

# The different types of sales:

**Navigating sales is more than just understanding tactics. Learn the different types of sales and key sales jobs that run the industry so you're better prepared to close deals.**

When you think of sales, the first thing that pops into your mind is probably chasing profits—followed closely by *how* to chase those profits. That's perfectly normal, but the truth is that sales is more than tactics. To truly understand and succeed in the sales industry, you have to know the *whole* industry.

In this piece, we're going back to basics by reviewing types of sales and key sales jobs. When you understand the big picture of the sales industry, it's easier for your company to zero in on your piece of the puzzle.

## Categories of sales

Let's start off with the five primary sales categories:

- B2B sales (business-to-business sales)
- B2C sales (business-to-consumer sales)
- Enterprise sales
- SaaS sales
- Direct sales

## B2B sales

B2B sales, or business-to-business sales, are sales that occur between other buyers or services. They're frequently more complex, involve more players, and take longer than B2C (business-to-consumer) sales. They also typically deal with larger amounts of revenue than B2C sales and tend to focus on long-term relationships rather than one-time purchases.

There are three main of types of B2B sales:

**Supply sales:** Businesses sell supplies needed to run other businesses (office supplies, cleaning supplies, etc.)

**Distribution sales:** Businesses sell products to distributors who will then sell that same product to the consumer (groceries, pharmaceuticals, Walmarts, etc.)

**Service sales:** Businesses sell services (tangible or digital) needed to run other businesses (consultants, software, etc.)

It's worth noting that many B2B businesses can also deal in B2C sales. Office supply stores perform B2C transactions every day, but they also sell wholesale to businesses through their advantage program.

## B2C sales

As mentioned previously, in contrast to B2B sales, B2C sales are transactions between the seller and the individual consumer (emphasis here on the word *seller*).

A common mistake when thinking about B2C sales is assuming the seller is also the creator of the product. That can be the case, but B2C sales refer to distributors as well. Netflix, for example, is a B2C seller because it sells subscriptions to individual consumers. However, Netflix (despite a recent surge in original content) is still primarily a distributor of content from other major production companies.

The key difference between B2C sales and B2B sales is the approach to buyers. B2B sales are far more focused on logistics, negotiating, and the relationships between the buyer and seller. B2C sales, on the other hand, are all about the brand, price, and emotional reaction. A successful B2C seller knows how to communicate their brand on an emotional level to the general population.

## Enterprise sales

Enterprise sales (also called *complex sales*) are a type of B2B sale that specifically targets large companies. Enterprise sales come with high stakes. Most of them entail lengthy processes that end with a huge revenue deal, a complicated implementation, or a multi-cycle complex contract.

Because enterprise sales have such a long pipeline and can continue over many years, they frequently stop being about the products. When a business buys in an enterprise sale, it's not just buying a product: it's buying a system. That system comes with the product(s), support staff, a liaison, an implementation team, and a promise that future use of the product is dependent upon a healthy B2B relationship.

That isn't to say other B2B sales can't involve relationships or implementation. Enterprise sales simply refer to the negotiations and relationships with extraordinarily lucrative clients. A SaaS sale (discussed in the next section) to a general retailer ranks differently than a sale to a Fortune 500 company.

## SaaS sales

SaaS sales refers to software-as-a-service sales. SaaS is any type of software hosted by a single provider or company, often sold on a subscription plan. We're very familiar with SaaS software because it's our business. Zendesk is a SaaS company. We create and sell CRM software and platforms to businesses to help them improve their customer service skills and smooth their sales pipelines.

Like many SaaS businesses, we offer trials and demos of our products to make sure you love the system before you buy. This is a crucial step in SaaS sales. Not all buyers will have the resources to train their staff on complex software. A demo allows buyers to not only evaluate the efficacy of your software for their purposes but also ensure it's simple to implement and use. As more and more businesses of all types expand and move into the digital world, SaaS sales are booming and it's essential to know how to navigate them.

## Direct sales

Direct sales refers to several different types of sales, so we're going to break down some of the most common definitions and what specific terms should be used to define them:

**Direct-to-consumer (DTC):** DTC sales refers to a product creator selling directly to a customer. These sales often happen among artisans and small business owners. Nowadays, most of these sales take place via online stores like Etsy.

**Direct sales:** Direct sales describes two independent seller models.

- 1- Single-level marketing: A direct seller makes money by buying products from a parent organization and selling them directly to customers.
- 2- Multi-level marketing: A direct seller can earn money by selling products to customers or signing up customers as new direct sellers.

Both models usually entail either party demonstrations of products or Internet sales.

**B2C sales:** Direct sales are a type of B2C sales, but the terms are not interchangeable.

## Different types of sales positions

Now that we've gone through the main types of sales, let's take a look at the different types of sales careers. There are far more than the four listed, but if you're looking to understand the sales system and its different components, this is a great starting point for key positions.

Business development manager

Account manager

Sales manager

Sales representative

### Business development manager

Business development managers work to grow businesses by researching leads, arranging appointments, and finding new opportunities. They work collaboratively with all departments in order to gain a handle on clients, markets, products, and sales.

The BDM may appear to be a job solely focused on lead gathering, but in actuality, the role guides the entire sales and marketing strategy of the company. Every sales plan, every marketing tactic, and every product launch meeting is contingent upon target market research and qualified leads. Because of this, one might say the business development manager is the influential backbone of the entire business.

Top traits for BDMs:

Excellent communication skills

Leans toward creative thinking

Understands market trends and how to implement them

Excellent organizational skills

### Account manager

Account managers are in charge of existing clients. They serve as the liaison between their company and the customer by answering questions, managing regular payments, and giving product advice.

Normally, account managers are only assigned once a company reaches a certain size. That enables clients to feel a level of personalization that sales

representatives simply cannot provide once the company gains a larger number of customers.

Account managers also work with satisfied clients to expand current deals. A SaaS account manager may identify a client who is currently only using marketing software. As that relationship develops, the manager may eventually reach out to that client regarding sales software and inquire whether they are looking for a new SaaS platform for the sales department. If the relationship is strong, the client may refer the sales team to the SaaS company.

Top traits for account managers:

Excellent listening skills

Experience multitasking (will handle numerous accounts)

Proficient in forecasting and reporting

Works easily with many personalities

## **Sales manager**

Sales managers lead teams of sales representatives to achieve sales goals. They create appropriate goals based on accurate forecasting and then build a strategic sales plan around their team's performance skills.

Sales managers walk a thin line between people and profit, and as a result, it's an incredibly difficult job. Sales goals have to be met in order for the company to move forward, but they can only be met by motivated and satisfied sales representatives. Sales managers are constantly working to find the balance between pushing and encouraging their team members.

Top traits for sales managers:

Understanding of sales forecasts and reports

Ability to set realistic goals and create achievement plans

Impeccable communication and presentation skills

Ability to inspire and lead a team

## **Sales representative**

Sales representatives (or salespeople) are the face of the company. They are the ones most often seen by the customer and the ones primarily responsible for building client relationships. There are two main types of sales that sales representatives deal with: inside sales and outside sales.

## Inside sales

Inside sales are any sales done remotely or from the home office. These sales include phone, email, CRM platforms, and VOIP sales. Generally speaking, inside sales are more geared toward KPI goals and quotas compared to their outside counterparts, but they cover everything from cold calls to long-term deal-making.

Traditionally, outside sales (discussed in the next section) are considered the more “high-level” sales for a company, but that is rapidly changing in the digital business industry. Currently, inside sales are growing 15 times faster than outside sales, with no signs of stopping.

The pandemic certainly influenced the use of remote sales, but social trends are also pushing toward this selling style. According to a recent survey, only 27.9 percent of buyers prefer to do business face-to-face. That doesn’t mean outside sales are obsolete, but it does mean your company should have a strong handle on inside sales as it moves into 2022.

Top traits for inside sales representatives:

- Ability to quickly pick up on verbal cues
- Attention to detail in communication
- Ability to easily learn new product information
- Excellent time management
- Excellent task prioritization

## Outside sales

Outside sales are any sales of products or services that happen through in-person interactions. These sales are sometimes referred to as field sales because outside sales representatives meet with their prospects on their home turf, no matter where it might be.

Outside sales representatives normally work with fewer clients than inside sales representatives, so the deals they handle tend to be more complex and more in need of a relationship-focused strategy. With modern technology, some aspects of outside sales still happen remotely, but outside sales reps still need to maintain complete flexibility for travel at the drop of a hat.

Despite the decline in outside sales, they can still heavily impact a company’s revenue. The bigger the transaction, the more people need the in-person factor to feel comfortable. If your company leans heavily on one type of sales,

don't worry: the right balance of inside and outside sales for any particular company depends on products, organization, and sales strategy.

Top traits for outside sales representatives:

Ability to pick up body language cues

Comfortable working independently and on a self-set schedule

Extremely organized

Willing to work with a low number of quality leads rather than a high number of moderate leads