

PLAYER MAP - See It. Create It. Win It.



In a time when account and opportunity management processes are becoming increasingly complex, Scott Leland's PLAYER MAP system is getting a lot of attention for being just the opposite: simple, elegant and effective.

We sat down with Leland of PLAYER MAP, Inc. to find out more about how PLAYER MAP is changing the face of sales planning in companies around the globe.

In a snapshot, what is PLAYER MAP?

PLAYER MAP is a unique way to look at a sales situation through both your client's and company's eyes, so you can build bridges to the people you can help, and who in turn can help you. Making real-world, we use the PLAYER MAP X-Ray (PMX) to build PLAYER MAPs, a one-page visual sales plan that helps sales professionals "See It. Create It. Win It."

There may be hundreds of sales planning programs out there. How is PLAYER MAP different?

Those hundreds of programs look pretty much alike. From a distance they may seem different, but at close range it's easy to see that most of them are minor variations on the same theme. And that's part of the problem.

It seems that everyone coming out with a new variation feels a need to distinguish their program by making it bigger and more complex with all kinds of elaborate tools.

As a result, what you have is a lot of stuff that salespeople can't really use. And the tools are so cumbersome they rob salespeople of valuable selling time. This virtually forces salespeople to hastily enter bad data or to stop using the tools altogether.



Did you run into that earlier in your career, when you represented Hewlett-Packard and IBM?

Sure. At that time companies were just beginning to use big, elaborate sales planning processes. It's ironic that so many of them are still trying to use the same approaches two decades later, despite profound changes in the business environment. But yes, the experience of trying to implement those legacy systems is one part – the smaller one – of how PLAYER MAP came into being.

What is the larger part?

Listening. I've been doing this for nearly twenty years. I have worked with a substantial number of companies across many industries. In all of that, I have always listened to the salespeople I've worked with. As much as I've tried to help them, I've also tried to learn from them.

PLAYER MAP is a result of that effort, combined with an acute awareness that for a sales methodology to work for real salespeople, it has to be lean. There can't be any fat. That means there is no room for theoretical stuff that sounds great in a training program but has no relevance in the real world.

But many companies have complex sales situations that involve teams of salespeople, often coming from different countries. Doesn't their sales planning process have to be more complex?

No. Just the opposite. It has to be more simple. There are built-in complexities to multinational sales teams. You have different cultures and different languages, which are enormous hurdles to overcome. The worst thing you can do is lay on top of that a process that is unwieldy, complex, hard to learn and difficult to implement.

The great advantage of PLAYER MAP is that its simplicity has been proven to be the most effective approach to a team-selling environment. It provides not just a common language for planning, but a common communication protocol, which makes it perfect for a multinational and multicultural environment.

How is the sales environment in Europe and Asia different from that of the United States?

The biggest difference is how selling is viewed in the US as opposed to how it is viewed in other parts of the world.

Conventional wisdom in America is that a sales campaign is a very aggressive pursuit and that you've got to have an elaborate methodology with all kinds of tools and command-and-control structures. Everything is predicated on the notion that if you work the methodology perfectly and check off all the boxes you will win. It implies that success is a result of relentlessly pushing a product and business rationale and that you can let relationships just sort of evolve on their own. US-based training companies try to export this philosophy. It falls flat.



Why?

Because in most other countries the view of selling is exactly the opposite. It's a given that relationships come first and must be nourished. It is simply understood that relationships can't wait to evolve after the fact, but must be cultivated so that you earn the right to set forth a business proposition.

What's interesting is that successful salespeople in the US are learning this is true here, too. In that respect they are much farther ahead on the learning curve than the training companies and the consultants and, in some cases, their own management. A lot has changed in the marketplace.

The people on the front lines were the first to see it. They know they have to adapt. They also can see through the fantasies spun by some of those consultants and training companies.

Do salespeople in Europe and Asia have anything in common with their counterparts in the United States?

Quite a bit. They too are busier than ever and under as much or more pressure. They too are overloaded with information. They too are working long hours. So, they too absolutely must have a simple process to manage complex sales situations.

What changes in the market are effecting selling?

In virtually every environment – technology, services, finance, manufacturing – the biggest change is the sophistication of customers. Right behind that is the short lifespan of new products. Both combine to change the game. Salespeople can no longer make a career simply by joining a company with a hot product and putting that wind at their backs.

A salesperson's job isn't to be a mere product representative. To succeed, salespeople must be skilled at orchestrating relationships and resources. They have to become experts at building bridges. They must be highly skilled at connecting on the basis of someone's professional and personal interests, regardless of the kind of organizational structure that individual works in.



Why is the customer's organizational structure a factor?

Those elaborate, legacy sales planning systems we were talking about are all oriented to the old-fashioned hierarchical organization. They're either about top-down or bottom-up selling, depending on how you believe you can best deliver your business and product case. They're not about building relationships, even though today it's not just what you know or who you know, but who knows you.

The problem is that, while some organizations today certainly are just as hierarchical as in the old days, more are essentially flat. In fact, a growing number are virtual. So the old notions about how to sell to an organization simply no longer apply. The people who advocate the elaborate, legacy sales planning systems are stuck in time. In an age of iPods, razor-slim telephones and Blackberries, they're offering boomboxes, bag phones and luggable computers.

What central strength of PLAYER MAP causes people to embrace it so enthusiastically?

PLAYER MAP is a reflection of the realities of today. It wasn't dreamed up in a bubble. It was built to accommodate the realities of selling in any number of organizational formats. It is straightforward enough to learn and deploy quickly. The PLAYER MAP is a window into all the forces that drive a project, including both client & company internal political dynamics – Player Map is your Visual Sales Plan.

The PLAYER MAP system is fully integrated, and prepares sales managers to lead their teams to higher sales performance. Our online PLAYER MAP X-Ray (PMX) app generates in real-time your customized PLAYER MAP. No confusing menus, no steep learning curve – it is easy, fast and streamlined. See your political strategy on one page, and sell with greater efficiency and higher win rate. Managers see status, teams see their approach, and sales professionals see how to win.

Sales professionals worldwide use the PLAYER MAP for small deals where one person sells to one client, and they use it for huge deals worth hundreds of millions of dollars where extended teams sell to clients stretched around the world. They use it because it works for them – it works for them because it was built for them.



PLAYER MAP

Visual Sales Plan

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