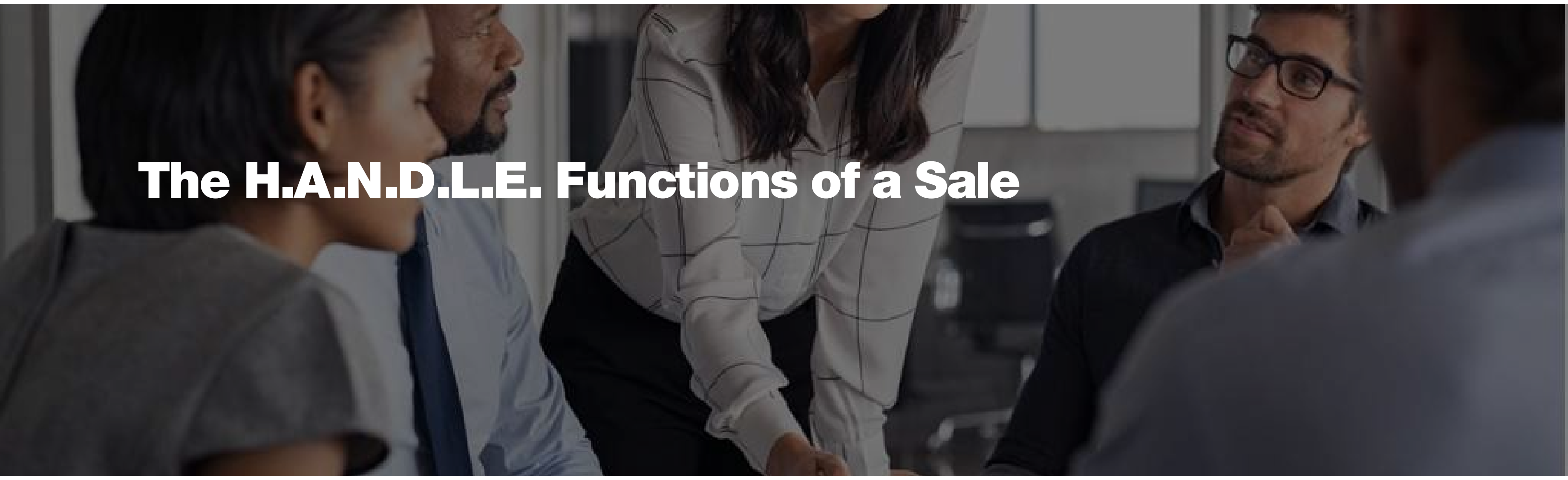
The H.A.N.D.L.E. Functions of a Sale



THE PRIORITY SALE®

Every sale is a project. Every project needs to understand its objectives in order to succeed.

Click the first lesson below or Start above to begin.

INTRODUCTION

Every sale is a project. Every project needs to understand its objectives in order to succeed.

A fundamental understanding of who is buying, their mentality and how to achieve priority together is crucial to winning new business in the modern era. It’s not, however, enough on its own.

The steps you must take and – more importantly – the tasks you must complete also need to be understood. Knowing what to accomplish will help you focus your efforts and make selling feel more like what it really is: helping solve a problem for your buyer.

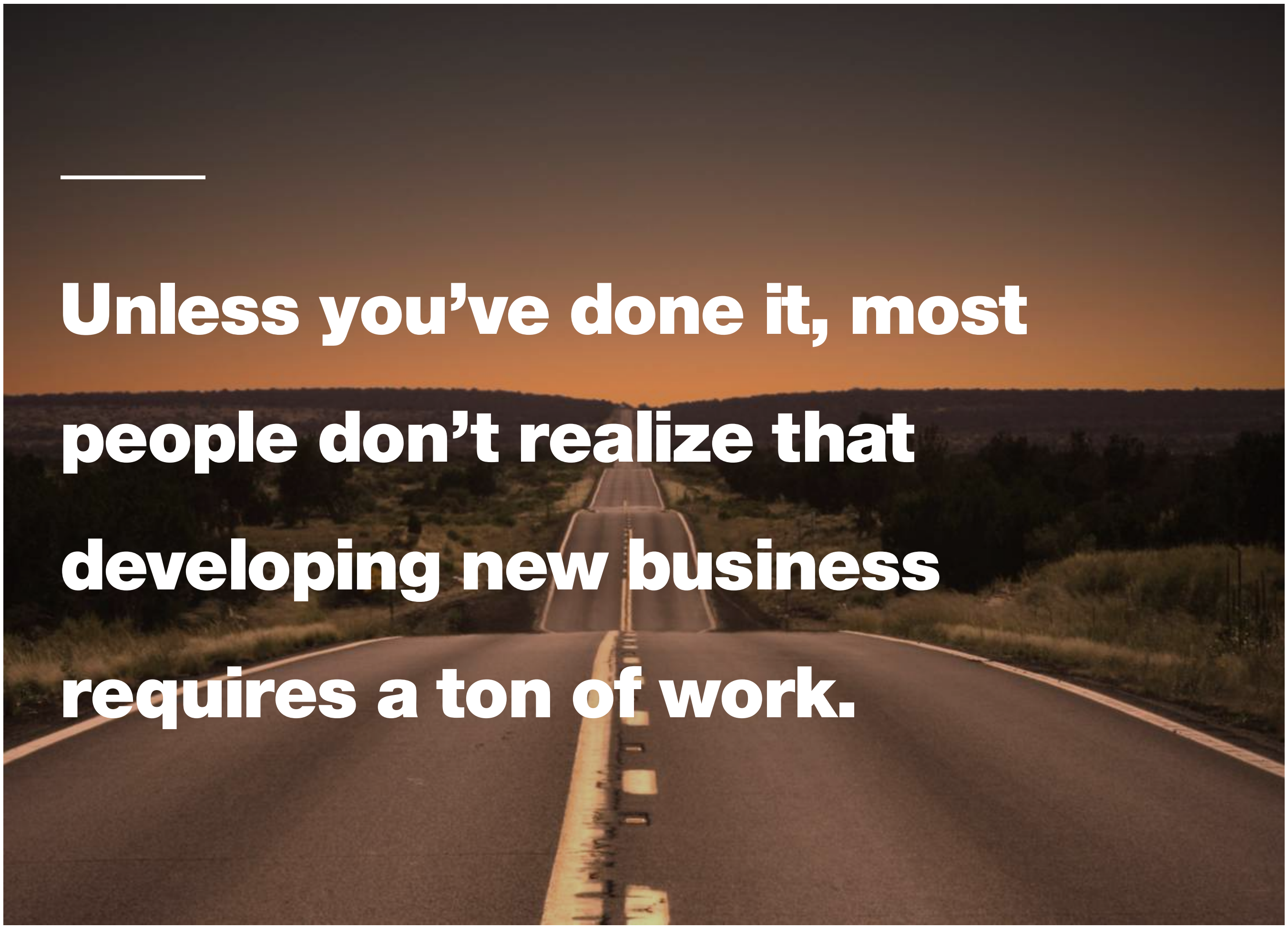
In this lesson, you will:

- Learn what must be accomplished to win a sale based on priority
- Apply the methodology to a sale

In future lessons, we will explore each objective in greater depth. The purpose of this course is to introduce you to them and to give you an understanding of what it looks like when you’ve accomplished them.

CONTINUE

THE SELLER'S JOURNEY



We've discussed how entering a sale early, in the Priority Phase, makes your job easier to accomplish.

The reason why is that every deal requires a certain amount of effort, and when you're given very little time, it becomes a lot more difficult to accomplish what you need to make a sale.

Here's a look at those tasks:

- Establish communication with the organization
- Establish communication with high level decision-makers
- Develop and/or find priority together
- Unite a committee or buying team around this priority
- Position the value of your solution as the elimination of a threat, thereby achieving that priority
- Create a scope that will accomplish the above
- Obtain commitment
- Obtain future business from the same organization

That's a lot of work!

In the next lesson, we're going to break down these tasks into groups that will make them easier to think about, so you can quickly reference this list and attack it. However, it's important to think of this methodology not as a timeline, but as objectives. Yes, these tend to follow a cadence and have an order that's the same from one sale to the next, and you can map these objectives to pipeline moves. But failing to achieve one objective will render anything that comes next nearly impossible to achieve.

It’s never too late to complete the objective and your role is to manage them to completion.

Complete the content above before moving on.

HUNT

Every deal requires a decision maker.

When we think of “hunting” sales, it’s easy to get off-track. For many in the B2B world, possibly yourself included, the sale begins with a lead that’s passed from marketing. For others, “hunting” can look like the connections a partner has from past business, or through social settings.

These views of the hunting stage aren’t useful. Instead, **think about hunting as a quest to find the primary decision maker.**

Every business buys things. Every purchase, large and small, has a primary decision-maker behind it. Think of the primary decision-maker as the person who is able to set the priority for the entire organization. This doesn't mean that they can make a decision alone or that they won't be influenced by others, but that they are able to say, on behalf of the company "This is a problem that we're dedicated to solve."

The hunting objective is accomplished when you've **established a connection** and **have two-way communication** with the person you've identified as the primary decision maker.

The leads that get passed to you from marketing might be primary decision makers, but it's still important that you establish this before moving on. Most leads aren't, and they require a set of activities that will get access through the gatekeepers, told to "bring back some options" or worse, "gather up some quotes."

Here are some questions to ask yourself to ensure that you've identified and are communicating with a primary decision maker:

If this person decided to take no action whatsoever, to buy nothing...

Would anyone above them push back?

If the solution to this problem required more than they budgeted...

Could this person get more funding?

If there isn't any budget at all...

Could this person find the funds?

The hunting phase is about finding new prospects, sure. But **it's only achieved once you've established two-way communication with a primary decision maker**. It's easy to start low, and in some cases, useful. But accomplishing the other objectives without starting here is doomed to fail most times. Every sale is hard work, and at this stage, you’re about to commit to a ton of effort. You deserve to start out with a chance to succeed.

Complete the content above before moving on.

ALIGN

You've established communication with a decision-maker. Next, you have to find and align to their priority.

No matter where you enter a potential sale, **you must align with the prospect's priority in order to win their business**. Make no mistake, this is a difficult, but rewarding objective of the sale. Accomplish it, and you'll both enjoy it. You, the seller, get to help solve a problem. The prospect will be excited to buy. When this objective isn't accomplished, you start to encounter the "sales tactics" that give selling its bad reputation.

Think about it. If a seller can't find a true priority, they must use something else for leverage. That's why pressure-packed, expiring offers exist. It's why car salespeople sometimes let customers sit for hours while they "talk to their manager" hoping that the discomfort will apply pressure.

All of the manipulation that happens by aggressive salespeople are stand-ins for what really matters: understanding the problem, the threat you're solving and focusing on that, instead.

So, how do you tell when you've **aligned** to their **priority**?

It starts with really understanding what that priority is. It's not usually the first thing the prospect says, even when asked directly. It requires **good questioning technique** (see the questioning and listening modules) and **an ability to identify the threat** yourself.

The key to unlocking real priority is to **follow their curiosity**, not their agreement. When you're on the right track, you'll hear indications of curiosity. Conversely, when you're off track, you'll likely hear short agreements. Here's what that might sound like:

Indications of curiosity —

- "That's interesting, what do you mean?"
- "I hadn't thought of it like that before."
- "I've been thinking it, but haven't been able to say it like that."

Short agreements

- "I suppose so."
- "That makes sense."
- "Of course."

You've accomplished the Alignment Objective when you've not only identified your prospect's real priority, but also shown how your solution — what you're selling — will achieve it.

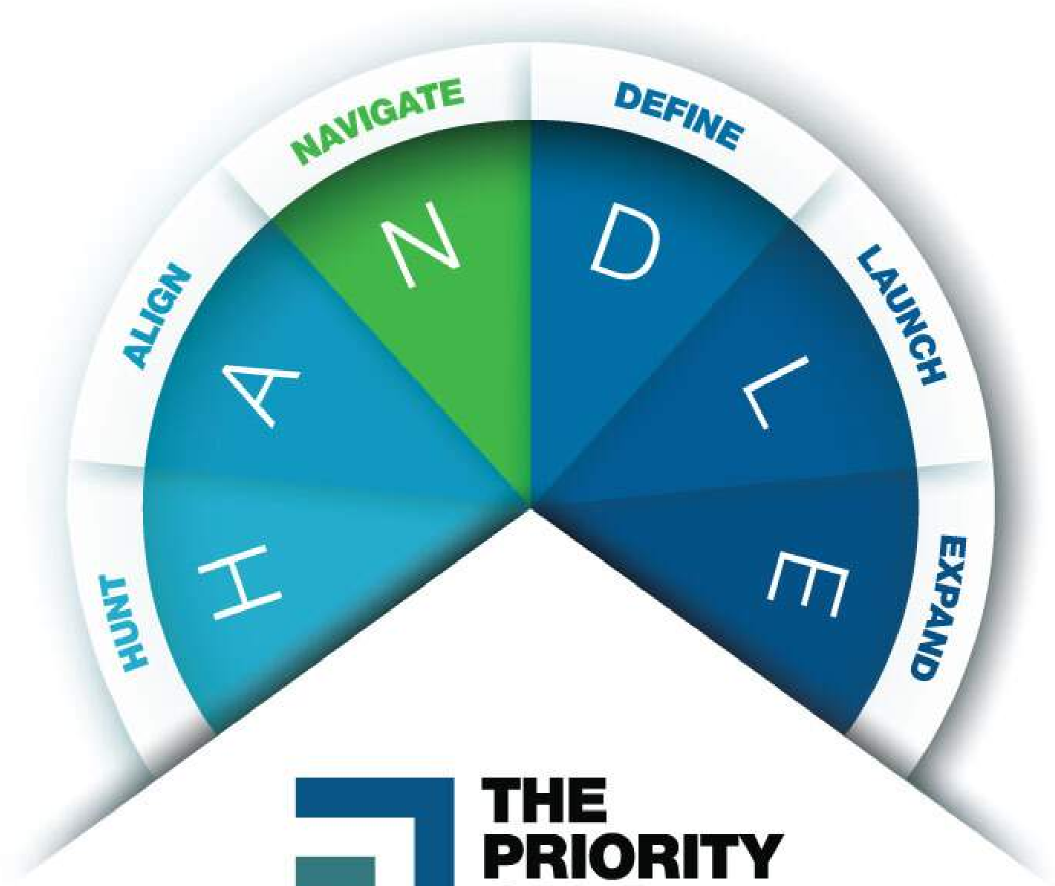
Complete the content above before moving on.

NAVIGATE

Every sale is a lot of work, even once you've aligned with priority.

Aligning to a primary decision maker's priority is hard, and achieving it is an important objective. Once achieved, it kicks off a bunch more effort. It's time to understand what's ahead and guide them.

As salespeople, we often default to a reactive state. That's not to say we aren't responsive, but we allow our prospects to work the sale on their time, at their pace and in their own order. The intention of selling this way is to make sure we aren't "Rocking the Boat" too much, or appearing too needy. Unfortunately, this approach doesn't provide any value or help the prospect solve the problem.



THE PRIORITY SALE

Remember, in every deal, there is pain in changing, even if they're just starting something new. Only when the pain of staying the same is greater than the pain of change will they buy. Your job in the Navigation Objective is to be prescriptive, and help diminish the pain of change.

The prescriptive approach is proactive; it helps the prospect understand what comes next, every step of the way. When you're successfully navigating the sale, you understand who on the buying committee will object in which ways. You understand the timing of the meetings, what needs to happen and in which order. You're providing the roadmap to the purchase to your prospects, and they really appreciate it.

In a recent article in Harvard Business Review, the authors showed that this prescriptive approach made buying easier and more enjoyable.

Here are some questions to ask your prospect that will help you plan the sale:

"What two or three things will get in the way of doing this?"

"Who do you think is going to be hesitant? Why?"

"Who is able to block this? Why would they want to?"

Complete the content above before moving on.

DEFINE

Scope is important: it can make or break a deal. But it's often celebrated for more than it really is.

It may seem counter-intuitive, but refusing to produce a quote until you've accomplished the other objectives can really help close more deals.

Too often, achieving a fast proposal is seen as a good thing, a deal that doesn't require a lot of time or effort. These entries get dropped right into an advanced stage in the pipeline, high-fives all around. But ask yourself: How can you propose work for a prospect if you don't understand what priority you're solving?

Is it possible to win deals that skip those steps? It is, and it happens often enough that it's still considered a win.

Take that business, sure. But understand that it comes with:

- Higher buyer's remorse

- The threat that the customer may disappear the instant a slightly lower-priced competitor enters the marketplace
- A low likelihood of renewal or account growth

Even in tough, straight-to-RFP situations, mechanisms exist for you to hunt and align before you're able to define the scope. Achieve the other objectives before you define the scope and you'll win more often, and do it with happier prospects and customers.

Complete the content above before moving on.

LAUNCH

Even when you've been successful in the other objectives, you need to get a commitment.

Even when you've been successful in the other objectives, **you need to get a commitment**.

In large part, the difficulty or ease of this objective is directly related to how well you've achieved each prior objective. If you've aligned with a primary decision-maker's true priority and helped them navigate the sale into a thoughtful scope, your work is largely done.

If you're finding that "closing" is really tough, that you're doing a lot of proposals and not signing many of them, then take a look at the other objectives.

Be honest with yourself. Ask:

- Am I really reaching the primary decision-maker, or am I trying to sell to anyone that will talk to me?

- Am I settling for the first or second reason they give me as their priority?
- Am I leading them with my questions to agree to a priority they may not really have?
- Am I helping them understand the sale in a prescriptive, predictive way, or am I laying too low?
- Did I quote too early, before I really knew what their priority was?

When you've done well with the prior objectives, the enthusiasm for the project is as high as it can be. That's when selling is an enjoyable, fulfilling function.

Most CRM pipelines only have two outcomes: won or lost. Those are useful, but **think about closing with three outcomes instead: won, adjusted win, and lost**. The adjusted wins are the deals that didn't happen at the margin you wanted or the timeline you wanted. They may be wins, but they're worth tracking because it will help find areas of improvement, looking at the objectives within this methodology.

Complete the content above before moving on.

EXPAND

Every deal is an endorsement, a belief in what you do at that moment. If you deliver, you deserve the chance to gain future business.

With rare exception, the B2B sale is one that can be expanded into greater engagement or repeated on a future project. Some more than others, of course. Consideration can and should be given for future business when selling the first deal into the organization.

For example, if the prospect is refusing to move on a demand to take away your margin on an initial sale, it could be worth an adjusted win at a low margin to get yourself established within the company.

THE PRIORITY SALE

After the sale, it’s important to measure the progress of your solution to the priority you set out to accomplish together. Keeping this focus at an executive level is key to winning new business within the same company.

After proving your solution, ask your primary decision maker to introduce you to other departments within the company, if appropriate to their company and your solution. This simple request goes unasked too often, and is rarely turned down if your solution works.

Complete the content above before moving on.

H.A.N.D.L.E.

Think of the objectives within the H.A.N.D.L.E. methodology and how they apply to your sale.

Create your own criteria for achieving them with the worksheet provided, and mentally prepare for the work that a sales project requires. Knowing what you need to achieve and roughly when to achieve it should help you chart a path to more successful relationships and more positive outcomes.

Complete the content above before moving on.

LET'S PRACTICE

Let's take a moment to review what you've learned.

Match each task in the Priority Sale methodology with its objective.

☰ Launch	Get the commitment.
☰ Expand	Measure the progress of your solution to the priority you set out to accomplish.

SUBMIT

Complete the content above before moving on.

SUMMARY

Congratulations!

You've successfully completed this course.

Your progress has been marked as complete. Please feel free to close your browser tab, or click any lesson title in the menu to review that course content.