H.A.N.D.L.E. Functions: Hunt

THE PRIORITY SALE®

Leads are great, but they're often way too late to achieve priority with your prospect. To make better sales – easier to close and at a higher margin – you have to gain access to the right people, earlier in their journey.

Click the first lesson below or Start above to begin.

HOW DO I MEASURE SUCCESS?

SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

It's time to take control of your pipeline.

Leads are great, but they're often way too late to achieve priority with your prospect. To make better sales – easier to close and at a higher margin – you have to gain access to the right people, earlier in their journey.

In this course, you'll learn:

- Why hunting is necessary to sell today
- How to identify a real decision maker
- How to gain the attention of real decision makers

Whether you're used to prospecting on your own or you've typically been handed marketing leads, the Hunting part of the H.A.N.D.L.E. methodology is required.

CONTINUE

Lesson 2 of 8

WHAT IS IT?

What is hunting?

Hunting is establishing meaningful communication with a real decision-maker.

To achieve priority, you will need to activate the threat they're facing and show them a path to eliminating that threat. This starts by gaining the attention of someone in your prospect organization that can make a difference.

Hunt for the highest level decision-maker.

As a salesperson, you are a solution in search of priority. You can solve a problem for the people and the organizations in your marketplace. Your prospects deserve to understand it so that they can decide for themselves whether it's a priority or not.

It's common for prospects to live with a pain point for some time before they decide it's time to fix it. They may be ignoring that pain, using hacked-together solutions that aren't helping enough, or employ other temporary workarounds. Your job is to help them realize the priority early, but it's really difficult if they aren't even looking to buy!

Since your best prospects haven't entered the marketplace, they won't find you. It's your job to find them instead. If you don't, you'll only ever sell to late-stage leads in the Planning and Procurement phases of the sale.

Hunting starts with identifying the kinds of prospects who need your solution. It ends when you have an appointment with an interested prospect who can make real decisions for their organization.

Are you talking to the highest level decision-maker?

To succeed at hunting, you have to be honest with yourself about where you're selling in the organization. As salespeople, we often celebrate getting contact with anyone in the organization, but this isn't always good enough. We aren't looking for members on the fringes of the buying committee, we're looking for people that can move their organizations in your direction themselves.

When speaking with a prospect ask yourself the following questions. If you can't answer "YES" to these questions, you likely aren't talking to the highest level decision-maker. You may need to keep hunting!

- [ ] Is this the person that would be most upset, if you can't implement this solution?
- [ ] If there wasn't a budget, or if there wasn't enough budget, could this person go find the money for it?

☐ Could this person shut down the sale and end the search for a solution, all by themself?

Ability Does Not Equal Willingness

One of the biggest inhibitors to hunting is one's willingness, not one's ability.

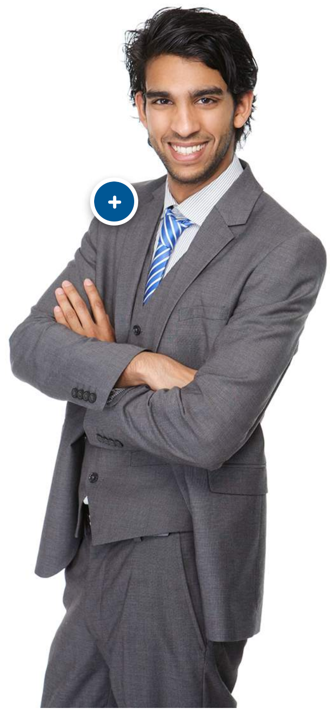
The likelihood of rejection in this stage of the sale is higher than at any other, and that fear of being rejected prevents us from entering the marketplace. When we do, it's often without conviction or confidence.

Remember, always, that **you are an expert in your solution**. Your marketplace deserves to understand it. You can help make positive change happen for the prospects you talk to. But when they travel the sale alone, they don't get the advice they need. They usually don't buy the right thing, for them. They end up thinking you're all the same and buy the cheapest thing on offer. It's no wonder they have greater buyer's remorse when they buy that way.

Your prospects need you, and they need you sooner than they realize. Be willing to get in touch early, and often. You owe it to them.

What makes a successful hunter?

Successful hunters have a few habits they've learned that gets them access to more prospects earlier in the process. ***Explore some of these behaviors by clicking on the five hotspots below.***

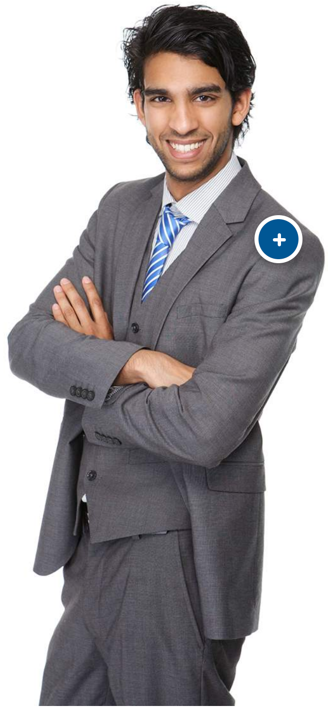


Timing

They don't wait for their prospect to get in touch. They find ways to gain attention before the prospect begins to buy.

Effort

They're willing to show up anywhere it takes to get in front of their prospects, but it never feels like "pounding the ground" because they're excited for the opportunity.



Message

They know how to get their prospect's attention with insights.

Vision

They understand where to find their prospects before they start to buy, in order to gain their attention.

Mentality

They're excited to share what they know. They don't feel like a pest because they believe that what they have to offer is valuable to their prospects.

Complete the content above before moving on.

WHAT IS IT NOT?

Hunting is often mistaken.

Remember, hunting isn't over until you've established meaningful communication with a real decision-maker.

That means the following items don't really qualify as hunting, at least not completing the hunting function of H.A.N.D.L.E. For example:

- An email campaign that gets sent out to a prospect list isn't complete, because it's contact, not meaningful communication.
- Collecting business cards after leading a breakout session you facilitated at a conference also doesn't qualify as meaningful communication. It's contact, albeit warmer than a cold email.
- Getting a meeting with a gatekeeper, while potentially useful, is also not establishing communication with a real decision-maker.

The Two Enemies of Real Hunting

While it may be easy to mistake some hunting tasks with fulfilling the hunting function, that isn't the real threat to your organization. There are two pervasive ideas in the B2B marketplace that get mistaken for hunting. If you allow the function of hunting to take the form of either of these, you risk wasting a lot of time, effort and maybe money.

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COLD CALLING

Cold calling, the way it traditionally works, is not hunting. It may establish communication, but it often amounts to "I sell _____. Who can I speak to that's in charge of buying it?" This isn't meaningful.

The other reason it fails to fulfill the hunting function is because it almost never involves a real decision-maker. How often is the person in the organization who can move budgets and rally teams answering the phone?

Put these two together and it's a recipe for disaster – one with expensive ingredients.

RELATIONSHIP BUILDING

Ah, the old "relationship sale." Too often we use the idea of the "relationship" as an excuse for the hard work we should be doing. This is often rooted in the fear of rejection. It's easier to talk about shared interests than it is to talk about real problems because we feel safer. We have a smaller chance of rejection asking about their kids or their hobbies.

The dangerous mentality here is that this is somehow achieving a sale. It's not meaningful, it's just communication. It usually doesn't hurt, but we don't just go around spending money on things because the people we like tell us to. You still have to find their priority.

They'll like you a lot more once you start solving a problem for them, even if you cheer for a rival team or forget their kids' ages.

Don't Let This Happen In Your Organziation

Hunting is establishing meaningful communication with a real decision-maker. Asking who's in charge of buying and whether they've seen the latest blockbuster will prohibit your success, if you let them substitute for the hunting function of your sale.

Complete the content above before moving on.

WHY DO I STILL HAVE TO DO IT?

I've got a lead, what's the problem?

It seems like the leads you get today should satisfy the hunting function of your sale, but they likely don't.

Problem #1: They're Late in Their Playbook —

Think about the moment the prospect makes contact with you. Did they find you in a phone book? More likely, it was an internet search, but either way, they have already decided three really important things, without you:

1. They have a problem, a threat they're facing that they're going to solve
2. They think they know what they need to solve it
3. You sell it

Look at those and think about the three phases of the Buyer's Playbook: Priority, Planning, and Procurement. Where are they when they've made this contact with you? It's likely they're already in Procurement.

Problem #2: They're Not The Decision-Maker

It's common in B2B sales for decision-makers to delegate the work of buying a solution, once the priority has been established. Their job is typically to ensure that you provide the solution they've already named without you. They'll sit through the pitches you mandate in order to get what they're really after, a quote. Which leads to the final problem with leads...

Problem #3: They're Seeing Other People

Google served up 10 or 13 or more results when they found you. Think you're the special one they chose to work with? Hardly.

Once they've named their own solution, any one of you will do. They think you're all the same. After all, you all showed up for the same keyword, right?

The best sales are made when you can position yourself as an expert problem solver, alongside a real decision-maker. Reactionary salespeople waiting for leads will never reliably hit quota. They're order fulfillers. That isn't to say fulfilling orders is bad, or that you shouldn't do it. Do you really need to pay someone a six-figure salary plus commission to pick up the phone and give them a price?

It's not rocket science... or is it?

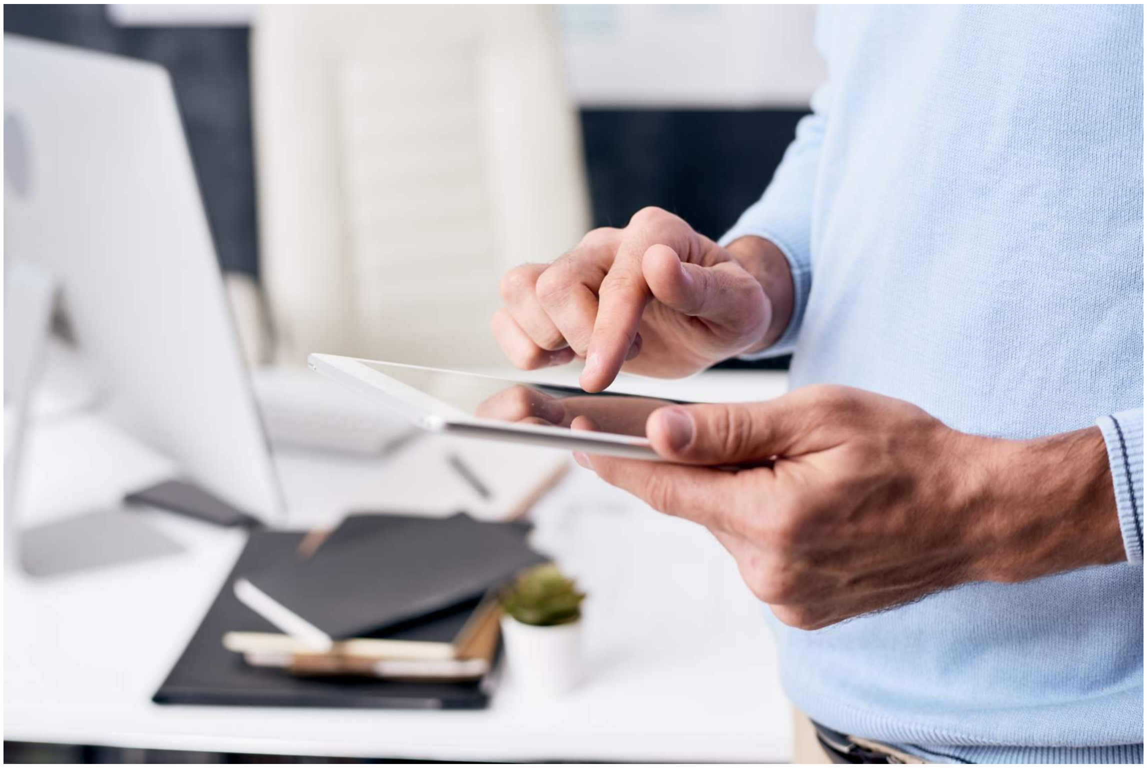
Think of It Like This...

You're the expert that's going to guide your prospect to a better place. You're going to solve a problem for them.

The following story illustrates how helpful a salesperson can be, and should be.

1

You Get an Email



Tomorrow you go into work, and there is an email at the top of your inbox. Incredibly, it tells you that several billion dollars have been placed in a bank account, and you are the account signee.

2

You're In Charge

Unfortunately, it is not yours to spend freely.

Instead, you must go out and buy rockets for a mission to Mars that will launch 5 years from today. If you fail, the mission fails.

Good luck.

Your First Move

Put in a position like this, what is your first move? Do you go to Google and search for something like “Who sells rockets that go to Mars?” That would be absurd, right?

Chances are, you would attempt to find an expert to help guide you through the process, even multiple experts.

Know What You Don't Know

You would need to learn how to compare vendors.

You would want to know what to ask for.

You would need to understand which points are and are not negotiable.

You would probably even need to learn how the process works to purchase such a thing.

At this point, you likely don't even know what you don't know. It's a daunting task, but it's all on you.

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A Lifeline

Let's say five minutes later, you get an email from a former department head at NASA offering you some help.

Are you annoyed or relieved?

Does it matter whether or not she works for a company that sells rockets? Probably not, you're going to respond to that email, right?

The Reality

Prospects do not know much more about what you sell than they do about buying rockets that go to Mars. You are the expert that is going to help them solve their problem. Show up and provide value, and you'll be welcomed with open arms and, more importantly, open minds.

Complete the content above before moving on.

HOW DO I GET THE BUYER'S ATTENTION?

Your prospect needs to see you as their expert problem solver.

Insights

Insights are provocative statements that help a prospect see their reality in a different, better way. These insights are the key that unlocks the very first moments of attention you will get from your prospect. To learn more about insights and how to make them yourself, see the Insights eLearning module.

Outreach

Use your insights to gain the initial moment of attention, and ask your prospect for time together to discuss what you want to show them. At this early stage, you should focus on the insights, not your solution. Book 30 minutes together and be ready to deliver 15 minutes of content that pay off the promise of the insights you build.

Getting past the gatekeeper.

An important note on dealing with gatekeepers: Your insights should be built for high-level decision-makers, but you will, occasionally, deal with getting through gatekeepers to get to them. In order to let you through, gatekeepers need two things:

1. Reassurance that they are not taking a risk of upsetting their higher-level decision-maker by presenting you to them
2. An understanding of what's in it for *them* in order to do so.

We often fail to get past gatekeepers because we fail to answer the second question. Think about how your insights can make their lives better or their job easier if only you could access their manager.

Complete the content above before moving on.

WHAT DO I DO WITH IT?

Your prospect needs to see you as their expert problem solver.

Your next interaction is a meeting. In this meeting, you have a few objectives.

Build Trust

Start with your elevator pitch. If possible, tailor it to your insight. The prospect is taking this meeting because your insights were valuable. Don't let them down. You also know, because they took the meeting, that you share a mutual belief based on your insights. That's the basis for building trust.

Listen

Let them talk. You're gathering really valuable knowledge, like how they talk about their problem, what led to it, and how it's causing pain. These inputs will be the basis of your pitch later in the sale. Remember the techniques in the Listening eLearning module.

Show Them What's Next

Whether it's a diagnostic tool or a meeting with the buying committee, or a deeper dive discovery meeting, know what's next and offer it. They're not buying yet, remember, so they need the direction of what comes next.

You're Headed Toward Priority

At this stage, you're trying to lay the foundation of establishing a shared priority with your sole contact – nothing more. Don't try to make the entire sale in this interaction. Most often the most successful interactions during the hunting function don't even mention specific solutions.

Complete the content above before moving on.

HOW DO I MEASURE SUCCESS?

How do you know you're hunting successfully?

The hunting function may require several steps, or several gatekeepers, to reach the right person. You might need meetings to gain meetings as you work your way up. Be honest about where you are in the organization and if you consistently enter too low, consider changing your insights to better match the high-level decision-makers' threats. Don't give up.

When you have a scheduled appointment, your first moment of truth, with a high-level decision-maker, you've fulfilled the hunting function of The Priority Sale. You'll measure success via first appointments.

How can I tell if it's not working?

There are a couple of tell-tale signs that your hunting isn't working:

- If you're delivering your insights to lower-level gatekeepers, chances are they won't respond to them. This isn't a problem, it just means that you need to change things up. Specifically, you need to find a medium where the right prospects will hear you. Consider email, trade shows, other speaking opportunities, webinars or other means to reach them.

- If you don't know who you want to talk to, you can't go out and find them. Give some thought to who you want to speak to and why before you reach out.

- If you're getting a lot of interest in what you're saying, but not booking at least a few first appointments, consider teasing your insights instead of delivering them out of the gate. This can take the form of "There are two reasons companies like you have problems with *XYZ,* can we get 30 minutes together to roll through them?"

What if you realize you aren't actually talking to the highest level decision-maker?

Inevitably, there will be times when we misjudge the level of the decision-maker we're dealing with. Sometimes, they misled us with regard to their authority. Other times, we uncover something unexpected. Be honest with yourself, but don't fret, it's simply time to reset.

1. Go back to the checklist. Based on what you know now, who is the real decision-maker?

2. Think about your current contact as a new gatekeeper. How can you reassure them that they aren't taking a risk by passing you up the org chart? What's in it for them, if they do? Fortunately, the answer to the second question may be more evident based on your time together.

3. Start over with the real decision-maker. Don't assume that any knowledge transfer has occurred. You need to start with trust, all over again.

Complete the content above before moving on.

SUMMARY

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You've successfully completed this course.

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