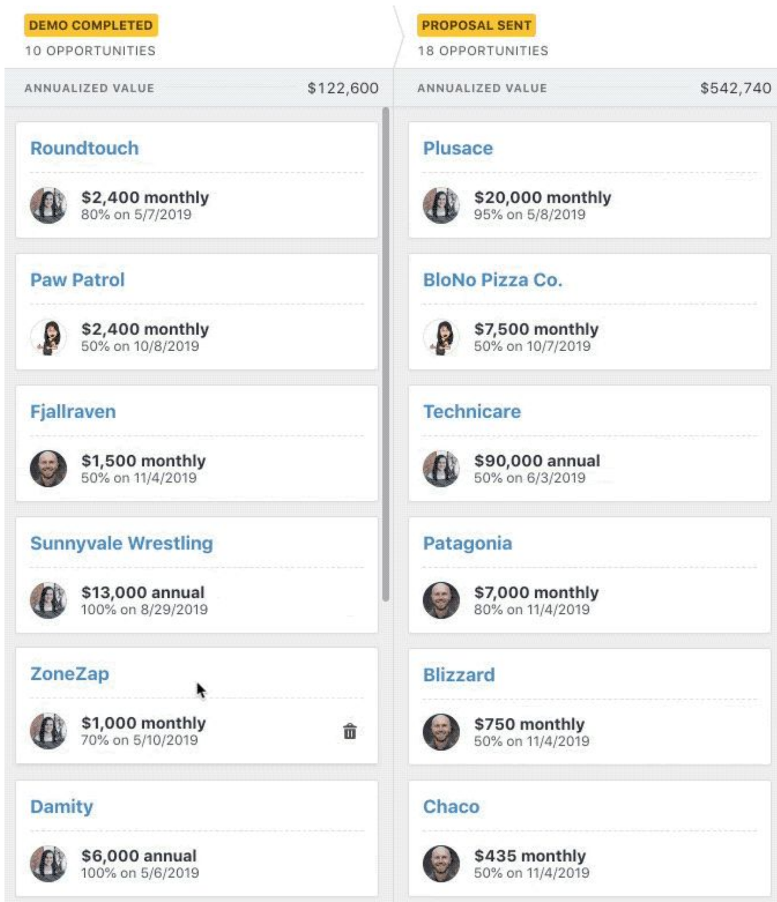
Within your sales pipeline, there are tons of important sales metrics that you need to be aware of.

To manage your pipeline successfully, focus on a few key metrics and avoid getting lost in a complex whirlwind of data.

In Chapter 4, we discussed some of the key metrics you'll need to keep an eye on, including:

- Pipeline value
- Sales pipeline velocity
- Conversion rate per stage
- Sales rep pipeline performance

Pro tip: For more information on pipeline analysis and setting up reporting for essential metrics, go back to Chapter 4 of this guide.



Close CRM helps you manage your pipeline and keep your metrics on hand.

These and other essential metrics help you keep an eye on the health of your pipeline, and give you insights on where to make adjustments.

4. Implement effective rep tracking

Monitoring what your reps are doing inside the pipeline is essential to managing it efficiently.

It's the job of the sales manager to make sure deals are assigned, prospects are contacted, and opportunities are moved forward through the pipeline. By monitoring your reps' activities during the sales cycle, you'll make sure everyone is playing the right part in building a sales process that wins.

5. Conduct regular sales pipeline reviews

The final key aspect of sales pipeline management is reviewing your pipeline from time to time. Schedule regular reviews every month or quarter, and use this time to analyze and clean up your pipeline.

This is the time to review opportunities that were lost during the month, purge your pipeline of leads that went cold, analyze the data, and define areas in your pipeline where you can improve.

You can also use these sales pipeline review meetings to talk with your reps about current deals that are on the table, especially any big fish in the pipeline. Together, the team can discuss obstacles and brainstorm ideas to close faster.

How to hack the sales pipeline process with trackers, forecasting templates, and more

To manage your sales pipeline effectively without wasting time, you need to put specific processes and automations in place. This gets you the information you need without forcing you to sift through loads of data.

Let’s talk about five methods to hack the sales pipeline process and manage it more efficiently.

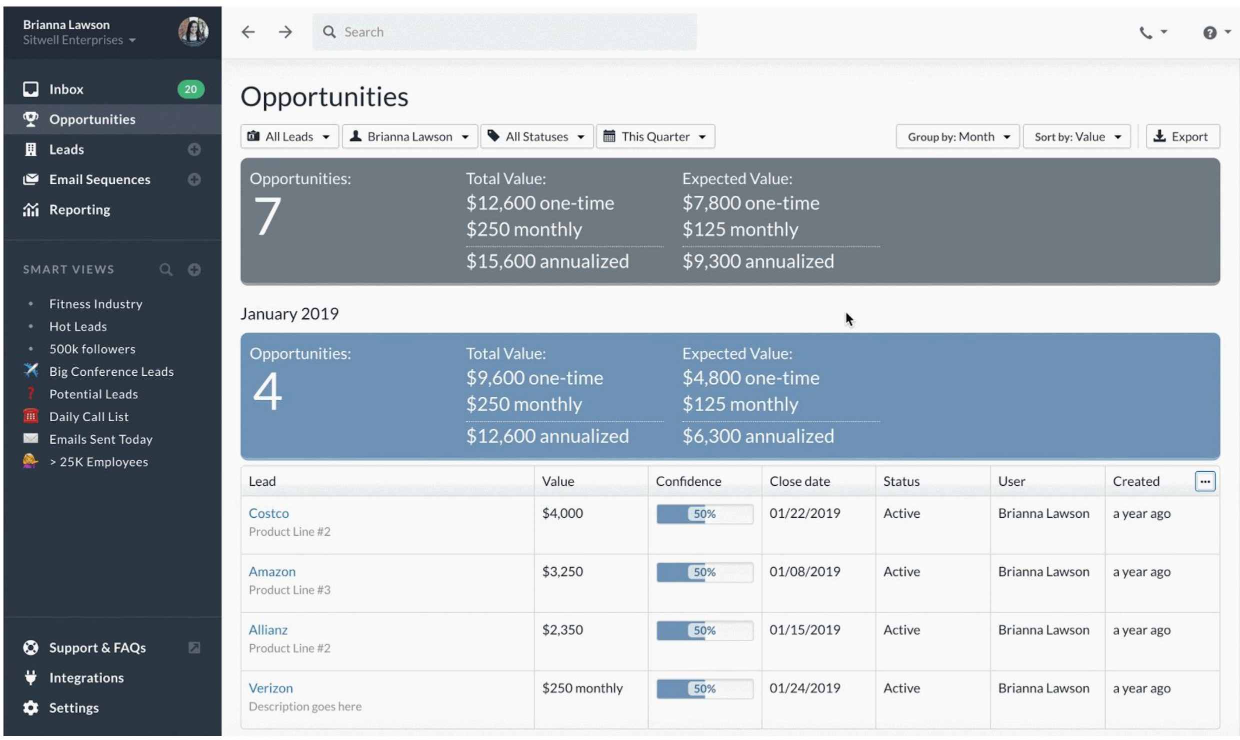
1. Use a sales pipeline CRM to 10x automations

While building a sales pipeline in a spreadsheet (like SalesTable) can work for small teams, you can seriously boost your productivity by using a CRM to keep track of the data and organize it automatically.

We may be a bit biased, but we really think that Close is one of the best options to automate your sales pipeline process.

For example, Close’s reporting features include an Opportunity Overview Report, which gives you a clear view of what’s happening in your pipeline, the current value, and how likely you are to close the deals there.

You can even customize these reports to show you just the information you want to see in the columns.



This means your reports won’t be bogged down with information you don’t need.

2. Use forecast templates that integrate with your data

Choosing the right forecasting tools and templates will help you manage your pipeline better and have a more accurate view of where your sales team is headed.

For example, if you use a sales forecast template that can be converted to a Google Sheet, you can easily integrate this to other tools and data points using Zapier.

> *Pro tip: To find a template that fits your business, check out our ultimate list of 23+ sales forecast templates.*

3. Combine rep activity data and sales pipeline conversion rates to plan more effectively

Knowing exactly what your reps are doing at different stages of your sales pipeline is only part of a high-level pipeline management strategy.

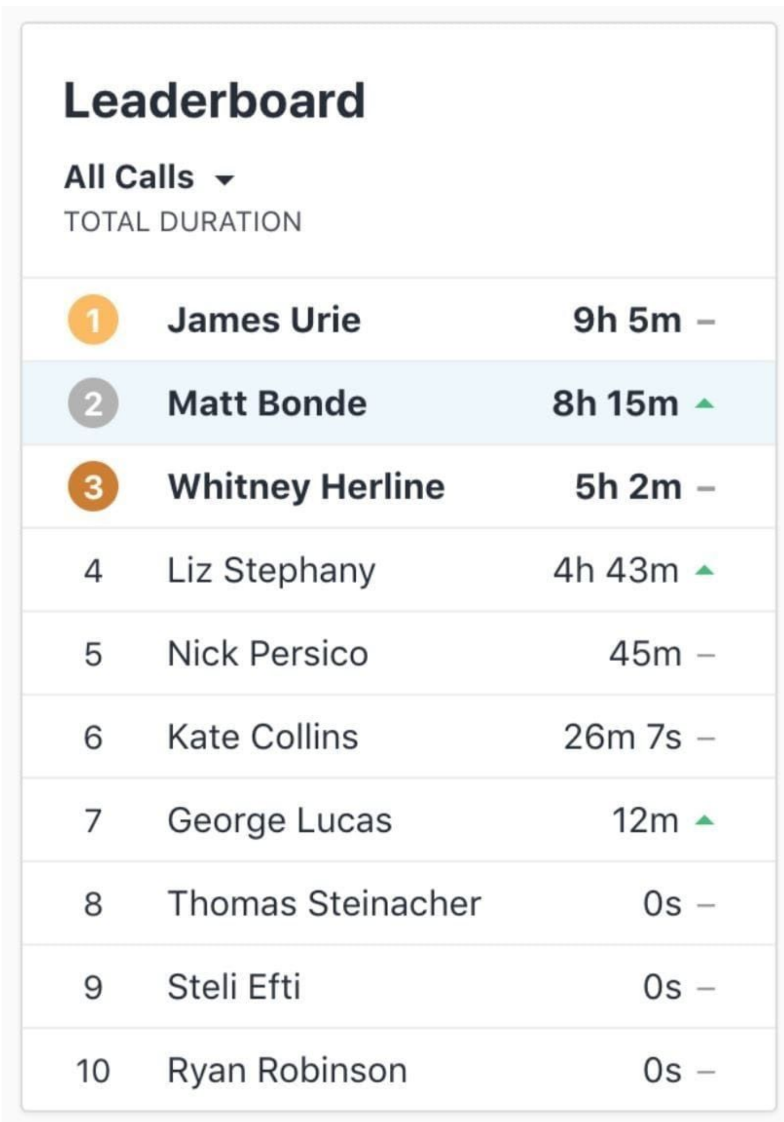
When you combine this information with other relevant data points, you'll practically be able to see the future (without the help of Doc's Delorean)!

Start by comparing rep activity data for a particular stage to the conversion rate. For example, in the qualifying stage, which activities lead to conversions? Are reps who focus on calling getting better conversion rates than those who email? Or is there a combination of phone and email touches that lead to a higher conversion to the next stage?

Using questions like these, take time to analyze the data for each stage. Next, use this data to draw accurate conclusions and record these. For example, you might find that:

- It takes at least 4 touches to get a meeting with a prospect
- Demos work better than sales presentations 74% of the time

Once you have these conclusions, you can more accurately guide your team to the right actions. Using Close, for example, you can track rep activity and even set up a leaderboard. Reps who accomplish more of the target actions go higher on the ranking.



These conclusions also help you forecast more effectively. For example, if you know that it takes an average of 3 follow-ups to finalize negotiations, and can more accurately predict when the deal will close.

4. Integrate different tools to automatically track the right KPIs

Your CRM is a great place to collect important data, but it's not the only tool you'll use to gather information and analyze metrics.

If you want to keep everything in order, you'll need to set up a system to automate the collection of important data and gather it together to one central location. That way, you won't have to keep checking different tools and systems to find the data you need.

That's why here at Close, we love integrations. By integrating your favorite data collection tools, you can gather relevant data based on the handful of essential metrics you picked for your team.

So, once you have which metrics you need to track clearly in mind, make a list of the tools you need to do so.

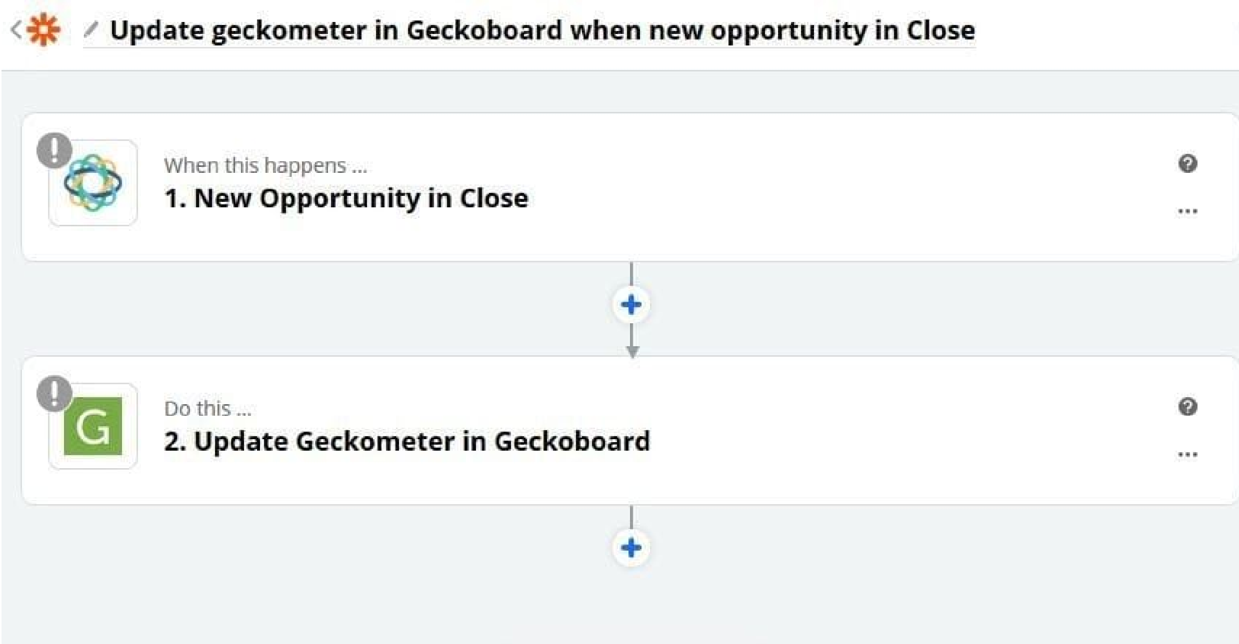
Start with your CRM. This is where you'll collect data about your customers, open opportunities, and rep activity.

Then, add other tools: For example, do you use customer communication tools like Drift, MailChimp, or Zendesk? What about analytics tools like Gong or Google Analytics?

Once you have this list, find a way to integrate all of these tools. Since Close CRM integrates natively with all of the tools mentioned above, you can collect and analyze data with no trouble at all!

If you want, you can feed your data into a Google Sheet, or you can display it visually using a tool like Geckoboard.

With this tool, you can create your own custom dashboard with information from various sources and display it for your reps to see. You can use Zapier to link Geckoboard to almost any tool you want, including Close!



By analyzing, organizing, and integrating your data across different tools, you'll save time and have a better point of view to manage your sales pipeline effectively.

5. Use templates for pipeline reviews

Another way to level-up your pipeline management is to automate your pipeline review meetings. Although this is an essential part of managing your pipeline, it's true that preparing for and attending meetings takes time out of your busy schedule.

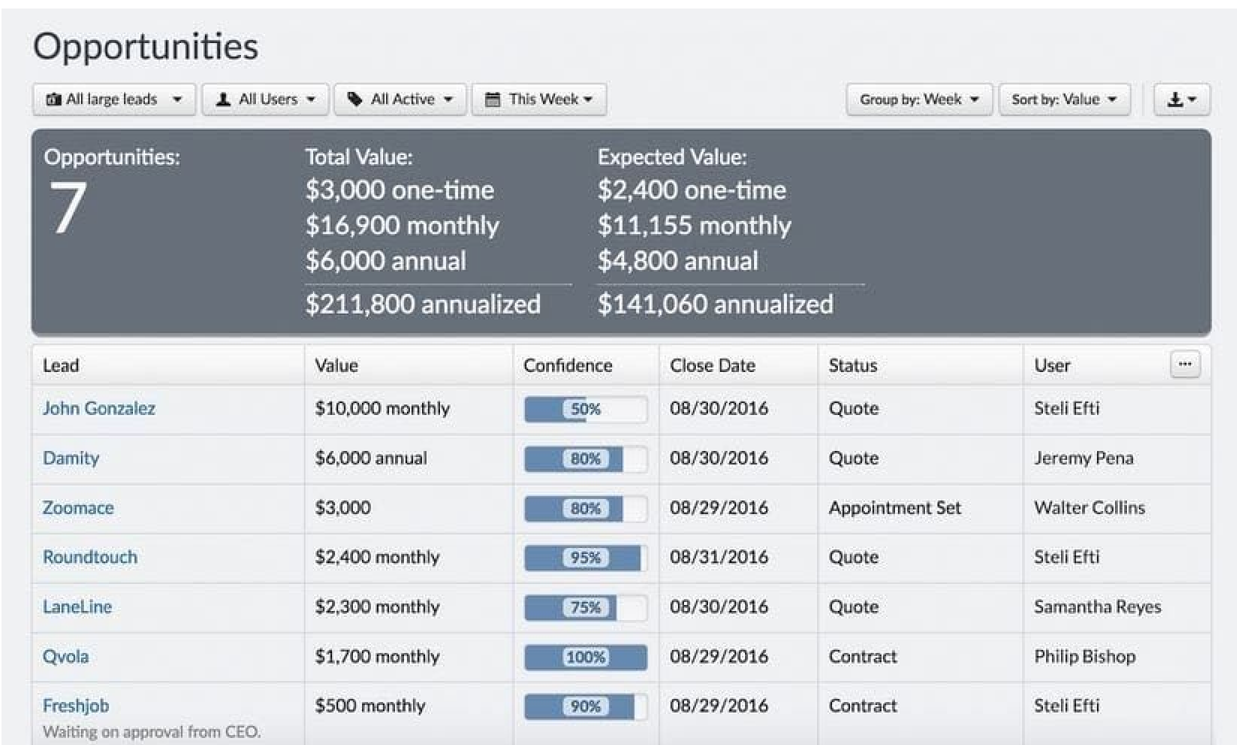
To reduce the time spent on pipeline review meetings, use templates to automate your workflows.

For example, why not create an agenda template? This ensures your meetings always follow the same pattern, which helps everyone stay on track. If you create your agenda template in Google Docs, your whole team can collaborate and add their talking points directly into the agenda.

This agenda template could include items such as:

- Review action items from the last meeting
- Mention victories from the last week/month
- Reps highlight one or two opportunities they're excited about/facing challenges with and get feedback from the team
- Set clear action items for each rep over the next week/month

You can use your metrics dashboards and custom data in these meetings as well. For example, create your own Opportunity Report in Close as discussed above, and you'll have essential metrics on hand when discussing current opportunities with your team.



Lead	Value	Confidence	Close Date	Status	User
John Gonzalez	$10,000 monthly	50%	08/30/2016	Quote	Steli Efti
Damity	$6,000 annual	80%	08/30/2016	Quote	Jeremy Pena
Zoomace	$3,000	80%	08/29/2016	Appointment Set	Walter Collins
Roundtouch	$2,400 monthly	95%	08/31/2016	Quote	Steli Efti
LaneLine	$2,300 monthly	75%	08/30/2016	Quote	Samantha Reyes
Qvola	$1,700 monthly	100%	08/29/2016	Contract	Philip Bishop
Freshjob Waiting on approval from CEO.	$500 monthly	90%	08/29/2016	Contract	Steli Efti

Use this ultimate sales pipeline management process to level-up your pipeline (and your team)

Let me ask you again: Are you taking full advantage of your sales pipeline?

By using the above steps to manage your pipeline efficiently, you'll be able to track the right metrics and your reps' actions and fully optimize your pipeline. Your reps will be better prepared to attend to the leads in their pipelines, and you'll have a clearer view of your current sales and future forecasts.

If you're ready to fully optimize your pipeline for your business, you need the right tools to get started. That's why our next chapter will dive into the best sales pipeline CRMs, and how to use them effectively.

Chapter 6:

How a sales pipeline CRM accelerates sales: 5 tools & how to use them

Your sales pipeline gives you the clearest view of your current sales situation and helps your reps build their process effectively.

But where should you build your sales pipeline?

There are many tools that you can use to build and maintain a sales pipeline, but one particular type of tool stands in a class of its own: a sales pipeline CRM.

What makes a CRM so special, and how will it help your team? More than that, how can you make sure that you're using your sales pipeline CRM to the fullest?

In this chapter, we're going to discuss:

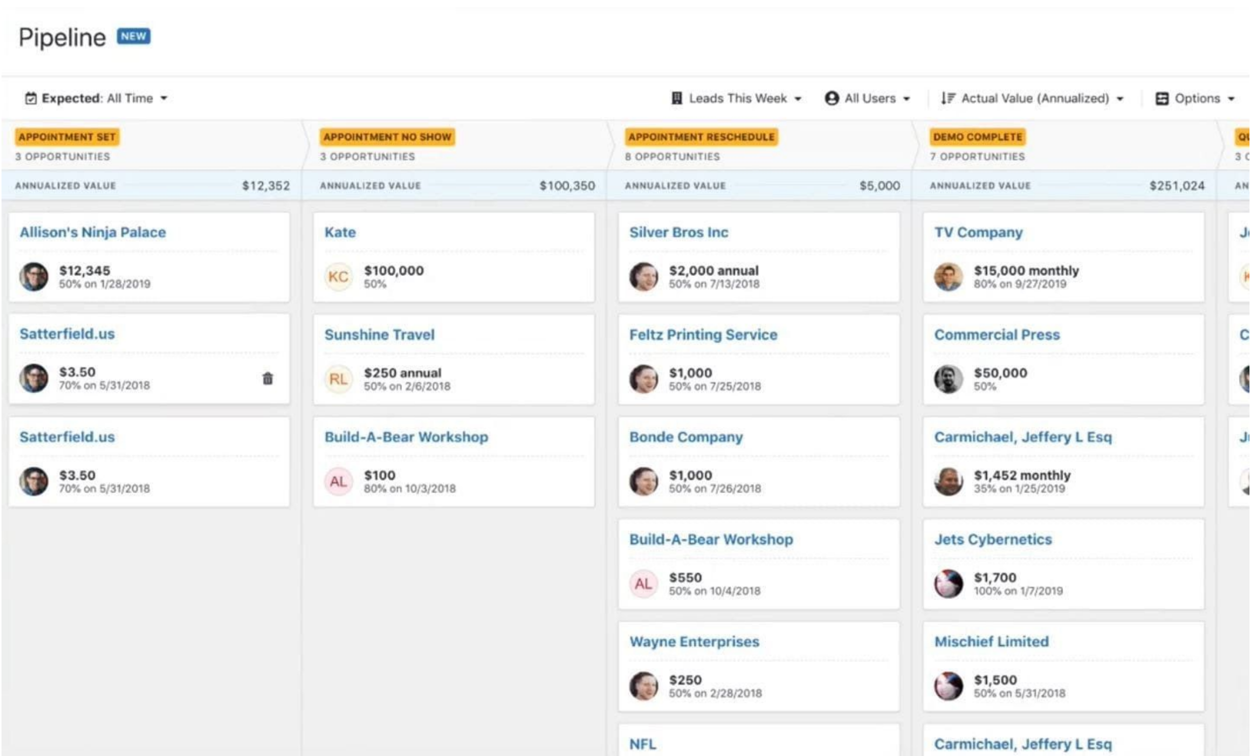
- What is a sales pipeline CRM and how does it help accelerate sales?
- 5 sales pipeline CRMs for different sales teams
- How to effectively use a pipeline CRM to accelerate sales

What is a sales pipeline CRM and how does it help accelerate sales?

CRM (Customer Relationship Management) software is used to collect and organize information on leads and customers, including contact information, touchpoints, or current status. A sales pipeline CRM allows you to visualize where your leads are in the sales process by creating your own pipeline and adding leads into it.

A sales pipeline CRM is more than just a place to create your pipeline: This is where you'll store your lead and customer information, gather data on what's working and what isn't, forecast your sales, and analyze your reps' activity. It's also the place your reps will go to keep prospect information updated, focus better on the tasks on hand, and simplify their workflow.

With a sales pipeline CRM, you'll see at a glance what deals are currently on the table and exactly what action you need to take to bring them to the next stage in the sales process.



When your data is stored in a sales pipeline CRM, you never need to worry about sharing files back and forth or constantly asking for updates on prospects. Since your CRM records completed tasks and rep activity automatically, the information in your pipeline is updated in real-time.

That means no more wasted time updating spreadsheets and no more outdated pipelines. Just a smooth, updated workflow that everyone uses to sell faster and smarter.

5 sales pipeline CRMs for different sales teams

Which sales pipeline CRM is right for your business?

Let's face it: there's no shortage of options when it comes to choosing a CRM. However, different CRMs have different strengths and weaknesses, and many are adapted to certain types of sales teams.

That's why we've analyzed 5 different types of sales teams and discovered the best CRM for each one:

1. For SMBs and startups: Close CRM

The goals and needs of a small business are very different from that of a multinational company. So, you'll need a CRM that's aligned with your small business: like Close.

This sales pipeline CRM is ideal for SMBs and startups for three main reasons:

1. **Easy to set up and use:** You won't waste hours learning or setting up your CRM. Even building a custom pipeline that's adapted to your business can be done in a matter of minutes.
2. **Saves your team loads of time:** With power dialing, email automation, and smart reporting, your team will spend less time doing repetitive tasks and more time actually selling.
3. **Won't break the bank:** The big names in CRM also come with big price tags. Close, on the other hand, fits right into the price range you need it to.

Close also integrates with the tools that small businesses use every day, including MailChimp, Facebook, Slack, and more!

But here's the best part: We're also a startup, so we understand exactly what you're going through as you try to build and scale your company. Not only are we a CRM that's made for startups, but we're also that friend who keeps pushing you to succeed.

> 💰 **Cost:** Between $35 and $145 per user, per month
>
> ⭐ **Best feature:** Close automatically logs all of the interactions you have with prospects and leads, including emails, SMS messages, and phone calls. That means your small sales team can stop wasting their time on data entry and start selling more.

2. For solopreneurs and freelancers: Bitrix24

If you're a one-man-band with a limited (or nonexistent) budget, Bitrix24 is a great option. The main reason for this is that it has a free version you can use endlessly!

Even as a free tool, Bitrix24 is very robust. You have a customizable pipeline view that allows you to see and update current deals easily, as well as free email, calling, and invoicing capabilities. It also has a mobile app that you can use to sell on the go.

💰 **Cost:** Free, or between $19 and $159 per month for more comprehensive plans

⭐ **Best feature:** Bitrix24 allows you to customize your pipeline statuses, as well as your view of the pipeline: See all deals, deals with tasks due today, or deals with overdue tasks.

3. For mid-market companies: Zendesk Sell

For large, multinational companies, one of the best options is Zendesk Sell. This extremely powerful tool is built to keep reps selling and helps smooth out communication so that your team can collaborate better and sell smarter.

With a fully customizable pipeline, adaptable integrations, and drag-and-drop reporting dashboards, Zendesk Sell is the perfect tool for large companies who want to build and manage complex pipelines.

(Note: For more robust features like activity reports, power dialing, and lead scoring, you'll need the Enterprise plan, starting at $99 per user, per month.)

💰 **Cost:** Between $19 and $199 per user, per month

⭐ **Best feature:** Communication is the main feature of Zendesk Sell. With smooth communication and easy hand-offs that provide full context, Zendesk allows sales, marketing, and support to work together and sell better.

4. For field sales: SPOTIO

For teams who work in the field and not in the office, it's essential to have a CRM that's adapted to the field and works while your team is on the go. That's why SPOTIO is a great sales pipeline CRM for field sales teams.

Not only does this CRM give you territory mapping options, but it also gives reps a clear view of their pipeline and next best actions right from an app on their phone. Sales managers can keep track of their reps with an activity feed, monitor where they are with location tracking, and communicate easily.

Meanwhile, field reps can easily update the status of leads on the go, pull up important documents to be signed digitally, and get accurate information on the best route to their next destination.

> 💰 **Cost:** Between $39 and $129 per user, per month
>
> ⭐ **Best feature:** As a dedicated field sales CRM, it's no surprise that SPOTIO's mobile app works wonders for reps on the go. It even includes an in-app chat feature so that managers in the office can communicate smoothly with reps in the field.

5. For enterprise companies: Salesforce

Arguably the most well-known CRMs on the market, Salesforce is a powerhouse tool that can do just about anything (for a price).

For enterprise companies looking to expand their sales tracking and pipeline abilities, Salesforce is definitely a good option. This software is a combination of pipeline and lead management, sales analytics, marketing automation, customer service features, and so much more. It offers visual workflows, intuitive AI capabilities, and adaptable modules for whatever you need.

That said, since Salesforce gives you so many options when it comes to purchasing, you'll probably need to hire a consultant to help you decide what you need and what you don't need. While it's nice that you can customize your purchase plan to your exact needs, it can be a bit confusing when it comes to making a decision.

> 💰 **Cost:** Between $25 and $300 per user, per month for Sales Cloud. (Other modules such as analytics, enablement, marketing, or customer service have their own pricing.)
>
> ⭐ **Best feature:** For enterprise companies that have the budget to purchase all of Salesforce's modules, this is the perfect connection between sales, marketing, customer service, and success. With fantastic automation for closing deals alongside a comprehensive view of customers across sales, service, and marketing, Salesforce truly is an enterprise company's dream tool.

Now that we've discussed the best sales pipeline CRMs for different teams, you're on the right track to picking a tool that will work best for your business.

But how can you get the most out of your CRM and effectively scale your business?

How to effectively use a pipeline CRM to accelerate sales

Want to optimize your pipeline for faster sales? You'll need to get the fullest possible use out of your CRM.

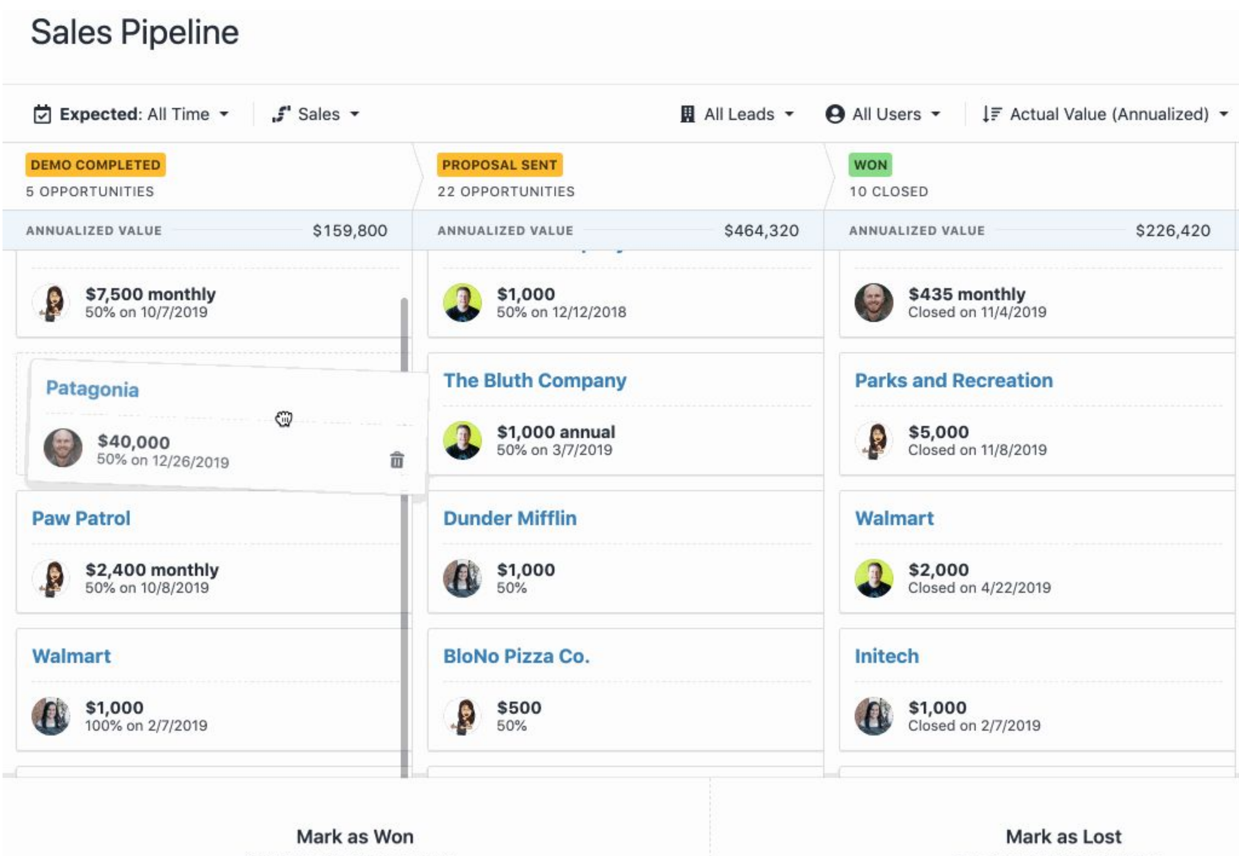
Here are four ways to do just that:

1. Get a clear view of pipeline value at different stages

Pipeline value is one of the main sales metrics you need to track. This will help you forecast more accurately and guide your team better.

By checking the value of the prospects in each stage in your pipeline, you'll understand where you stand, what your current sales projections are, and how likely your team is to reach its goals.

In Close, you can see the value for each stage in your pipeline and choose between annualized, monthly, or one-time value, depending on your needs. These values are automatically updated as you move leads and prospects around in your pipeline.



2. See where reps are excelling

One advantage of using a sales pipeline CRM is that you have special insights into the actions of your reps. To use your CRM to the fullest and optimize your pipeline, keep track of rep activity within your pipeline and use that information to better plan your sales tasks.

With Close's customizable activity reports, you can check what reps are doing, how they're accomplishing their tasks, and what actions they're using to push leads through the pipeline faster.

You can also see time-based comparison reports that show you how reps performed in different quarters, and how their actions impacted sales.

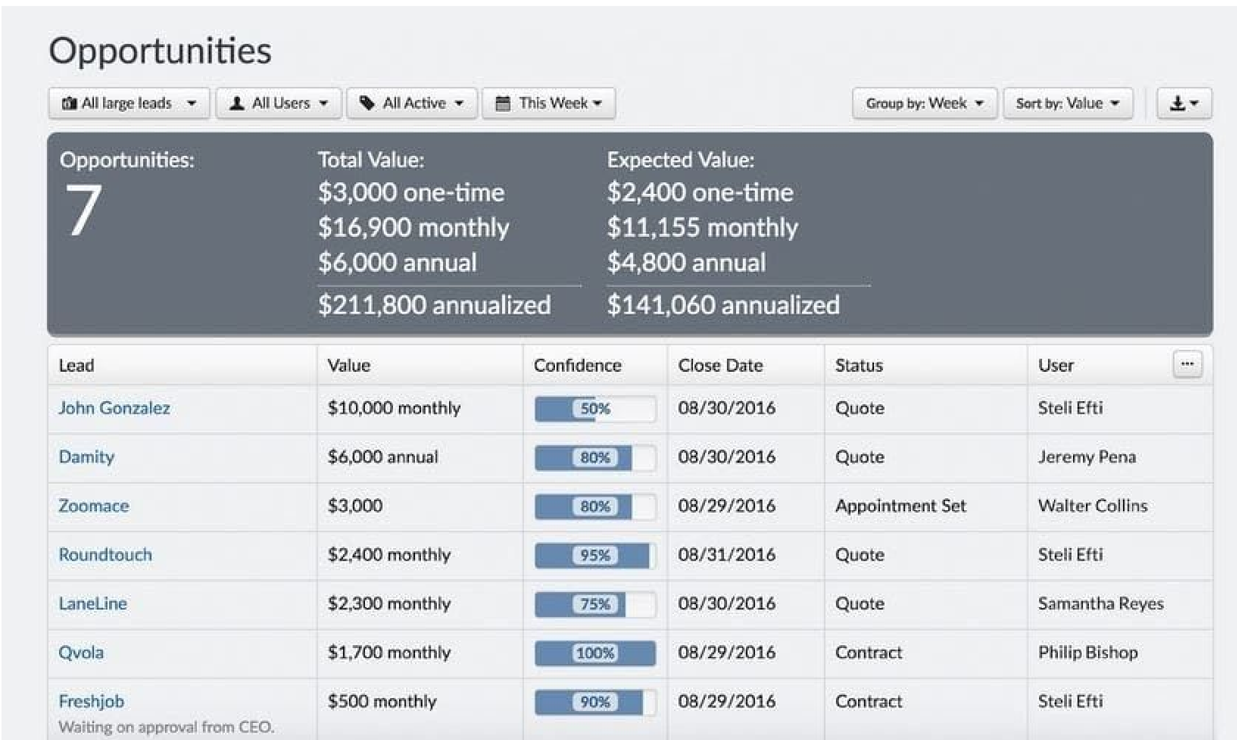
Last Quarter ▾ 2 Quarters Ago ▾

	Team Members 8 USERS	Outbound Calls ALL TYPES	Inbound Calls ALL TYPES	Sent Emails ALL TYPES
1	James Urie	1,117 ▲	188 ▲	10,787 ▲
2	Whitney Herline	189 ▲	76 ▲	3,180 ▲
3	Nick Persico	70 ▼	44 ▲	558 ▲
4	Matt Bonde	190 ▲	70 ▲	2,814 ▲
5	Alberto Nodale	82 ▼	13 ▼	1,017 ▼
6	Liz Stephany	94 ▼	62 ▼	2,074 ▲
7	Steli Efti	1 ▼	337 ▲	42 ▲
8	Madhav Bhandari	0 ▼	21 ▼	51 ▲
	Total:	**1,743**	**811**	**20,523**
	Percentage change:	20%	29%	1%

3. Prioritize the right deals

A sales pipeline CRM gives you more in-depth information about your prospects at a glance. Managers can use this information to their advantage when planning and assigning tasks to their team, and reps can use this information to better prioritize their time between different prospects.

For example, Close's opportunity reports give a clear view of important prospect information, including value and confidence level.



By using this data, you can get your priorities straight and focus on the deals that are most valuable and likely to close.

4. Provide continual training for reps

For better adoption of your sales pipeline CRM, your reps need to know how to use it. That's why continual training is such an important part of getting the most out of your CRM.

Want to get a headstart on training? Check out our master list of the top CRM training resources you can start using today.

For example, when you first purchase a new CRM, make sure the whole team is involved in learning how to use it and setting it up. When reps are allowed to help customize the pipelines and build custom reports, they'll be more motivated to use the CRM into the future.

Even once you've been using your CRM for a while, keep reps up-to-date on how it works. Get everyone involved in discovering new features, or reviewing how to accomplish certain tasks. By giving continuous CRM training, your team will be more effective at using your pipeline CRM.

Choose the right tools for your sales pipeline, and watch your revenue grow

To build a pipeline that is customized to your needs, full of relevant data, and easy to update, you'll need the right pipeline CRM. When your pipeline is powered by a CRM that suits your business, you'll see better adoption, clearer reporting, and reduced data entry.

Best of all, when you use your CRM right, your team will boost their sales productivity and pick up speed to hit their goals.

That said, it's true that a sales pipeline can be built in other places, including spreadsheets and other apps.

To create an effective spreadsheet pipeline, you'll need to use the right templates.

Check out chapter 7 of this guide to discover the best pipeline templates available right now.

Chapter 7:

13 sales pipeline templates (Excel + more) to boost your pipeline

You know that a sales pipeline is essential if you want to scale your business and grow your customer base.

But if you're a startup that's just getting off the ground, you may not have the cash to purchase new tools, such as a CRM.

That said, you need a way to keep track of your prospects and the deals in play, even if you're just looking to start with your first 10 customers.

Looking for a free tool to track your sales? Try a sales pipeline spreadsheet template that you can use in Excel, Google Sheets, or other apps.

That way, you can have your business organized as you build your first sales process and start to turn that million-dollar idea into something tangible.

In this chapter, we're going to show you a total of 13 different templates you can start using today, including:

- The best sales pipeline Excel templates (4)
- Google Sheets templates for sales pipelines (3)
- Native app sales templates: Asana, Airtable, & more (6)

The best sales pipeline Excel templates (4)

Microsoft Excel is one of the most popular spreadsheet programs, meaning you probably already have this on your computer and know how to use it.

Plus, with Office 365, you can collaborate with others on your team and keep everything up-to-date.

This tried-and-true program is perfect for building your first sales pipeline. If you're ready to dive in, here are 4 Excel templates you can download for free and start using today:

1. Free Sales Pipeline Template from Salesmate

Salesmate | Sales Pipeline Template

Q1

DEAL TITLE	CONTACT PERSON	DEAL STAGE	DEAL AMOUNT	WIN PROBABILITY	WEIGHTED FORECAST	EXPECTED CLOSE DATE	SALES REP	NEXT ACTIVITY
Amazon LLC	Jeff Bezos	New Lead	$300,000	15%	$45,000	1/22/17	Jimmy	Follow up call on 1/9/17
Tesla Motors	Elon Musk	Proposal Presented	$130,000	65%	$84,500	2/5/17	Ashley	Meeting on 1/18/17
Microsoft	Bill Gates	Qualified	$54,000	35%	$18,900	3/10/17	Bob	Follow up on 3/1/17
Your Client Compay	John Miller	Closed - Won	$75,000	100%	$75,000	3/25/17	Matt	No Action Needed
Q1 TOTAL			$559,000		$223,400			

Q2

DEAL TITLE	CONTACT PERSON	DEAL STAGE	DEAL AMOUNT	WIN PROBABILITY	WEIGHTED FORECAST	EXPECTED CLOSE DATE	SALES REP	NEXT ACTIVITY
Amazon LLC	Jeff Bezos	New Lead	$300,000	15%	$45,000	1/22/17	Jimmy	Follow up call on 1/9/17
Tesla Motors	Elon Musk	Proposal Presented	$120,000	65%	$78,000	2/5/17	Ashley	Meeting on 1/18/17
Microsoft	Bill Gates	Qualified	$54,000	35%	$18,900	3/10/17	Bob	Follow up on 3/1/17
Your Client Compay	John Miller	Closed - Won	$75,000	100%	$75,000	3/25/17	Matt	No Action Needed
Q2 TOTAL			$549,000		$216,900			

Q3

DEAL TITLE	CONTACT PERSON	DEAL STAGE	DEAL AMOUNT	WIN PROBABILITY	WEIGHTED FORECAST	EXPECTED CLOSE DATE	SALES REP	NEXT ACTIVITY
Amazon LLC	Jeff Bezos	New Lead	$300,000	15%	$45,000	1/22/17	Jimmy	Follow up call on 1/9/17
Tesla Motors	Elon Musk	Proposal Presented	$130,000	65%	$84,500	2/5/17	Ashley	Meeting on 1/18/17
Microsoft	Bill Gates	Qualified	$54,000	35%	$18,900	3/10/17	Bob	Follow up on 3/1/17
Your Client Compay	John Miller	Closed - Won	$75,000	100%	$75,000	3/25/17	Matt	No Action Needed
Q3 TOTAL			$559,000		$223,400			

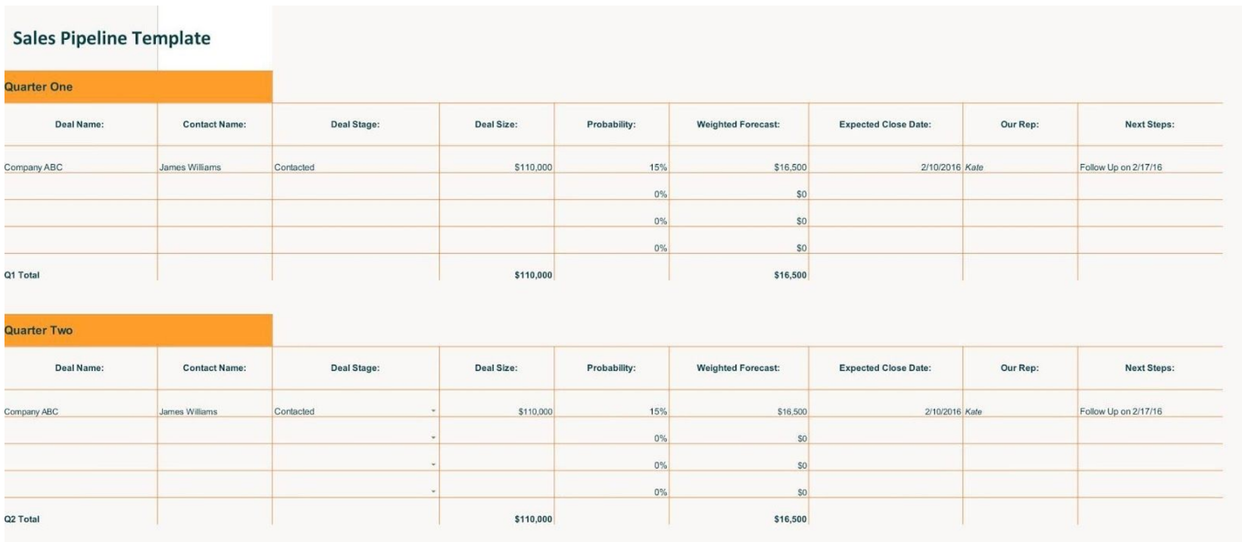
⭐ **Best feature:** Clean design and easy customization options

👤 **Who this is best for:** For new businesses just getting started with sales

🚧 **Prerequisites:** Must input an email address

If you want the ability to customize your pipeline spreadsheet, this template from Salesmate gives you all the instructions you need. Not only can you adjust your deal stages, but you can also adjust the formula for win probability to create more accurate forecasts.

2. Sales Pipeline Template from Tipsographic



Sales Pipeline Template

Quarter One

Deal Name:	Contact Name:	Deal Stage:	Deal Size:	Probability:	Weighted Forecast:	Expected Close Date:	Our Rep:	Next Steps:
Company ABC	James Williams	Contacted	$110,000	15%	$16,500	2/10/2016	*Kate*	Follow Up on 2/17/16
				0%	$0			
				0%	$0			
				0%	$0			
Q1 Total			**$110,000**		**$16,500**			

Quarter Two

Deal Name:	Contact Name:	Deal Stage:	Deal Size:	Probability:	Weighted Forecast:	Expected Close Date:	Our Rep:	Next Steps:
Company ABC	James Williams	Contacted	$110,000	15%	$16,500	2/10/2016	*Kate*	Follow Up on 2/17/16
				0%	$0			
				0%	$0			
				0%	$0			
Q2 Total			**$110,000**		**$16,500**			

- ⭐ **Best feature:** Easy to use and customize
- 👤 **Who this is best for:** For businesses with very few deals on hand
- 🚧 **Prerequisites:** None

This spreadsheet separates deals into quarters and also allows you to customize the win probability depending on the deal stage. You can also add the expected close date, the sales rep working with this customer, and notes on next steps. When downloading this template, you can choose to download as an Excel spreadsheet or open with Google Sheets and make a copy for yourself.

3. Sales Pipeline Template from Smartsheet

	LEAD			FINANCE			ACTION			ADDITIONAL INFO
	COMPANY NAME	CONTACT NAME	SALES REP	SIZE OF DEAL	PROBABILITY OF DEA	WEIGHTED FORECAST	DEAL STATU	PROJECTED CLOSING D	NEXT ACTION	NOTES
QUARTER 1				$ 1,000,000.00	75%	$ 750,000.00				
				$ 2,000,000.00	50%	$ 1,000,000.00				
				$ 500,000.00	10%	$ 50,000.00				
				$ 1,000,000.00	75%	$ 750,000.00				
				$ 2,000,000.00	50%	$ 1,000,000.00				
				$ 500,000.00	10%	$ 50,000.00				
				$ 7,000,000.00		**$ 3,600,000.00**				

	LEAD			FINANCE			ACTION			ADDITIONAL INFO
	COMPANY NAME	CONTACT NAME	SALES REP	SIZE OF DEAL	PROBABILITY OF DEA	WEIGHTED FORECAST	DEAL STATU	PROJECTED CLOSING D	NEXT ACTION	NOTES
QUARTER 2				$ 1,000,000.00	75%	$ 750,000.00				
				$ 2,000,000.00	50%	$ 1,000,000.00				
				$ 500,000.00	10%	$ 50,000.00				
				$ 1,000,000.00	75%	$ 750,000.00				
				$ 2,000,000.00	50%	$ 1,000,000.00				
				$ 500,000.00	10%	$ 50,000.00				
				$ 7,000,000.00		**$ 3,600,000.00**				

	LEAD			FINANCE			ACTION			ADDITIONAL INFO
	COMPANY NAME	CONTACT NAME	SALES REP	SIZE OF DEAL	PROBABILITY OF DEA	WEIGHTED FORECAST	DEAL STATU	PROJECTED CLOSING D	NEXT ACTION	NOTES
QUARTER 3				$ 1,000,000.00	75%	$ 750,000.00				
				$ 2,000,000.00	50%	$ 1,000,000.00				
				$ 500,000.00	10%	$ 50,000.00				
				$ 1,000,000.00	75%	$ 750,000.00				
				$ 2,000,000.00	50%	$ 1,000,000.00				

⭐ **Best feature:** Provides quarterly sales forecasts, space for next actions, and projected closing date

👤 **Who this is best for:** Designed for small businesses

🚧 **Prerequisites:** None

Designed for small businesses, this template is organized into quarters and includes all the necessary information for your pipeline. You'll be able to see the status of the deal, who is the lead rep, next actions, and even forecasted earnings for each quarter.

4. Detailed Sales Pipeline Management from Microsoft Office

<Company Name>

Detailed Sales Pipeline Management

Company Confidential

YOUR LOGO HERE

Instructions: Enter values into the white and yellow cells only.

Opportunity Name	Customer Contact	Sales Region	Lead Source	Sales Category	Forecast Amount	Sales Phase	Forecast Close
A. Datum Corporation	Kim Abercrombie	US - Northeast	Web Inquiry	Consulting	$ 150,000	Contact	January
Adventure Works	Angela Barbariol	US - Southeast	E-Mail	Products	$ 145,200	Lead	February
Alpine Ski House	Gabriele Cannata	US - North Central	Partner	Training	$ 162,500	Qualified Lead	March
Baldwin Museum of Science	Barbara S. Decker	US - South Central	Customer Reference	Mixture	$ 147,500	Opportunity	April
Blue Yonder Airlines	Susan W. Eaton	US - Northwest	Web Event	Prof. Services	$ 148,000	Executive Sponsorship	May
City Power & Light	Kathie Flood	US - Southwest	Conference	Support	$ 175,000	Proposal Discussed	June
Coho Vineyard	Janice Galvin	Canada - East	E-Mail	Mixture	$ 149,000	Written Proposal	July
Coho Winery	Adina Hagege	Canada - West	Partner	Training	$ 142,000	Contract	August
Coho Vineyard & Winery	Shu Ito	EMEA - UK	Customer Reference	Consulting	$ 189,900	Purchase Order	September
Contoso, Ltd.	David Jaffe	EMEA - France	Conference	Mixture	$ 172,500	Invoice	October
Contoso Pharmaceuticals	Sandeep Kaliyath	EMEA - Germany	E-Mail	Products	$ 163,500	Payment	November
Consolidated Messenger	Rebecca Laszlo	EMEA - Italy	Customer Reference	Products	$ 155,500	Acceptance	December
Fabrikam, Inc.	Diane Margheim	EMEA - Other	Conference	Consulting	$ 166,000	Executive Sponsorship	January
Fourth Coffee	Paula Nartker	APSA - Asia	E-Mail	Training	$ 180,000	Invoice	March
Graphic Design Institute	Robert O'Hara	APSA - Pacific	Web Inquiry	Services	$ 140,000	Contract	May
Humongous Insurance	Carol Philips	APSA - Mexico	Web Event	Support	$ 155,000	Qualified Lead	June
Litware, Inc.	Kim Ralls	APSA - Australia	Web Inquiry	Prof. Services	$ 173,200	Lead	October
Lucerne Publishing	Sharon Salavaria	APSA - Other	Partner	Services	$ 146,500	Contact	December
Margie's Travel	Andy Teal	US - Northeast	E-Mail	Support	$ 156,750	Payment	November
Northwind Traders	Sunil Uppal	US - South Central	Conference	Prof. Services	$ 162,000	Written Proposal	February
Proseware, Inc.	H. Brian Valentine	Canada - East	Customer Reference	Mixture	$ 157,000	Opportunity	March
School of Fine Art	Robert Walters	EMEA - France	Web Inquiry	Services	$ 173,000	Executive Sponsorship	April
TOTAL					$ 3,510,050		

Pipeline Input | Pipeline Calculations | Pipeline Totals

⭐ **Best feature:** Includes detailed forecasting abilities with premade calculations, plus a handy graph!

👤 **Who this is best for:** For those who need a more detailed view of their pipeline

🚧 **Prerequisites:** None

Coming straight from the creators of Excel, this template fits nicely into your favorite spreadsheet program. With three sheets, there's plenty of space to fill in the information you need. This Excel template gives you detailed forecasting, plus a visual forecast graph to help you see if you're reaching your sales goals.

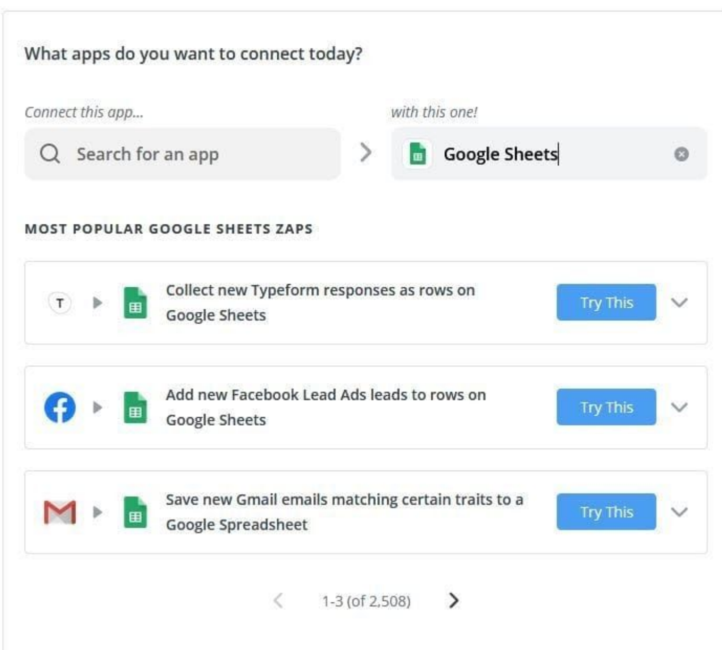
Google Sheets templates for sales pipelines (3)

As another spreadsheet program that almost everyone has used at some point, Google Sheets definitely has some serious advantages when it comes to creating your sales pipeline.

When you use Google Sheets in place of a CRM, one of the biggest advantages is that everything is stored online. That means you can collaborate in real-time with your teammates, and all the information stays current.

Another advantage of using a Google Sheets sales pipeline template is that this program can easily be linked to other tools. Using Zapier, you can create automations that add information to your spreadsheet from other sources. For example, you can create new leads in your Google Sheet when someone completes a Typeform form on your website.

In fact, there are over 2,000 connections you can make between Google Sheets and other apps in Zapier.



5. SalesTable Spreadsheet CRM Template from Close

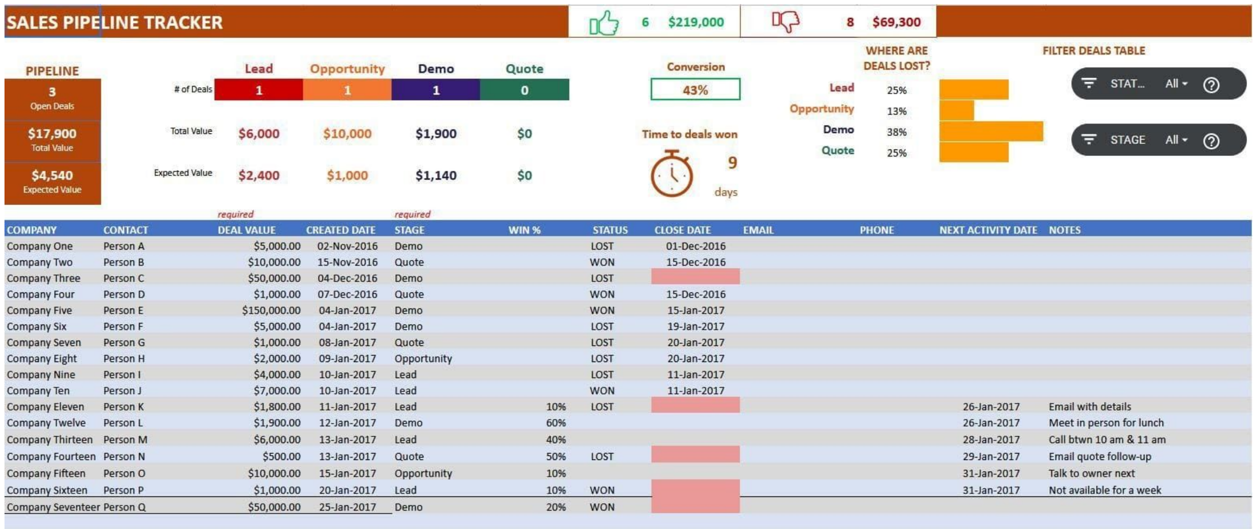
⭐ **Best feature:** Includes a simple visual dashboard to see your open, closed, and won opportunities, plus their value

👤 **Who this is best for:** Small businesses who need customization and easy visual overview of their sales

🚧 **Prerequisites:** Must input your email address to download

SalesTable is an easy, straightforward spreadsheet with a visual dashboard that summarizes your current sales efforts, plus the ability to easily track leads and their important information. You can also customize your opportunity status and sages to fit your unique workflow and sales process.

6. Sales Pipeline Tracker from Indzara



COMPANY	CONTACT	DEAL VALUE	CREATED DATE	STAGE	WIN %	STATUS	CLOSE DATE	EMAIL	PHONE	NEXT ACTIVITY DATE	NOTES
Company One	Person A	$5,000.00	02-Nov-2016	Demo		LOST	01-Dec-2016				
Company Two	Person B	$10,000.00	15-Nov-2016	Quote		WON	15-Dec-2016				
Company Three	Person C	$50,000.00	04-Dec-2016	Demo		LOST					
Company Four	Person D	$1,000.00	07-Dec-2016	Quote		WON	15-Dec-2016				
Company Five	Person E	$150,000.00	04-Jan-2017	Demo		WON	15-Jan-2017				
Company Six	Person F	$5,000.00	04-Jan-2017	Demo		LOST	19-Jan-2017				
Company Seven	Person G	$1,000.00	08-Jan-2017	Quote		LOST	20-Jan-2017				
Company Eight	Person H	$2,000.00	09-Jan-2017	Opportunity		LOST	20-Jan-2017				
Company Nine	Person I	$4,000.00	10-Jan-2017	Lead		LOST	11-Jan-2017				
Company Ten	Person J	$7,000.00	10-Jan-2017	Lead		WON	11-Jan-2017				
Company Eleven	Person K	$1,800.00	11-Jan-2017	Lead	10%	LOST				26-Jan-2017	Email with details
Company Twelve	Person L	$1,900.00	12-Jan-2017	Demo	60%					26-Jan-2017	Meet in person for lunch
Company Thirteen	Person M	$6,000.00	13-Jan-2017	Lead	40%					28-Jan-2017	Call btwn 10 am & 11 am
Company Fourteen	Person N	$500.00	13-Jan-2017	Quote	50%	LOST				29-Jan-2017	Email quote follow-up
Company Fifteen	Person O	$10,000.00	15-Jan-2017	Opportunity	10%					31-Jan-2017	Talk to owner next
Company Sixteen	Person P	$1,000.00	20-Jan-2017	Lead	10%	WON				31-Jan-2017	Not available for a week
Company Seventeer	Person Q	$50,000.00	25-Jan-2017	Demo	20%	WON					

⭐ **Best feature:** Very visually friendly, with clear graphs to decipher key data

👤 **Who this is best for:** For small business owners who love having visual data

🚧 **Prerequisites:** None

The dashboard on this template allows you to quickly see where the value is in your pipeline, what your average conversion rate is, as well as how long it takes on average to close a deal. You'll also see which stage is losing more deals on average, and total value vs. expected value based on win confidence.

7. Pipeline Tracker Spreadsheet from Sales Hacker

QUARTER 1	OPPTY			ECONOMICS			PIPELINE DATA			
	COMPANY NAME	CONTACT NAME	SALES REP	SIZE OF DEAL	PROBABILITY OF DEAL	WEIGHTED FORECAST	PIPELINE STAGE	PROJECTED CLOSING DATE	NEXT ACTION	NOTES
				$250,000.00	75%	$187,500.00				
				$500,000.00	50%	$250,000.00				
				$100,000.00	10%	$10,000.00				
				$200,000.00	75%	$150,000.00				
				$400,000.00	50%	$200,000.00				
				$1,000,000.00	10%	$100,000.00				
				$7,000,000.00		**$3,600,000.00**				

QUARTER 2	OPPTY			ECONOMICS			PIPELINE DATA			
	COMPANY NAME	CONTACT NAME	SALES REP	SIZE OF DEAL	PROBABILITY OF DEAL	WEIGHTED FORECAST	PIPELINE STAGE	PROJECTED CLOSING DATE	NEXT ACTION	NOTES
				$250,000.00	75%	$187,500.00				
				$500,000.00	50%	$250,000.00				
				$100,000.00	10%	$10,000.00				
				$200,000.00	75%	$150,000.00				
				$400,000.00	50%	$200,000.00				
				$1,000,000.00	10%	$100,000.00				
				$7,000,000.00		**$3,600,000.00**				

QUARTER 3	OPPTY			ECONOMICS			PIPELINE DATA			
	COMPANY NAME	CONTACT NAME	SALES REP	SIZE OF DEAL	PROBABILITY OF DEAL	WEIGHTED FORECAST	PIPELINE STAGE	PROJECTED CLOSING DATE	NEXT ACTION	NOTES
				$250,000.00	75%	$187,500.00				
				$500,000.00	50%	$250,000.00				
				$100,000.00	10%	$10,000.00				
				$200,000.00	75%	$150,000.00				
				$400,000.00	50%	$200,000.00				
				$1,000,000.00	10%	$100,000.00				
				$7,000,000.00		**$3,600,000.00**				

QUARTER 4	OPPTY			ECONOMICS			PIPELINE DATA			
	COMPANY NAME	CONTACT NAME	SALES REP	SIZE OF DEAL	PROBABILITY OF DEAL	WEIGHTED FORECAST	PIPELINE STAGE	PROJECTED CLOSING DATE	NEXT ACTION	NOTES
				$250,000.00	75%	$187,500.00				
				$500,000.00	50%	$250,000.00				

⭐ **Best feature:** Information separated by opportunity info, economics, and pipeline data

👤 **Who this is best for:** Businesses who need to see sales data separated by quarter

🚧 **Prerequisites:** None

Everything a small business needs to keep track of their pipeline: with space to add the probability of the deal, weighted forecast, pipeline stage, and notes. Just copy this Google Doc to your own Drive and get started!

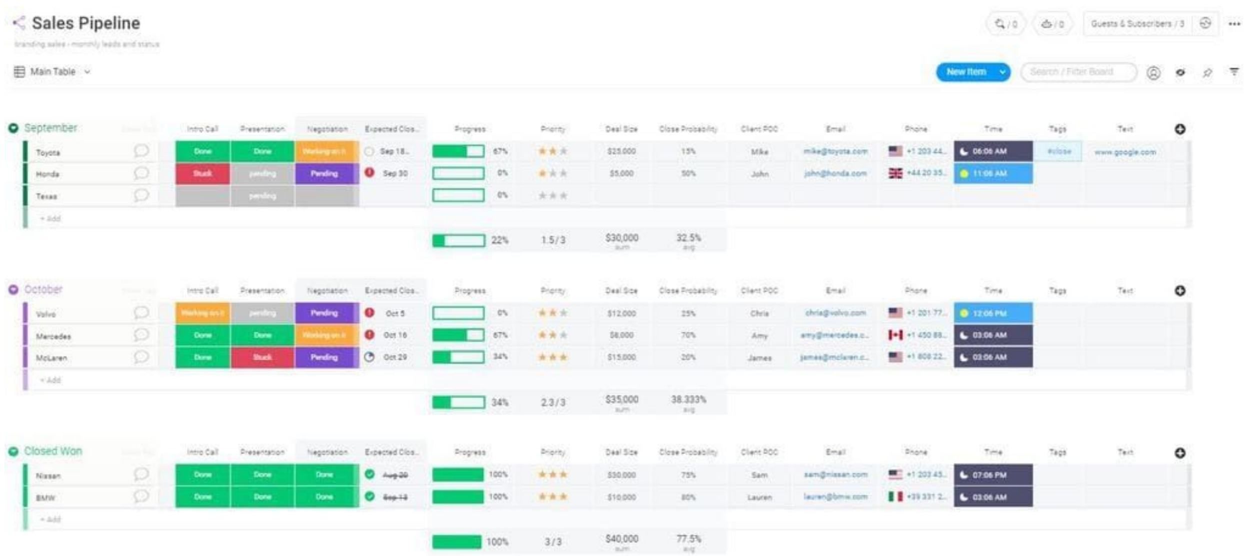
Native app sales pipeline templates: Asana, Airtable, & more (6)

While Excel and Sheets are popular options, they're not the only programs you can use to create an easy, online sales pipeline.

Many of the productivity apps we use every day have integrated templates for sales pipelines.

Check out the 6 best templates that our favorite productivity apps have created:

8. Sales Pipeline Template from Monday.com



⭐ **Best feature:** Great visual view and productivity features from a productivity app

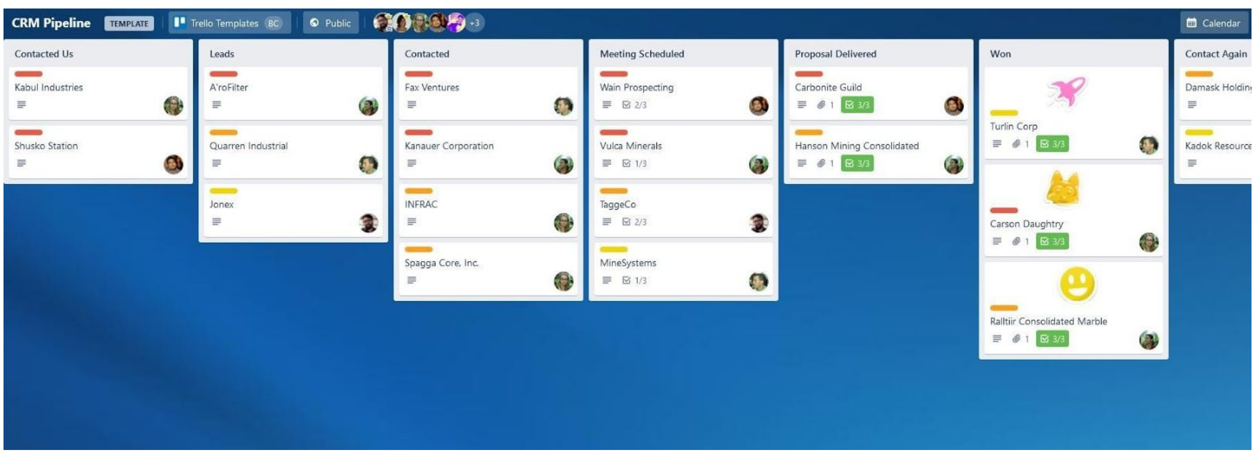
👤 **Who this is best for:** For teams with multiple reps or prospects in multiple countries

🚧 **Prerequisites:** Must have an account with Monday.com (basic plan starts at $39 per month)

Productivity app Monday.com offers this great template for users. It includes excellent visuals, such as a progress bar, color-coded task updates, time zones for businesses with international customers, and expected close dates that turn red when you go past. There's also a star rating for the priority of deals, and customizable labels for quick organization.

Monday.com makes collaboration easy, and you can add guests and subscribers to your pipeline. The only downside is that you'll have to pay for their upgraded version if you have more than 5 reps on your team.

9. CRM Pipeline from Trello



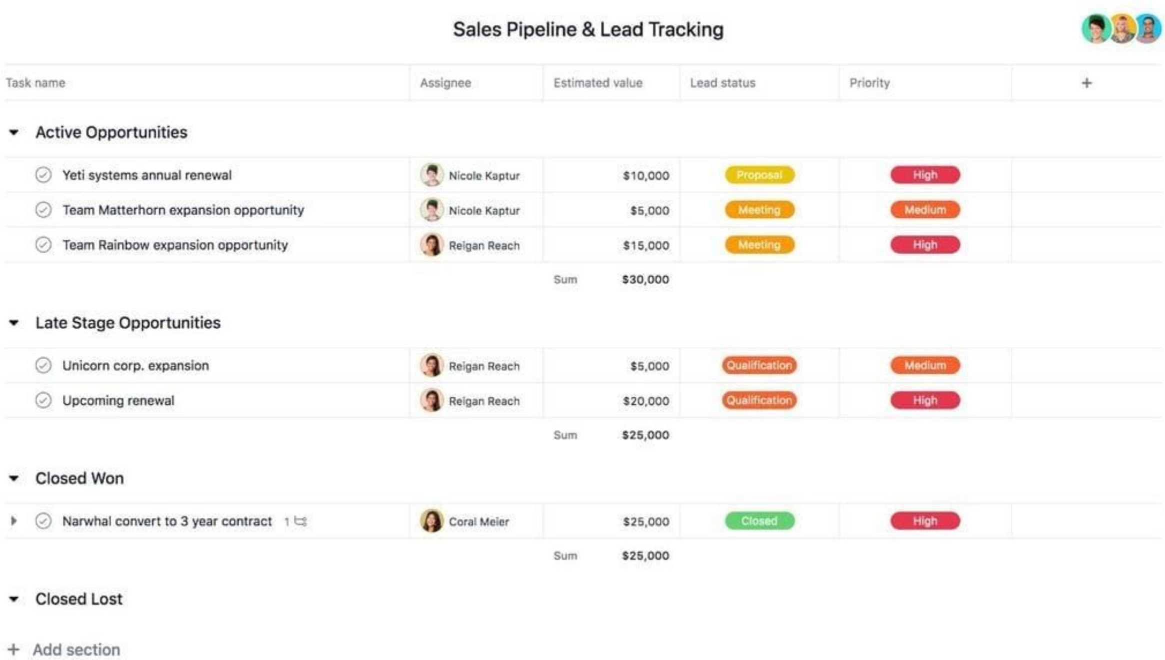
☆ **Best feature:** A Kanban-based pipeline that uses custom tags to help you see which prospects are the most promising

👤 **Who this is best for:** For small businesses who love Kanban

🚧 **Prerequisites:** Must have a Trello account (Works best with Business Class, starting at $9.99 per user, per month)

This Trello board template allows you to add teammates, assign tasks to them, and organize your prospects with custom tags. You can also add more information in the descriptions, and add custom checklists for important tasks. The collaboration features in Trello also help you talk with your team through comments and discuss next steps or ideas.

10. Sales Pipeline and Lead Tracking from Asana



Sales Pipeline & Lead Tracking

Task name	Assignee	Estimated value	Lead status	Priority
Active Opportunities				
Yeti systems annual renewal	Nicole Kaptur	$10,000	Proposal	High
Team Matterhorn expansion opportunity	Nicole Kaptur	$5,000	Meeting	Medium
Team Rainbow expansion opportunity	Reigan Reach	$15,000	Meeting	High
	Sum	$30,000		
Late Stage Opportunities				
Unicorn corp. expansion	Reigan Reach	$5,000	Qualification	Medium
Upcoming renewal	Reigan Reach	$20,000	Qualification	High
	Sum	$25,000		
Closed Won				
Narwhal convert to 3 year contract 1	Coral Meier	$25,000	Closed	High
	Sum	$25,000		
Closed Lost				
+ Add section				

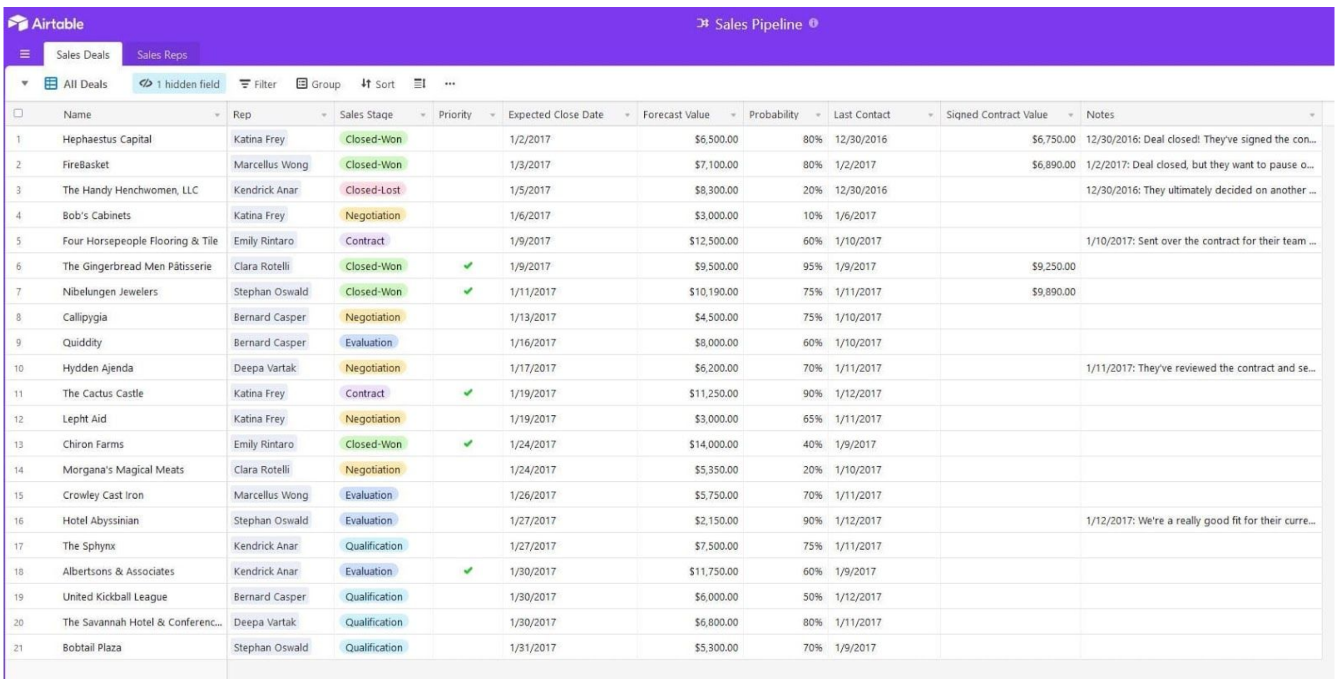
⭐ **Best feature:** Productivity with tasks and better sales overviews all wrapped into one neat package

👤 **Who this is best for:** For small sales teams with big goals

🚧 **Prerequisites:** Must have an Asana account (Free account for less than 15 users, or paid versions starting at $10.99 per user, per month)

Since Asana is a productivity-based app, it's no surprise this template is easy-to-use and extremely intuitive. But it gives you something the other native app templates don't: the ability to forecast. In your lists, you can see all active opportunities and their estimated value, plus add custom lead statuses and priorities for each prospect. You'll see a sum of the value below each section, helping you forecast better and keep track of what your team is doing.

11. Sales Pipeline Template from Airtable



	Name	Rep	Sales Stage	Priority	Expected Close Date	Forecast Value	Probability	Last Contact	Signed Contract Value	Notes
1	Hephaestus Capital	Katina Frey	Closed-Won		1/2/2017	$6,500.00	80%	12/30/2016	$6,750.00	12/30/2016: Deal closed! They've signed the con...
2	FireBasket	Marcellus Wong	Closed-Won		1/3/2017	$7,100.00	80%	1/2/2017	$6,890.00	1/2/2017: Deal closed, but they want to pause o...
3	The Handy Henchwomen, LLC	Kendrick Anar	Closed-Lost		1/5/2017	$8,300.00	20%	12/30/2016		12/30/2016: They ultimately decided on another ...
4	Bob's Cabinets	Katina Frey	Negotiation		1/6/2017	$3,000.00	10%	1/6/2017		
5	Four Horsepeople Flooring & Tile	Emily Rintaro	Contract		1/9/2017	$12,500.00	60%	1/10/2017		1/10/2017: Sent over the contract for their team ...
6	The Gingerbread Men Pâtisserie	Clara Rotelli	Closed-Won	✔	1/9/2017	$9,500.00	95%	1/9/2017	$9,250.00	
7	Nibelungen Jewelers	Stephan Oswald	Closed-Won	✔	1/11/2017	$10,190.00	75%	1/11/2017	$9,890.00	
8	Callipygia	Bernard Casper	Negotiation		1/13/2017	$4,500.00	75%	1/10/2017		
9	Quiddity	Bernard Casper	Evaluation		1/16/2017	$8,000.00	60%	1/10/2017		
10	Hydden Ajenda	Deepa Vartak	Negotiation		1/17/2017	$6,200.00	70%	1/11/2017		1/11/2017: They've reviewed the contract and se...
11	The Cactus Castle	Katina Frey	Contract	✔	1/19/2017	$11,250.00	90%	1/12/2017		
12	Lepht Aid	Katina Frey	Negotiation		1/19/2017	$3,000.00	65%	1/11/2017		
13	Chiron Farms	Emily Rintaro	Closed-Won	✔	1/24/2017	$14,000.00	40%	1/9/2017		
14	Morgana's Magical Meats	Clara Rotelli	Negotiation		1/24/2017	$5,350.00	20%	1/10/2017		
15	Crowley Cast Iron	Marcellus Wong	Evaluation		1/26/2017	$5,750.00	70%	1/11/2017		
16	Hotel Abyssinian	Stephan Oswald	Evaluation		1/27/2017	$2,150.00	90%	1/12/2017		1/12/2017: We're a really good fit for their curre...
17	The Sphynx	Kendrick Anar	Qualification		1/27/2017	$7,500.00	75%	1/11/2017		
18	Albertsons & Associates	Kendrick Anar	Evaluation	✔	1/30/2017	$11,750.00	60%	1/9/2017		
19	United Kickball League	Bernard Casper	Qualification		1/30/2017	$6,000.00	50%	1/12/2017		
20	The Savannah Hotel & Conferenc...	Deepa Vartak	Qualification		1/30/2017	$6,800.00	80%	1/11/2017		
21	Bobtail Plaza	Stephan Oswald	Qualification		1/31/2017	$5,300.00	70%	1/9/2017		

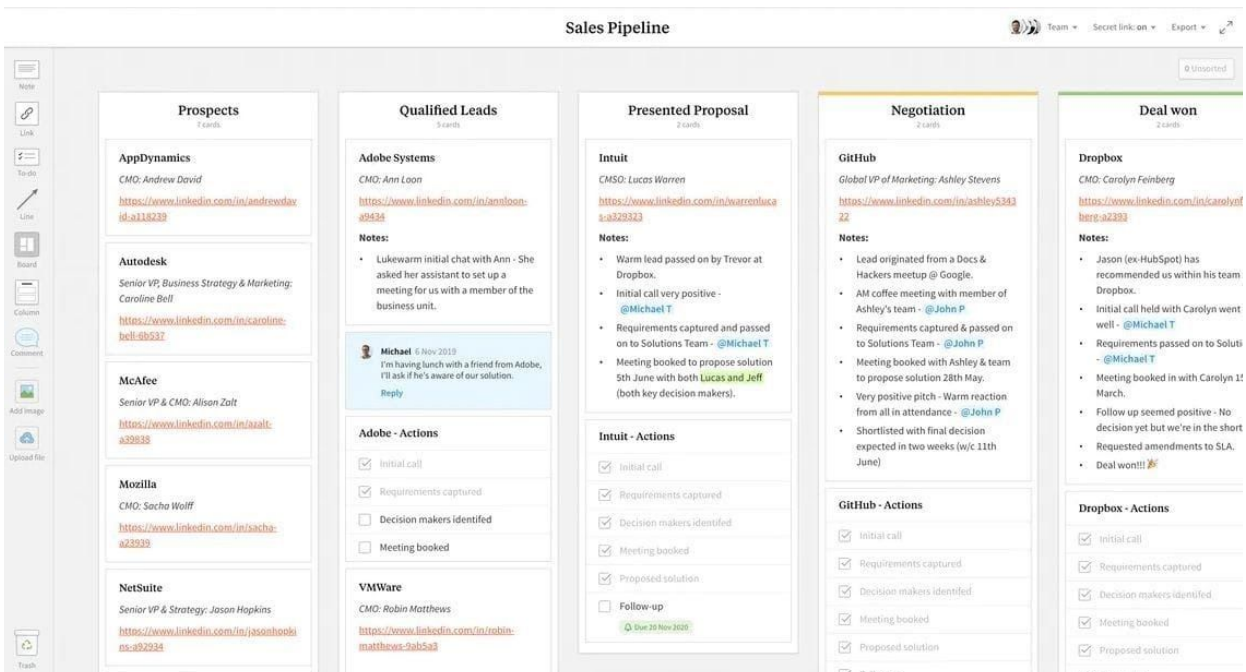
⭐ **Best feature:** Intuitive and detailed template for more advanced teams

👤 **Who this is best for:** For anyone who loves Airtable, or teams who need easy collaboration

🚧 **Prerequisites:** Must have an account with Airtable

For fans of Airtable, this template is extremely intuitive and powerful. You can easily switch views from a list to a Kanban board, an expected close calendar, or a list grouped by the rep assigned to each deal. Airtable also allows you to open up records, work through the data, and add comments for your teammates. You can even customize your view by adding Blocks (like add-ons) with custom charts, batch updates, maps, and more!

12. Sales Pipeline Template from Milanote



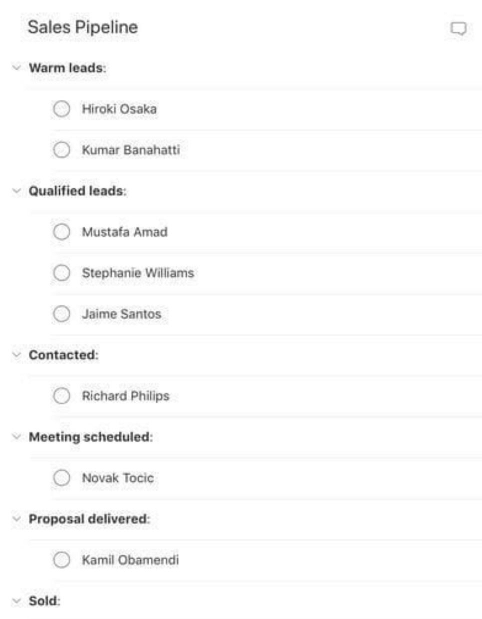
⭐ **Best feature:** A creative, fully-customizable pipeline view that allows you to organize and annotate to your heart's content

👤 **Who this is best for:** For creative souls who want full control over their pipeline

🚧 **Prerequisites:** Must have an account with Milanote (Free, or paid version starting at $9.99 per month)

If you're a creative at heart and want to mind-map your way through a sales pipeline, Milanote's template is the right place to start. This is a great tool for small sales teams or freelancers who want to customize how they view their pipeline. Easily add notes and tasks, and tag coworkers in the comments. You can also add due dates and assignees to your tasks, and the drag-and-drop aspect makes your pipeline easy to adjust and update.

13. Sales Pipeline Template from Todoist



⭐ **Best feature:** For a no-fuss pipeline, a simple list view of your leads and their status

👤 **Who this is best for:** For solopreneurs and freelancers with few deals to handle at a time

🚧 **Prerequisites:** Must have an account with Todoist (the free version should be fine)

While admittedly more of a to-do list than a pipeline, Todoist's template allows you to add your leads and their details, then organize them by their status. This is a simple way to keep track of a few leads for freelancers or solopreneurs who are just getting started.

Create your own sales pipeline today

When you’re just starting to grow your business, it can be hard to justify investing in software and tools.

That’s why these sales pipeline templates are perfect for new startups who are just getting off the ground. They’re easy to set up and use, they’re great for online collaboration with teammates, and they’ll help you organize those first few deals in your pipeline.

But while using a spreadsheet sales pipeline is great at first, there is one serious disadvantage: None of these were built to scale the way your business will over the next few years.

That means your startup will eventually outgrow the sales pipeline spreadsheet template you’re using.

You’ll know when it’s time to move to something better suited for your business when:

- You start losing important information about current deals
- You grow your sales team to more than one or two people
- Multiple people on your team start accidentally calling the same prospects

When these things start to happen, you’ll know it’s time to take a step up and invest in a sales pipeline CRM that can handle all the new deals you’re raking in.

Your business is going to keep growing, and the tools you use should be able to grow with you. With a truly versatile CRM (like Close) you'll not only be able to create your sales pipeline: you'll be able to analyze, iterate, and expand your pipeline as your business grows to its full potential.