



CLOSING MORE DEALS WITH A DATA-DRIVEN DRINKS INDUSTRY SALES PROCESS



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A GUIDE FOR SALES LEADERS WITHIN THE DRINKS INDUSTRY.

Helping to deliver the products
customers need, at an agreeable
price, with the maximum available
profit for the business.



INTRODUCTION

INCREASE YOUR PROFITS BY 23% *

Whether dealing with the on or off-trade, the drinks industry can sometimes feel like a race to the bottom, a battle fought purely on price. But this approach eats into your profits, effectively pushing you into a commodity model.

Trying to operate multiple processes with disconnected data sets reduces the efficiency of your business. Which makes it much harder to reach your revenue and profit goals.

To protect profits, your business needs to move towards a sales strategy that is personalised for the different types of transactions placed by the different outlets and customers. These differing needs will determine how you, as a drinks business, will create and process orders. This is an impossible task if the different stakeholders involved in the process cannot see the complete picture of their accounts.

By consolidating data and providing access to it using 3 different sales methods you can have a leaner organisation and a more effective sales process which will help to improve profits by at least 23%.*

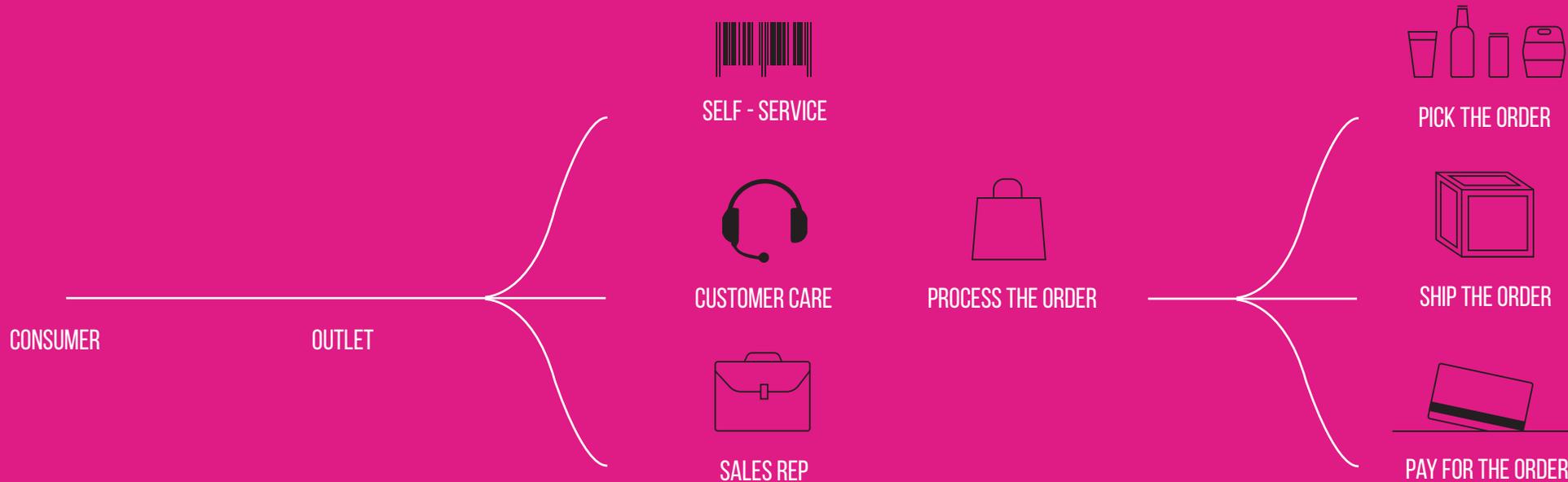
* based on a sample size study of drinks companies that supply 30% of the Irish Drinks Market



DIGITISE TO SUPPORT AN EFFECTIVE DRINKS SALES ORGANISATION [BUSINESS PROCESS]

To meet the challenges of the drinks marketplace, your sales organisation must be properly equipped with the data and tools to make sure that the cost of sale is relevant to the value that it brings. You don't need to put expensive resources into managing simple repeat orders. That resource can be invested in activities that will help you grow as an organisation. This could be within your existing customer base with a better product mix or to expand into a new customer base by your sales reps having more time to focus on business development.

MANAGEMENT:



CUSTOMER JOURNEY

CUSTOMER SCENARIOS

SELF SERVICE

- I need to re-stock
- I know what I want
- I want to order at a time that suits me
- I want an overview of my account

CUSTOMER CARE

- I need to re-stock
- I need some help
- I have been called to hear about the latest promotion or to remind me to order

SALES REP

- I want new brands to suit my consumer
- I want to take advantage of promotions and merchandising
- I need help to plan for a special event

PROCESSES

Online & Mobile Account Access

Sales Order Processing

Order Capture and Business Intelligence

ADVANTAGES

- ✓ Customer in control
- ✓ Improve order to cash process
- ✓ Low cost of sale
- ✓ Operationally efficient

- ✓ Proactive approach for high volume low value transactions
- ✓ Supporting customers who are less digitally aware
- ✓ Opportunity to up and cross-sell

- ✓ Increase value of order
- ✓ Increase Product Portfolio
- ✓ Opportunity to cross-sell
- ✓ More time to enter new markets/ outlets

QUALITY DATA

DATA DRIVEN VALUES AND MARGINS

There are 5 distinct steps to ensure you can deliver a data-driven sales organisation.



1) UNIFY – REVEAL INSIGHTS FROM ONE SOURCE

Your business already owns a substantial volume of information – but you need to maximise its impact throughout your organisation. Sales interactions with customers are not achieving their full potential because this information is not readily available.

Moving forward, your business needs to centralise data to overcome these challenges. By integrating in-house systems and improving the sharing of data, you can make data accessible for use by your sales reps (and the rest of your business too).

You will also need to invest in a central application to aggregate this data accurately and make it available for each part of the business. The ability to discover insights from across the business and build finely-tuned, irresistible offers for individual clients will quickly repay the outlay however.



2) ENHANCE - IMPROVE DATA QUALITY

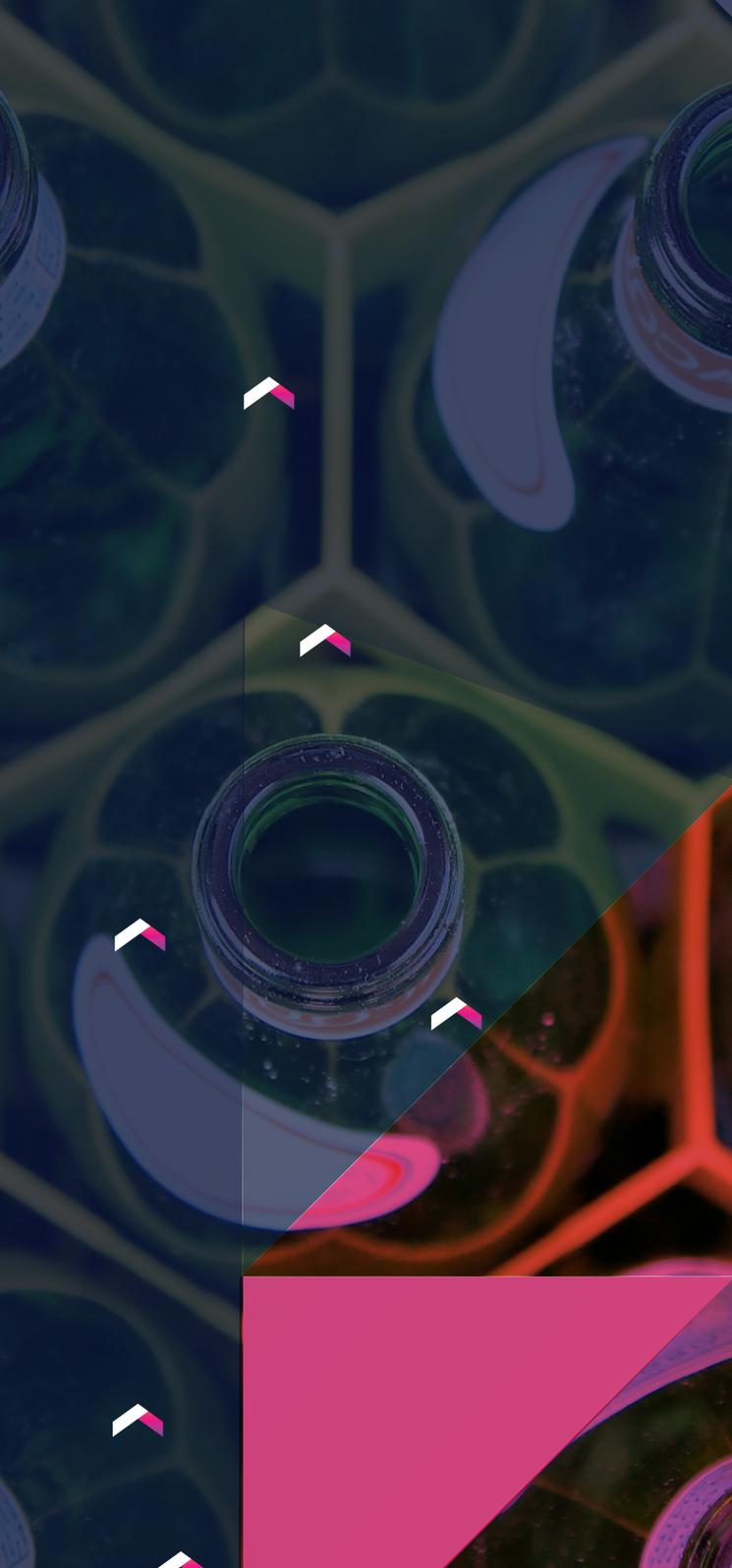
Every inaccuracy significantly affects the quality of decisions made using your data. It also has an impact on the quality of service offered to customers; an error could mean an order being returned, creating a chain of negative events:

- A dissatisfied customer who orders less in future (if at all)
- A rep who fails to hit their sales targets
- Additional costs to cover the return of unwanted/incorrect drinks

Many of these inaccuracies arise at the point of capture. Sales people transferring hastily hand-written notes into the company ERP system can create long-term problems, simply by mis-keying information. Electronic data capture using Excel is just as error-prone – a report by Olson & Nilsen found a [21% cell error rate](#) among experienced spreadsheet users.

Your reps need a way to record information quickly and accurately, and to retrieve that data whenever and wherever needed.





3) ACCESS - MAKE DATA EASY TO ACCESS

Your sales organisation must have access to key data such as pricing, promotions, stock levels and previous buying history to enable them to provide a proactive, effective service to their accounts.

You also need to be able to capture and integrate feedback about your customers so that you can better segment them for future campaigns and promotions. Capturing insights will show what does and does not work, and how to tailor future sales and marketing efforts more efficiently.

In conjunction with wider industry buying trends, reps will have more data to help them make relevant recommendations and offers based on:

- Seasonal drinking habits
- Sporting events, sponsorship deals and the effect of both on consumer buying habits
- New product launches and advertising campaigns

The ability to capture and integrate this data will make your reps more effective in every customer interaction.

4) ANALYSE - UNDERSTAND TRENDS AND IMPACT

Reviewing historical data helps you better understand and predict future buying behaviours – a long term view can reveal subtle shifts that can be exploited to boost sales.

The sales manager and their team will also need to better understand products in the context of their customer's establishment. To assist with targeting, and potentially provide the leverage required to increase market share, it is useful to understand shelf share ratio, in stores, restaurants, bars and other outlets. This could be done by reps providing necessary information from their visits and adding this data through their order capture tool. In addition, managers should be using data to manage performance of the different sales methods, whether that is customer care, sales reps or the online tool. Data can enable a sales leader to understand what works well and what doesn't depending on the individual outlet, timings, type of order etc.



5) APPLY – USE THE DATA TO SUPPORT MORE SALES

The way that your business collects and analyses data will be used to define your sales processes, and ultimately your level of success, today and into the future. When applied correctly, data will allow your reps to create value-added sales, helping to break out of the transactional sales trap and avoiding a race to the bottom on pricing.

Identifying trends in your data provides a number of opportunities:

- Historical behaviour can be used to better predict customer buying habits
- Historical data allows reps to see where orders have changed over time, and to follow up any previously unidentified product or order problems
- Provide your sales manager with the granular data required to create more accurate forecast data for planning campaigns and promotions
- Ensure working capital is not tied up in stock
- Spot opportunities to launch relevant marketing campaigns and promotions

The true value of centralising and analysing data lies in how you apply those insights to serving your customers more effectively. Without accurate data, and the systems required to make it available, your sales organisation will struggle to succeed against more informed competitors.

EMPOWER YOUR EMPLOYEES

The data and insights outlined above will give you the foundation required to build a data-driven sales organisation. Information, and the tools to access it, allow you to personalise every sales engagement to the specific needs of the customer and their customers, ensuring you deliver exactly what they need.

The next step is to empower your sales team to access those insights and act upon them. This requires two things:

- Any time, any place access to product and customer data
- The authority to act on that data when in the field, allowing them to provide a responsive, timely service to customers

By deploying a sales order platform, you can help to simplify the sales process by automating some of your reps' administrative tasks. You can also interface with the company ERP system, giving them access to other key data direct from their iPad. Allowing them to access data in this way boosts productivity – they no longer need to phone every order back to head office for capture, or to check stock levels and pricing.

**THE ULTIMATE GOAL IS TO
DELIVER THE PRODUCTS
YOUR CUSTOMERS WANT, AT
AN AGREEABLE PRICE, WITH
THE MAXIMUM AVAILABLE
PROFIT FOR YOUR BUSINESS.**

USE DATA TO EMPOWER YOUR REPS BY:

- Giving them the power to change pricing when required. They are then able to move from being order takers to order makers
- Giving them complete insight into pricing, so reps never have to walk away from a deal when faced with a competitor's quote on a single product.
- Allowing them to answer questions immediately, affording the customer fewer opportunities to buy from a competitor
- Reducing their admin burden, therefore freeing up time to be spent talking to customers, strengthening relationships and better understanding their needs
- Introducing new products to clients that have been identified as matching their needs and preferences
- Giving accurate information about product lines that increase the profitability of each order and help your reps appear more professional and knowledgeable

DATA DRIVEN EFFICIENCIES AND PROFITS

Data transparency allows for changes to back-office sales processes too. The sales manager has the information required to build programs around margins, rather than building around the more traditional values like volume, helping to maximise profits.

This will of course mean providing reps with the ability to see margins on each product so they can plan their own sales approaches. Taking into account price points, profit margins and promotions, the rep can sort through the product portfolio, and build a checklist for the customer easily, which gives them ability to upsell to individual accounts.

Without deploying technology that empowers reps to better manage their own accounts and sales processes, your business will forever be restricted by manual, multi-stage processes that are slower than your digitally-enabled competitors.

The data generated by your sales team is also incredibly useful for better managing the team and their performance. With improved data availability, the sales manager can immediately see the highest and lowest performers at a glance. They can then reallocate leads and resources in real time, boosting individual and team attainment, and ensuring every team member has the support they need to succeed.



RECLAIM TIME

Sales managers frequently complain that they do not have enough time to engage in actual selling. One study conducted by Pace Productivity discovered that just [22% of a rep's time is spent on sales.](#)

Even the sales manager spends an average of 2 to 3 hours every day reading and responding to email. More than a quarter of the day is wasted dealing with questions that reps (and customers) could answer themselves if properly resourced. Every unnecessary “just checking” email steals time away from the strategic activities that will determine future success. Worse still, an increasing number of customers – 14.5% and rising – expect you to drop everything and [respond within just 15 minutes.](#)

Empowering your sales team allows them to better serve your customers and allows you to devote more time to the strategic decision making that will be key to growing market share and profit margins. Rather than operating in the here-and-now, your business will be able to devote additional time to designing new products that meet the changing needs of your customers.

Looking beyond the sales team, helping your customers access key data themselves will also reduce the volume of email you need to deal with. Customers increasingly expect a degree of self-service functionality from their suppliers – so it makes sense to give them those facilities, particularly if it helps speed up communications. SIS International Research found that [74% of employees spend 3.3 hours each week dealing with negative comments](#) or complaints from customers, specifically because they could not be reached in a timely fashion.

**14.5% OF CUSTOMERS
EXPECT YOU TO DROP
EVERYTHING AND RESPOND
WITHIN JUST 15 MINUTES**

- TOISTER SOLUTIONS

FUTURE READY SALES PROCESSES

Allowing customers to check the status of their own orders immediately reduces the amount of “when can I expect...?” emails. They are no longer completely reliant on your team to help them get the information they need.

Your sales reps will still play an important part in nurturing the relationship, but your customers will feel as though they “own” more of the process too – especially if they can place their own orders directly.

Again, it is the availability of information that is key to freeing up time for the sales team. Making data easily accessible internally will be crucial to empowering your sales team and building the sales process your customers want – one in which they are actively involved.

This can be achieved by deploying a customer portal, allowing authorised users direct access to key account information, like order history and delivery status details. For true future-readiness, the portal will also need to accept sales orders from customers looking to restock their own drinks products.

This allows your customers to place orders whenever is convenient for them, and reduces your reps’ overheads for dealing with repeat business so they can focus on introducing new products, or cultivating other leads.

For existing customers, a portal would offer another communications channel through which to access information about their account. Self-service functionality allows buyers to view order status, obtain a statement of account, and take advantage of any deals or promotions your business is running. Instead of taking your reps away from sales activities, customers are empowered to answer their own questions, reducing the cost of account management.

Your future-ready sales processes need to be built on a system that makes data available internally and externally. You can then re-invest your time savings in researching the drinks market for new ways to better serve customers.



ACHIEVE LOWER COSTS AND HIGHER MARGINS

Customers may be willing to pay more for premium product ranges, but generally they expect prices to remain stable, or preferably, fall. Profit margins are squeezed from several directions, adhering to government regulations, the changing costs of products and ingredients, the overall cost of sales, process inefficiencies and a customer unwilling to accept any corresponding price increase. These increases keep coming – consider the “sugar tax” being levied on manufacturers of sweetened drinks in the UK, Ireland, France, Mexico and even some individual US cities. Sugar taxes are sure to be repeated across the world if considered successful in reducing obesity - South Africa is already set to join the trend next year for instance.

All of which means that you, the supplier, must bear most of these cost increases at the expense of your own profits.

It is expected by every business unit, including sales, to increase efficiency to reduce operating costs. This then allows your business to absorb more of these external cost factors without significant impact on margins or on the quality of the products offered to clients. Making more of your data available in a sales order system greatly simplifies demand management for instance, allowing for increasingly accurate ordering based on empirical evidence of previous customer habits. Even automation of basic administrative tasks helps to reduce costs by freeing employees to spend their time on revenue-generating activities.

MANAGE COMPLEX PRICING AND PROMOTIONS

The drinks industry is unique and uses complex pricing and promotion strategies to win deals and retain clients. Although necessary, this flexibility makes the sales reps' jobs much harder – particularly when trying to win new business and satisfy the needs of existing customers.

The complexity of each sale is increased when multiple price lists are in play. When factoring in build-up, supplier costs and distribution it becomes harder to see the margins for each product line. If you want reps to structure sales to realise the highest possible margins, they need to be able to see the built-up cost against the invoice price charged to customers.

Promotions and discounts also present a challenge for your reps to stay on top of. As well as pushing promoted items to their accounts, they need to be able to control and manage the available stock levels to avoid supply issues. Reps and account managers also need to be able to track account purchasing to apply retrospective discounts for volume purchases over a promotional period or similar.



An increased understanding of the customer and products will be invaluable when matching outlets and brands, avoiding wasted marketing and event spend.

Sales reps need an automated data system that can help them manage the sales process more efficiently. As well as providing a deeper understanding of the customer, reps will also be able to see how best to approach them, maximising the value of discounts to the benefit of clients and their company. If a specific deal hinges on the price of a single product, reps need advance permission to adjust costs in real time and secure the buyer's signature. This flexibility and empowerment ensures you capture the whole deal, maximising order value.

The sales manager will also be empowered to improve the accuracy of their commercial modelling and trade, building forecasts that will help to refine strategy.

The information gathered throughout the sales process is valuable beyond the sales team however. Centralising and sharing the reps' progress helps the merchandising team to better understand customer buying and purchasing trends, allowing them to tailor and improve their own processes. These efficiencies will help to further strengthen margins in future sales cycles.

Ultimately, collecting, sharing and auctioning data about lines and customers will help reps to consistently deliver the right products at the right price and time to the right account.



CONCLUSION

DATA WILL BE THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN SUCCESS AND FAILURE IN THE DRINKS INDUSTRY

The drinks industry is already complex thanks to the variability of pricing, discounts and promotions, and the variability of consumer purchasing. At the same time as delivering products and services tailored to the demands of individual accounts, sales reps are also responsible for protecting company profit margins.

Without data – and systems capable of capturing, analysing and displaying it – reps will be able to do neither effectively.

In order to keep up with customer demand, your business needs to build a sales process and strategy that uses information intelligently, increasing the flexibility and speed of operations. Increasing efficiency at the back end – particularly order capture,

processing and fulfilment – will help to reduce costs and free up time that can be invested in strengthening client relationships and creating new, more effective campaigns.

To succeed you need to build processes that can take your sales and accounts data and apply it intelligently to your customers' needs. You will also need a suitable technology platform to centralise, collate, analyse and distribute data so that every key stakeholder has the information they need to enhance every customer interaction.

Flexibility, personalisation and efficiency will be the service differentiators. Only those drinks businesses capable of demonstrating all three trends will be able to successfully protect their margins in the face of increased competition.



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