



# HOW TO BUILD PIPELINE HEROES

And why it is critical in 2024

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CHAPTER 1

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# THE GOLDEN AGE OF PIPELINE BUILDING

# PIPELINE BUILDING PRE-2003: A LOOK BACK

In the early days of pipeline building, sales strategies were relatively straightforward and highly effective. The process typically involved a few key steps: calling a prospect, having a discovery meeting, engaging qualified prospects, and nurturing future opportunities until they were ready to buy. This method was efficient and produced reliable results.

## **Effective Techniques of the Past**

Before 2003, building a pipeline felt like a natural progression. Sales reps would dial prospects, often connecting at a rate of 8:1, leading to conversations every four minutes on average. Messaging was typically directed through executive assistants (EAs), and voicemails had a high return rate of over 15%. Email communications were personal and direct, usually on a 1:1 basis, ensuring that messages were tailored and relevant to the recipient.

## **The Decline Begins**

However, as time went on, several factors began to erode this strong pipeline culture. The advent of new technologies, changing market dynamics, and evolving buyer behaviours started to complicate the process. Sales reps found it increasingly difficult to reach decision-makers, leading to frustration and a noticeable decline in pipeline quality and quantity.



**PIPELINE CULTURE USED TO BE STRONG:**

**BUILDING PIPELINE TO THE YEAR 2000 **WAS** EASIER.**



**1. CALL A PROSPECT**



**2. HAVE A DISCOVERY MEETING**



**3. ENGAGE QUALIFIED PROSPECTS**



**4. NURTURE FUTURE OPPORTUNITIES  
UNTIL READY TO BUY**

CHAPTER 2

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# THE MODERN PIPELINE CRISIS

# THEN VS NOW

Frustration abounds

## 25 YEARS AGO

Dial to connect rate = **3:1**

Conversation every **4 minutes** on average

Messaging worked through EA's, admins & voicemail had high return @ > 15%

Email: 1:1

## NOW

Dial to connect rate = **23:1**

Conversation every **68 minutes** on average

Voicemail response < **1%**

Email: 1: many

This sea change has left a generation of sellers too **frustrated** to call decision makers to generate essential pipeline. **It is too unproductive to bother with** became the prevailing sentiment.

**PROSPECTS DISAPPEARED BEHIND A WALL OF TECHNOLOGY,  
RENDERING THEM ALMOST UNREACHABLE...**





# THE MODERN PIPELINE CRISIS

## **Technological Barriers**

The digital revolution brought about significant changes in how prospects could be reached. Innovations such as voicemail, caller ID, and interactive voice response (IVR) systems created new barriers, making it harder for sales reps to connect with potential buyers. These technologies, while improving efficiency in some areas, also added layers of complexity that hindered direct communication.

## **The Impact of Voicemail, Caller ID, and IVR**

Voicemail became ubiquitous, making it easy for prospects to screen calls and avoid unwanted sales pitches. Caller ID allowed prospects to identify and ignore sales calls, while IVR systems added another layer of difficulty, often preventing reps from reaching a live person. These barriers significantly reduced the effectiveness of traditional pipeline-building techniques.

## **The Flood of Digital Communication**

The rise of email and digital communication channels added to the challenge. Prospects became inundated with messages, making it harder for individual emails to stand out. The sheer volume of communications overwhelmed both prospects and their email servers, leading to lower response rates and increased frustration among sales reps.



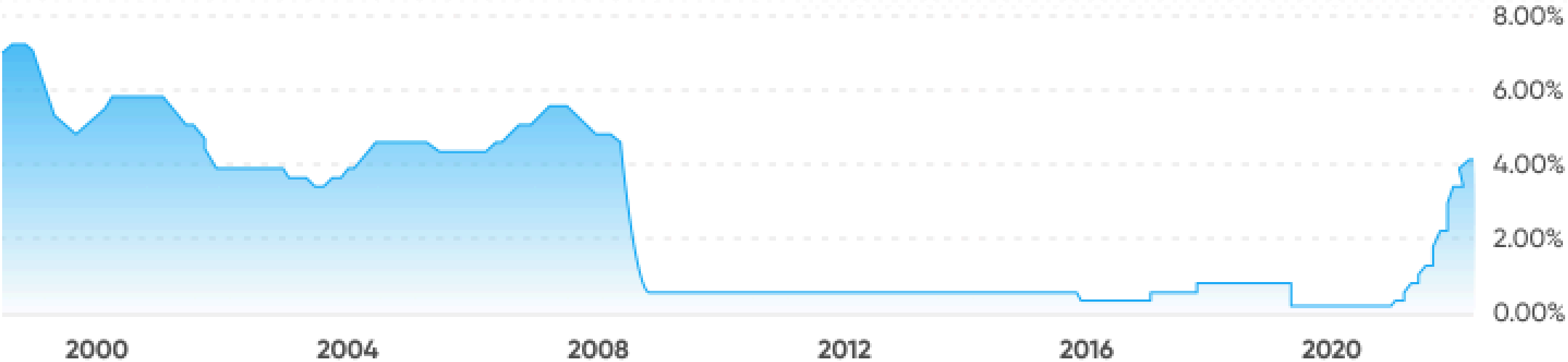
## CHAPTER 3

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# THE RISE AND FALL OF SALES DEVELOPMENT

# PROPPED UP BY RECORD-LOW INTEREST RATES PIPELINE CULTURE RADICALLY CHANGED

BOE'S INTEREST RATE, 1998 - 2023



Past performance is not a reliable indicator of future results

Source: BoE, via TradingEconomics

# THE RISE AND FALL OF SALES DEVELOPMENT CONTINUED

## **2008 and the Shift in Pipeline Culture**

The year 2008 marked a significant shift in pipeline culture. Economic factors, including record-low interest rates, spurred investments in sales and marketing technologies. Venture capitalists and the sales tech industry declared pipeline culture dead, focusing instead on automation and mass outreach strategies.

## **The Promise and Pitfalls of Prospecting Technology**

The second wave of prospecting technology promised a golden age of effortless human-to-human conversations. Digital targeted advertising, instant response to web forms, robotic social network outreach, and mass personalization through email orchestration and chatbots were all touted as solutions to the pipeline crisis. However, these technologies often fell short of their promises, leading to further decline in pipeline quality.

## **Current Challenges in Sales Development**

Today, sales development faces numerous challenges. Dedicated sales development representatives (SDRs) are setting appointments at the lowest rates ever measured, with quota attainment dropping below 50%. Sales leaders, including Chief Revenue Officers, are changing jobs frequently, barely staying long enough to see if their strategies can make a difference. The focus on top-of-the-market prospects and failure to understand selling windows have contributed to widespread frustration and inefficiency.



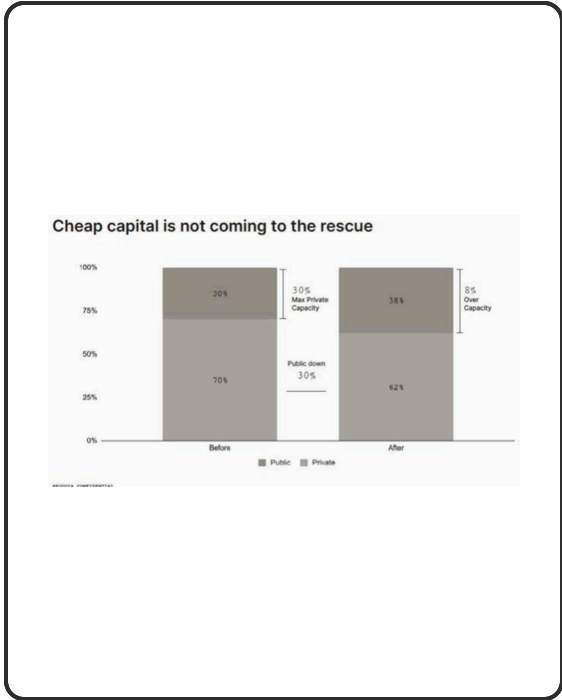
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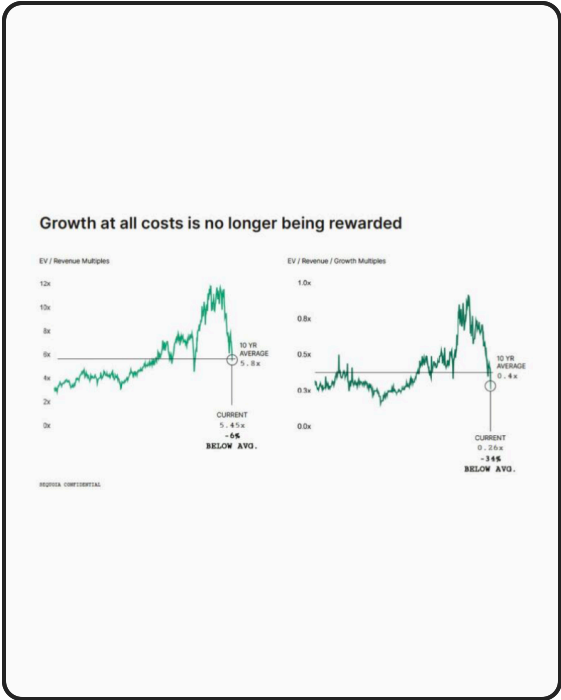
# THE NEED FOR PIPELINE HEROES

# “GROWTH AT ALL COSTS HAS BEEN REPLACED BY MEASURED GROWTH AS HIGH TECH COMPANIES ENTER THE AGE OF EFFICIENCY”

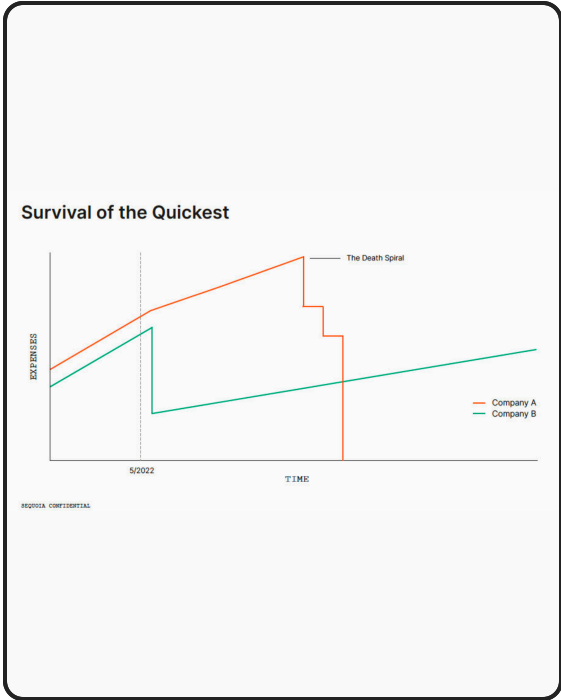
- Jos White, Founder of MessageLabs (Acq by Symantec) and Prinicpal at Notion Capital



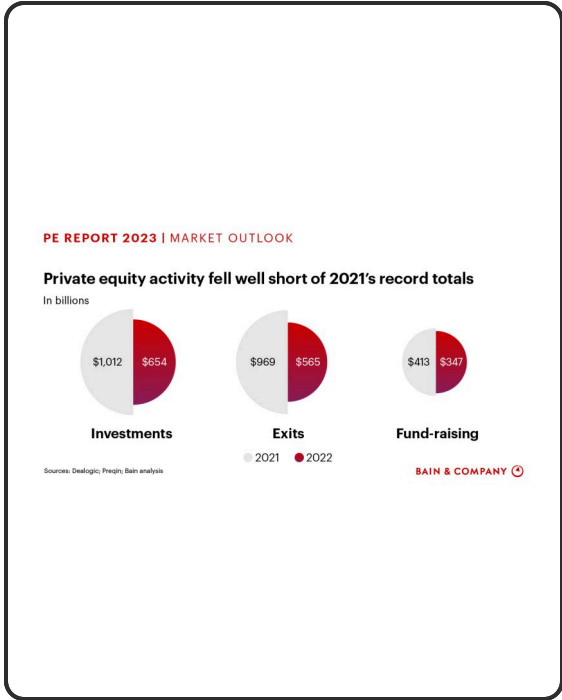
**CAPITAL WAS FREE, NOW IT IS EXPENSIVE**



**GROWTH AT ALL COSTS IS NO LONGER BEING REWARDED**



**SPEED IS COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE**

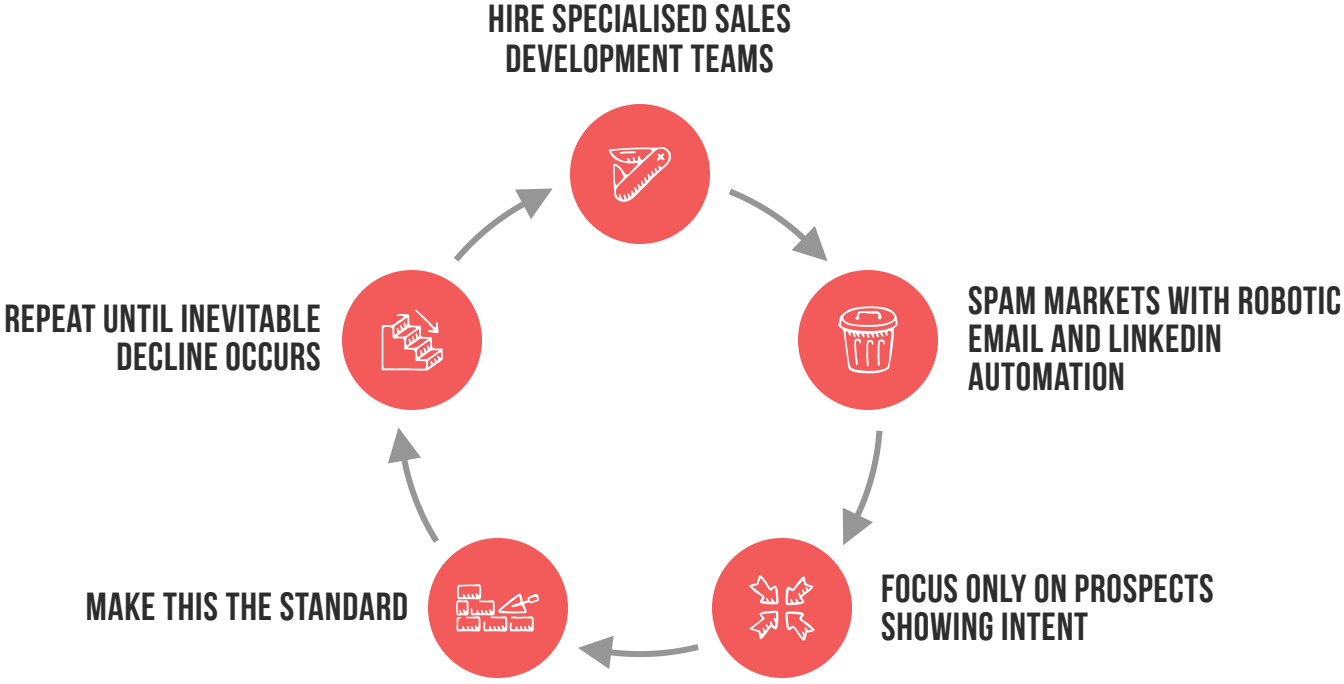


**INVESTMENTS, BUY-OUTS AND EXITS ALL DOWN**

Research: Sequoia Capital, Adapting to endure, Founder All Hands, May 2022, and <https://www.bain.com/insights/private-equity-outlook-global-private-equity-report-2022>



# DESPITE THIS NEW REALITY, WITH SALES AUTOMATION AND MACRO SHOCKS, LEADERSHIP STILL INVESTS IT'S TIME AND MONEY EXECUTING THE SAME "DEATH SPIRAL" PLAYBOOK



THE CONSEQUENCES ARE DISASTROUS. DEDICATED SALES DEVELOPMENT REPS ARE SETTING APPOINTMENTS AT THE **LOWEST RATE EVER MEASURED**. QUOTA ATTAINMENT BY B2B REPS HAS **DROPPED BELOW 50%**. AND SALES LEADERS, INCLUDING CHIEF REVENUE OFFICERS, ARE CHANGING JOBS, VOLUNTARILY OR INVOLUNTARILY, IN AN AVERAGE OF 17 MONTHS - BARELY LONG ENOUGH TO SEE IF THEIR TECHNIQUES AND TECHNOLOGIES CAN MOVE THE NEEDLE.



# THE NEED FOR PIPELINE HEROES

## Characteristics of Pipeline Heroes

Pipeline Heroes are elite sales reps who possess the skills and mindset needed to thrive in the modern sales landscape. They are experts at having meaningful conversations, building trust, and gaining market insights. They are not just tactical executors but strategic thinkers who understand the importance of personalized, human-to-human interactions.

## Strategic vs. Tactical Work

In the past, pipeline building was a strategic endeavor involving high-level planning and decision-making. Today, it has become more tactical, with sales reps executing predefined steps. However, for Pipeline Heroes, the strategic element remains crucial. They are empowered to make decisions and adapt their approaches based on real-time insights and market conditions.

**The Role of Elite Sales Reps** Elite sales reps, or Pipeline Heroes, are fully enabled with world-class equipment and strategic coaching. They can have 30-40 conversations a day, supported by expert data and list analysts. They are precise, fast, and cost-effective, leveraging data-driven, system-oriented approaches to maximize relevance and minimize waste.





## CHAPTER 5

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# BUILDING YOUR PIPELINE HEROES TEAM



**...INTRODUCE A CULTURE OF PIPELINEHEROES AT THE HEART OF YOUR GO-TO-MARKET STRATEGIES AND OPERATING RHYTHM**



# BUILDING YOUR PIPELINE HEROES TEAM

## Identifying Key Roles

To build a team of Pipeline Heroes, it's essential to identify and cultivate key roles:

-  **THE TECHNICIAN: MASTERS THE TOOLS AND TECHNOLOGIES USED IN PIPELINE BUILDING.**
-  **THE CONVERSATIONALIST: EXCELS IN ENGAGING PROSPECTS AND BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS.**
-  **THE ANALYST: PROVIDES DATA-DRIVEN INSIGHTS AND OPTIMIZES STRATEGIES.**
-  **THE TIMELORD: MANAGES TIME EFFICIENTLY TO MAXIMIZE PRODUCTIVITY AND ARGUABLY THE LEADER**
-  **THE TEACHER: COACHES AND MENTORS THE TEAM, SHARING BEST PRACTICES AND KNOWLEDGE.**



# YOUR CORE PIPELINE "AVENGERS"?



**THE TECHNICIAN**



**THE TIMELORD**



**THE CONVERSATIONALIST**



**THE TEACHER**



**THE ANALYST**

**ROLE GENERALISATION  
KILLS EXECUTION AND  
COSTS MUCH MORE IN  
SHADOW COSTS THAN  
HIRING FOCUSED  
SPECIALISTS WITH  
SUPER POWERS**



DAILY EXECUTION: PERSONA/SEGMENT/INDUSTRY/GEO FOCUS IN EACH CALL BLOCK

# SPRINT DEVELOPMENT - EXECUTION EXAMPLE - SDR'S

Agile works

MONDAY

90 MINUTE CAMPAIGN SESSION

FOLLOW UP

ANALYSIS & TEAM FEEDBACK

90 MINUTE CAMPAIGN

FOLLOW UP

TUESDAY

90 MINUTE CAMPAIGN SESSION

FOLLOW UP

ANALYSIS & TEAM FEEDBACK

90 MINUTE CAMPAIGN

FOLLOW UP

WEDNESDAY

90 MINUTE CAMPAIGN SESSION

FOLLOW UP

ANALYSIS & TEAM FEEDBACK

90 MINUTE CAMPAIGN

FOLLOW UP

THURSDAY

90 MINUTE CAMPAIGN SESSION

FOLLOW UP

ANALYSIS & TEAM FEEDBACK

90 MINUTE CAMPAIGN

FOLLOW UP

FRIDAY

90 MINUTE CAMPAIGN SESSION

FOLLOW UP

ANALYSIS & TEAM FEEDBACK

90 MINUTE CAMPAIGN SESSION

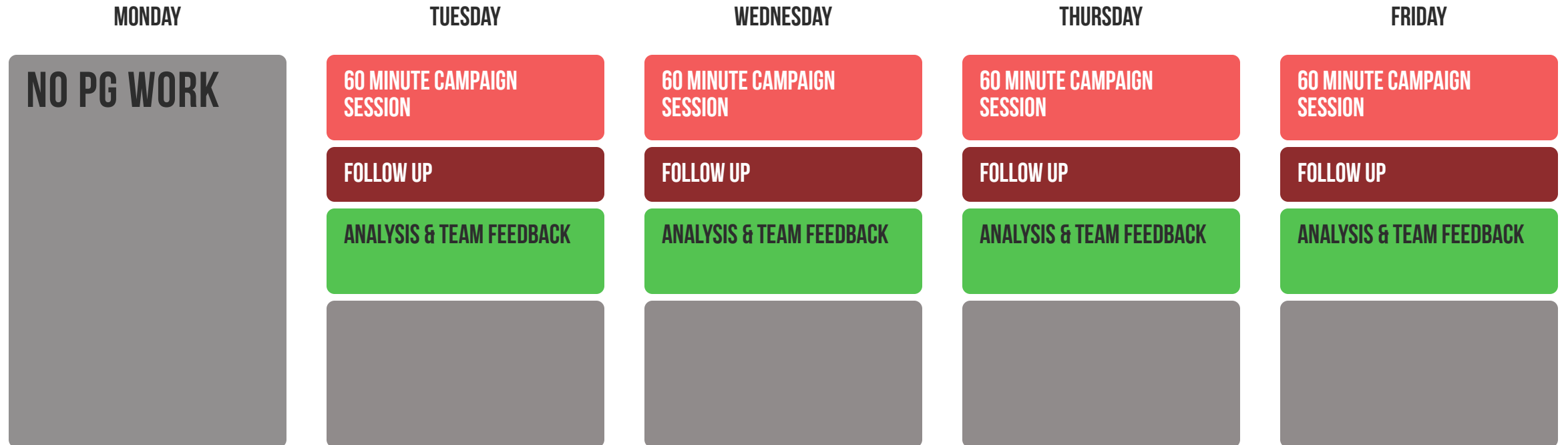
FOLLOW UP

MANAGEMENT WRAPPER: GAMIFICATION & COACHING AT SCALE

DAILY EXECUTION: PERSONA/SEGMENT/INDUSTRY/GEO FOCUS IN EACH CALL BLOCK

# SPRINT DEVELOPMENT - EXECUTION EXAMPLE - ACCOUNT EXECUTIVES

Agile works



**MANAGEMENT WRAPPER: GAMIFICATION & COACHING AT SCALE**

CHAPTER 6

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**OVERCOMING PERCEIVED  
MODERN SALES CHALLENGES**

# OVERCOMING PERCEIVED MODERN SALES CHALLENGES

## **Removing Bottlenecks**

Identifying and eliminating bottlenecks in the sales process is crucial. This might involve streamlining workflows, improving communication channels, and leveraging automation where appropriate to free up reps' time for high-value activities.

## **Restructuring for Success**

Restructuring the sales team and processes can lead to significant improvements in performance. This might include redefining roles, implementing new strategies, and fostering a culture of collaboration and continuous improvement.

## **Gamifying the Process**

Gamification can be a powerful motivator for sales teams. By introducing game-like elements such as points, leaderboards, and rewards, you can increase engagement and drive better performance.

## **Aggregating Data for Scale**

Aggregating and analyzing data at scale allows for more effective coaching and decision-making. By correlating skills to business outcomes, you can identify areas for improvement and tailor coaching to address specific needs.





## CHAPTER 7

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# REAL-WORLD EXAMPLES AND SUCCESS STORIES

# IN REAL LIFE

*Moving sellers from a conversation every 90 minutes to a conversation every 4 minutes. Imagine 850-1200% improvement on time and cost changing your pipeline culture.*

Industry	Pipeline \$	Pipe\$/RepHr	RepHrs	Convs	Meetings	Return On rep labour	ROCS (Return on conversation spend)**
Commercial real estate	\$172,051,629	\$1,573,495	109	3,018	185	\$3,147	\$1,710
Training	\$65,840,831	\$380,657	173	1,137	55	\$761	\$17,372
Security Saas	\$66,815,272	\$83,650	799	3,835	341	\$167	\$5,227
Collaboration Software	\$238,874,041	\$21,966	10,875	96,730	6,734	\$44	\$741



# READY TO CREATE PIPELINEHEROES IN YOUR BUSINESS?

