SALES INTROVERTS

SEVEN HABITS OF

ELITE SELLERS

Introduction

In my first full fiscal year at MongoDB my org achieved 163% of my revenue target.

We accomplished this with minimal ecosystem support:

- One SDR for 30+ AEs
- No dedicated marketing resource
- Fewer than two inbounds per rep for the entire year

Not to mention the terrible economic conditions.

I created this resource to share best practices from the people who made our successful year happen: the reps.

No organization can have success without a group of individuals that blow through their targets.

And, as much fun as I'd have writing about the macro decisions I made to unblock my sellers, I thought it would be more valuable for you to hear from them.

So, I asked eleven of my top Account Executives to share what drove their success. Some of these reps were ramped and experienced. Some were brand new and finding ways to contribute.

I found the consistent patterns in what the reps told me made them successful, and seven traits/skills stood out.

I'm thrilled to share their insights with you.

Urgency

A great quote from a team member was, "Pipeline Generation is your oxygen. A deep sea diver never lets anyone else control their oxygen supply."

Each of these reps understood that "sales math" rarely favors the rep. Once you take out weekends, holidays, and PTO, there are fewer than sixty selling days per quarter.

So no time can be wasted.

Here's how they made the most of each day:

    1) Quick to pivot

"When something wasn't working, I immediately got feedback from teammates and iterated the approach."

Consistency alone won't make you successful. You need consistency + iteration to ensure you are going the right direction.

    2) Sell with urgency

If a deal doesn't have urgency it's not happening. Time kills deals, and no next step means no deal.

These reps went into each call with a plan for the current call, plus an idea of what the next call should cover. To make sure it was a good plan, they worked with their manager and solution architect to identify the gaps in their deal and how they could be closed.

Having a "pre-plan" for next steps ensured calls never ended with ambiguity.

3) Learn with urgency

Personal development was key for these top sellers. One seller said, "I end every day reflecting on two questions: Did I learn something new today? Was my work today impactful?"

Work hard. Get better. Repeat until success is the only possible outcome.

4) Imperfect action beats inaction

One of the ramping sellers explained how they got a fast start:

"Being scared that you don't know enough will hold you back - you'll procrastinate. I tried to be curious about the person on the other end of the phone rather than thinking about what I'm going to pitch."

5) Leveraged my "Good Day" framework

I was thrilled to see these top sellers had committed to my Good Day Framework. You can learn it here.

Territory Prioritization

My team does not work customer accounts, we only acquire new logos. My available territory is over 100,000 accounts, and we assign each rep ~60.

That means, at any given time, I'm covering roughly 2% of my available territory.

Even after skimming the top 2% of accounts for assignment, my top sellers tell me "I earned 80% of my commissions in my top 20% of accounts."

Here are their best tips for effective territory management:

1) Number of employees and/or revenue isn't the best indicator

Don't force a use case into a big account if you are a better fit for a smaller account that fits your ideal customer profile (ICP).

2) Territory management is a daily activity, not monthly or quarterly

The technological rate of change is faster than ever. The economy is unbalanced, leading to disparate impact on different industries. Tier 1 accounts can become Tier 2 (and vice versa) based on these changes, and my best reps kept up with those moves.

3) In a sea of noise, look for signals

These reps were all over relevant changes in their territory:

- Hiring plans
- Funding events
- Key job changes
- New product announcements

When selling a complex product with a lengthy average deal cycle, searching for signs that a company may need to move faster helped these sellers blow out their numbers.

Bring Strong Opinions, Loosely Held

I frequently teach the importance of always having a point-of-view, so I was thrilled to see this consistent theme from this group of sellers.

Here's what they had to say on this topic:

 1) Every conversation you have should reinforce or evolve your point of view

It's better to be wrong than clueless. But, if you are wrong, you need to get right as soon as possible.

 2) "I don't think I booked a single meeting this past year off a generic email"

It's tempting to load up that big list of prospects into a sequence. Don't.

 3) Higher bar to capture attention

To get the attention of busy engineering leaders, they had to provide value or an opinion that showed they had put thought into how our solution could specifically help their business.

If the value prop could be duplicated for someone else, it's too generic. If the value prop could be shared by one of our competitors, it's too generic.

Cold Calling

I always smile when I hear how many people think cold calling is dead. The more people that think that, the more effective of a channel it becomes.

Each of my best reps told me cold calling was their number one channel for pipeline generation. I don't think that changes this year.

Here's what they had to say about getting their head right for successful cold calling:

1) Embrace rejection

Getting a no isn't personal - it tells you where to spend your time.

Consider rejection to be redirection and it feels like a win.

2) Personalization + relevance

Booking cold meetings requires personalization AND relevance. No point of view, no meeting, and my best reps learned how to leverage signals in accounts to build their point of view. They knew they were on the right track when they had a good idea of:

- Problems the prospect probably had
- How we solve those problems better than the competition
- How we can prove it

Success follows cold calling with that combo.

3) You should be excited to call

If you dial, hoping your prospect doesn't answer, you must not have a good reason to talk to them.

If you don't have a good reason to talk to them, why would they schedule time with you?

Customer-Centric

One of these top reps said, "Customer-centric isn't just a buzzword - our ultimate goal as sellers is to help people solve problems. Not be at the top of KPI leaderboards because we sent a ton of boilerplate emails."

Here's how they exhibited this behavior:

    1) Think far past deal closure

Sellers often consider contract signature to be the end of the sales process. But, for the buyer, it's just the beginning. Their work actually begins once the contract is signed. Don't be the rep that disappears. Instead, make sure you deliver the outcomes promised in the sales process.

    2) Personal wins motivate champions

To sell a complex deal you need to motivate several people to champion your solution. You can't do that without understanding personal wins and how we help them win at the individual, team, and company levels.

    3) Align sales process with buyer process

Forcing customers through a rigid process without understanding how it benefits them is a recipe for disaster.

Each customer is in a different state of awareness and education - a one-size-fits-all process ends up fitting no one.

Team-selling

You don't get extra credit for winning alone. These top AEs found a few different ways to leverage the team:

    1) Early executive alignment

It doesn't have to be complex - a simple "I'm here as a resource as you evaluate our solution" is a way to break the ice and open up more direct requests later in the deal cycle.

    2) Match buyers to internal resources

Technical buyers appreciate conversations with Solution Architects to get in the weeds of the solution.

CTOs value conversations with Business Value Analysts to understand long-term impact of potential changes.

CEOs value conversations with product executives to know what a long-term partnership entails.

As one of the AEs put it: "Team-sell whenever possible - The more I collaborated, the more opportunities in the win column."

    3) Team-Selling isn't always customer facing

These top reps constantly sought perspectives from the full team. Their reward was finding "nuggets" that were perfect for their opportunities: an ideal customer story, piece of content, technical expertise, etc.

Run at Risk

Risk is in our deals whether or not it's discussed. If it's ignored, we leave our buyers to handle it alone.

My best sellers "ran at risk" to give us the best chance to mitigate it so we could win.

Here's how:

1) Ask the hard questions

Sellers often avoid the hard questions: 'Why wouldn't you just do this next year?" "Does anything bad really happen if we miss your goal timeline?"

If we don't ask the hard questions, someone else will. And then we may not have the opportunity to influence the answer.

2) Proactively address the risk

Our best sellers know what customers worry about. They would call out those risks, and then design proof-of-value exercises to show the customer we were prepared to overcome the risks if they moved forward.

3) Embrace the doubters

The biggest skeptics of your solution may not be on your calls. My best sellers worked with their champion to identify who had concerns, what concerns they had, and then refused to move to the end of the deal cycle until they could meet with those individuals to make sure they were heard and addressed.

Conclusion

Nothing is more rewarding than seeing my team members win. A few of my favorite messages from this last year:

- "I've learned more in a few months than I had learned in my entire career"
- "Joining this team is the best decision of my career"
- "This year is my biggest W2, by far"

I hope this resource helps you narrow your focus on what matters for success. If you want more, including the exact Frameworks I teach my team, your best next step is at hitmyquota.com