

# How to sell when no one picks up the phone

(And why you need to stop pretending that  
your sales team is driving growth)

BY JUSTIN ROFF-MARSH



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This special report is an extract from Justin's LinkedIn event, *How to Sell When No One Picks Up the Phone. (And why you need to stop pretending that your sales team is driving growth.)*

Visit the Ballistix YouTube channel to watch the replay as well as a heap of other videos, including the highly-praised sales documentary: Double-Digit Growth (and why you're stuck on single digits).



## The Sales department's dirty secret

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In most sales environments, it's practically impossible to initiate conversations with strangers.

When I was growing up in sales, every executive took pride in the phone on their desk. They even answered it when it made noise! And, when cell phones hit the market, executives queued to purchase them and proceeded to use them for their intended purpose: making and receiving calls.

Increasingly, executives (and regular folks) no longer answer their phones. I spent a couple of hours with a software development team a couple of months ago, and each developer had a phone on their desk. Every phone was muted. And all phones were blinking forlornly as a parade of inbound calls went unanswered.

This is why some salespeople are reporting that they can spend four hours attempting outbound calls and only manage to connect with one or two of their intended targets.

Notice I say "some salespeople".

If you have salespeople and they're not complaining that their prospects simply don't pick up the phone, there are two reasons why this might be the case.

1. It's possible that you sell into construction projects, or that you call on buyers who are compelled to take your salespeople's calls.
2. Or, your salespeople are so busy with account management that they never have time to pick up the phone.

I would hazard a guess that over 80 percent of salespeople fall into this second category.

Either option means neither you nor they are aware of how incredibly difficult it is to start a conversation with a potential customer in this day and age.

# It's never been easier to avoid speaking to salespeople

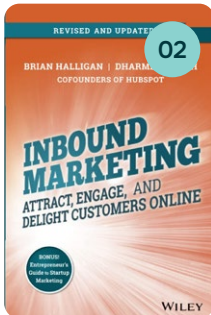
The cold, hard reality is that new technologies have made it easy for prospects to avoid talking to salespeople. They're no longer dependent upon salespeople for information discovery, and they have the means to reject inbound calls by default. You probably do it yourself.

Now, there are two approaches to mitigating this problem.



## Brute force solution

There's the brute force approach, where you free salespeople from all distractions so they can spend eight hours a day on outbound calls, which means making 80 to 100 phone calls a day.



## Elegant solution

Then there's the elegant solution, which marketing folks have fallen in love with, where you spend marketing dollars to generate inbound inquiries, which presumably result in easier conversations for salespeople.

**But there's one problem with both of these approaches, and that's diminishing returns.**

You can scale the brute force approach by adding more salespeople, but because this is often painful and thankless work, the quality of your sales force

tends to degrade over time. Most organizations don't want to operate a boiler room.

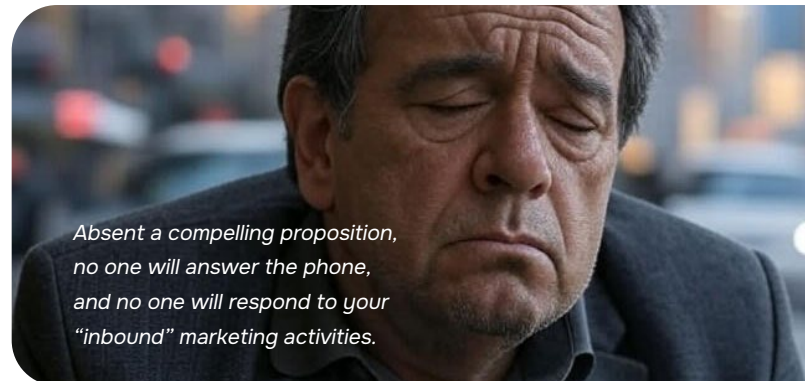
The problem with inbound marketing is that it works only to the extent that the organization's content is compelling, controversial, and new. If your organization distributes HVAC components, you have a steep hill to climb. Moreover, increasing your marketing spend doesn't result in a commensurate increase in inbound inquiries.

Another big problem with inbound is that most inquiries tend to be transactional in nature, meaning they should probably be directed to your customer service team and not to the sales department.

To summarize, when your salespeople call prospective customers, virtually no one picks up the phone. You can compensate by creating a boiler room environment, but you'll burn through salespeople.

Or you can buy into the inbound religion, but that means satisfying yourself with a very small number of inbound inquiries of dubious quality.

If we're going to solve this problem, we need to dig a little deeper.



# The relationship between innovation and salesmanship



Now, you may recall from your high school economics classes that markets tend, over time, towards an efficient market. Information is evenly distributed, meaning that buyers can make decisions quickly and objectively. Consequently, in a perfectly efficient market, there are no salespeople.

Fortunately, no market is perfectly efficient. The primary reason is innovation. Innovation results in the release of new information into the marketplace, and it takes time for this new information to diffuse.

If it's major information, such as the creation of Uber or, more recently, ChatGPT, then the information diffusion occurs organically and quickly.

If it's a smaller innovation, then marketing and sales departments are required to speed up the diffusion process.

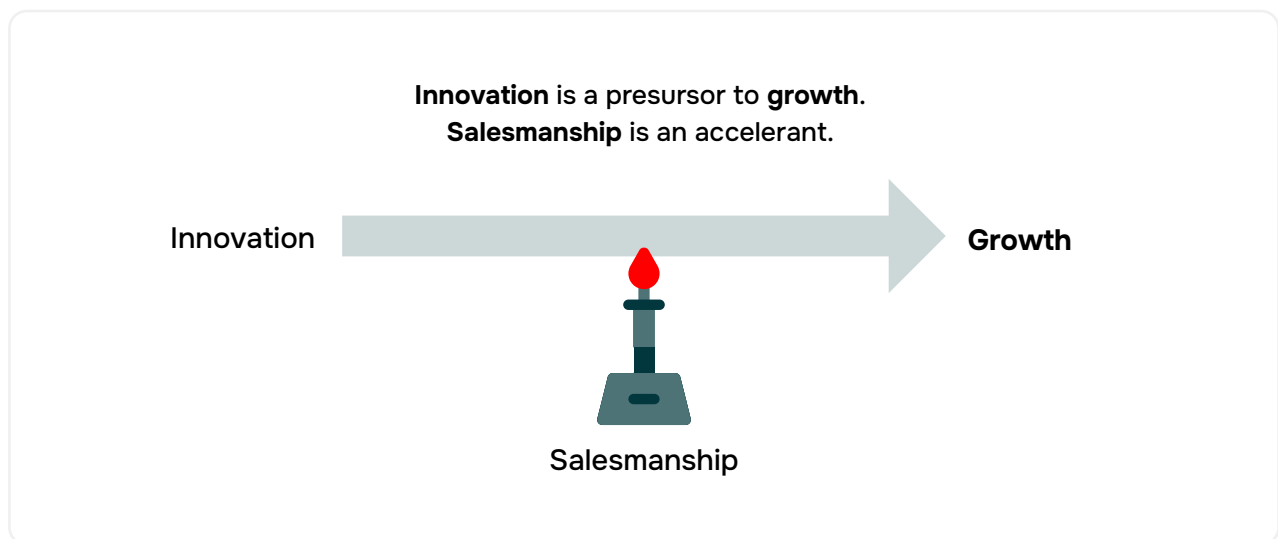
The lesson is that salesmanship is dependent upon innovation. Although parenthetically, innovation is not necessarily reliant on salesmanship. In more practical terms, this means that the effectiveness of both marketing and sales depends on innovation. In the absence of innovation, your return on marketing spend will go to zero, and no one will answer your calls.

To achieve a breakthrough, we need to examine the connection between salesmanship and innovation.

Are each of these independent requirements? Or do they exist in service of a common goal?

Obviously, both innovation and salesmanship are required to drive an organization's growth.

This diagram visualizes the relationship between these concepts. Innovation is the precursor to growth and salesmanship; marketing is an accelerant.



# From maximizing sales to maximizing growth

Since our sales problem appears to be intractable, it makes sense to broaden our perspective and determine what we need to do to maximize growth. I think it's fair to say that most business owners are interested in innovation and sales, only to the extent that these are required to drive growth.

So our big idea is to shift our focus from maximizing sales to maximizing growth. Given this new focus, let's explore the component parts of the growth formula.

## Growth

Growth results from the addition of new accounts (customers) and the addition of new categories of business for existing accounts.

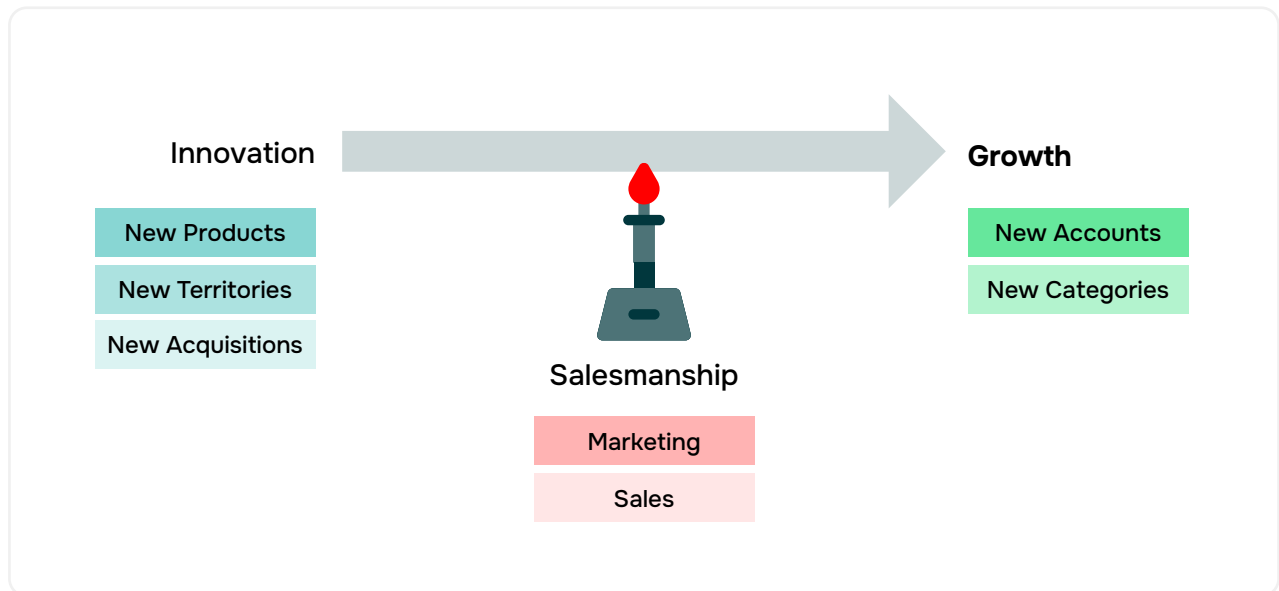
## Salesmanship

Salesmanship takes the form of marketing (virtual salesmanship) and traditional sales activity.

## Innovation

Innovation takes the form of new products, new territories, and new acquisitions.

When it comes to new products, innovation can take the form of entirely new products or services, or it may involve repackaging existing ones. Alternatively, it may take the form of a material improvement to an existing product resulting from production or supply chain innovation.



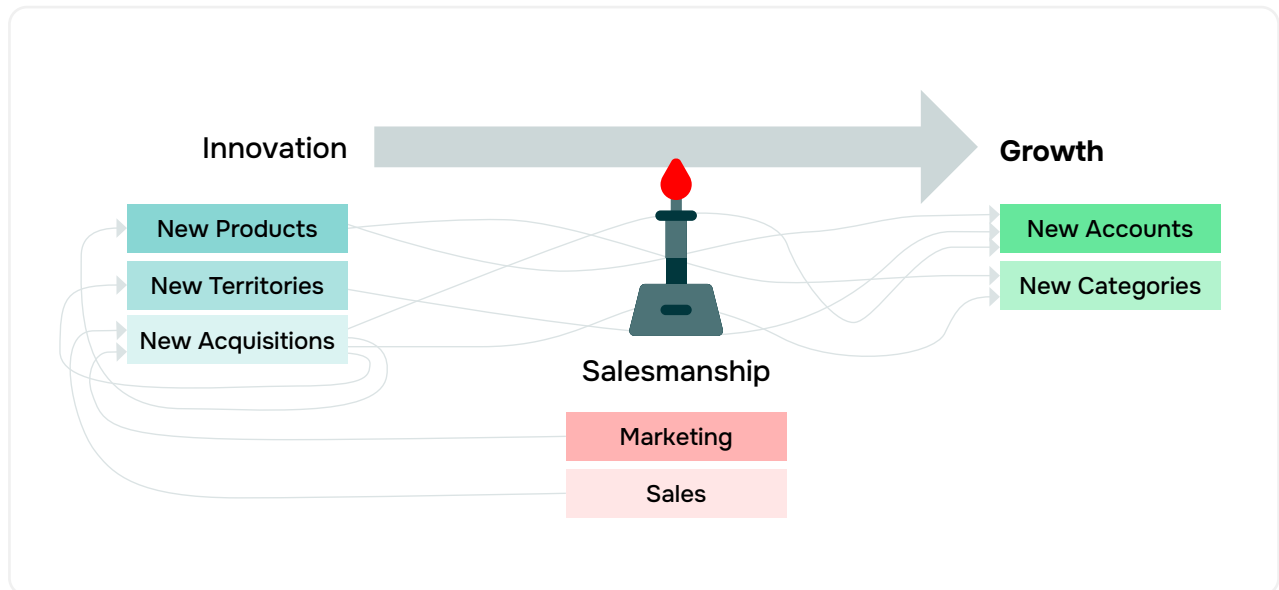
# The entities that make up your growth engine are tightly interrelated

It's essential to recognize that the component parts of our growth formula are tightly integrated. This means that incremental improvements in one place are likely to be multiplied.

New products and product improvements make it easier to win new accounts and sell new categories of business to existing accounts.

Likewise, new territories provide opportunities to win new accounts and to expand existing ones.

Acquisitions bring new products, new territories, and new accounts, and the existence of a functioning growth engine, like the one pictured, makes your organization more attractive to potential acquirers.



# If you want to grow, Sales are necessary but not sufficient. You need a complete growth engine!

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Take note of those two words. Growth engine.

We're no longer trying to improve sales or to innovate in a vacuum. Our objective is to build a tightly integrated growth engine.

So that's the theory. Let's transition now to execution. How exactly do you go about building this growth engine? I challenge you to do this simple test. Grab one of your salespeople and ask them why their role exists.

Odds are, they'll tell you it's their job to drive revenue. You can't fault your salesperson for this answer. Most likely, you created this expectation when you hired them. In modern organizations, there's a good

chance the sales department is accountable to a chief revenue officer, which makes this expectation explicit.

But here's the problem. The pursuit of revenue is not the same as the pursuit of wealth growth..

In fact, the relentless pursuit of revenue will result in an absence of growth. Here's why. In a typical business, almost all revenue comes from existing customers repurchasing. The relentless pursuit of revenue turns salespeople into highly paid account managers, which is a polite way of saying customer service reps.

Revenue is not the source of growth; it's the result of growth.

## Reality Check!

The pursuit of revenue leads to the absence of growth

Growth comes from the pursuit of **sources of revenue**

The root cause of growth is innovation.

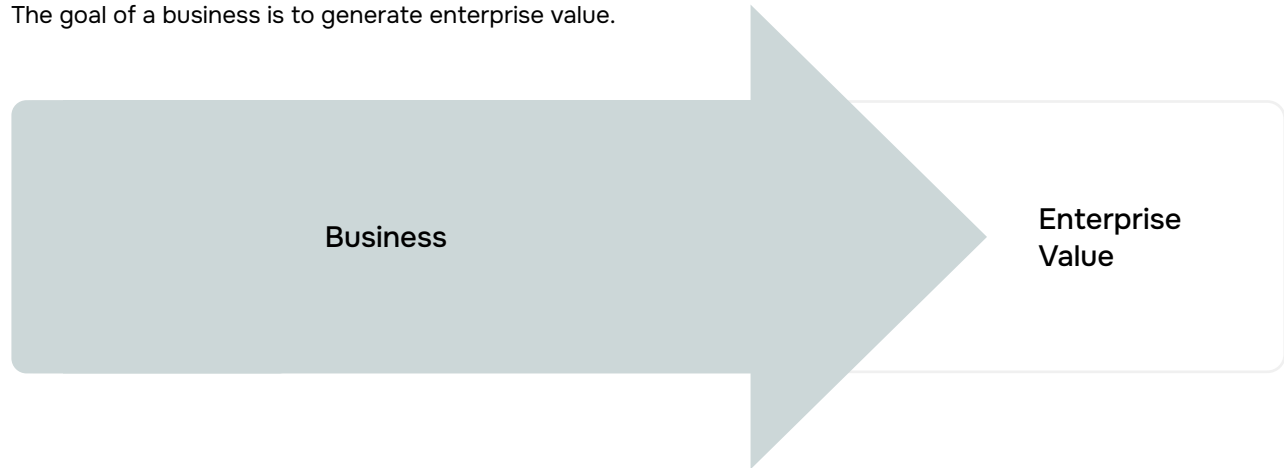
As we've discussed, to grow, you need to stop chasing revenue and start identifying sources of revenue. Now, this distinction is not just semantics.

It determines the definition of success within critical departments. It defines the structure of the overall organization, and ultimately it determines whether your organization will grow or wither on the vine.

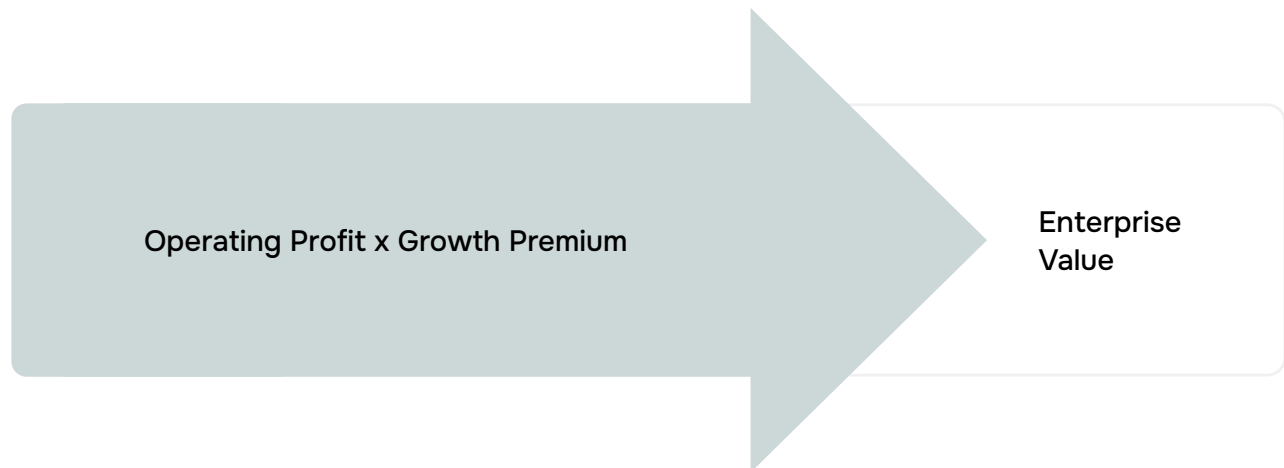
# A new organizational design

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Let's start with the structure of your organization.  
The goal of a business is to generate enterprise value.

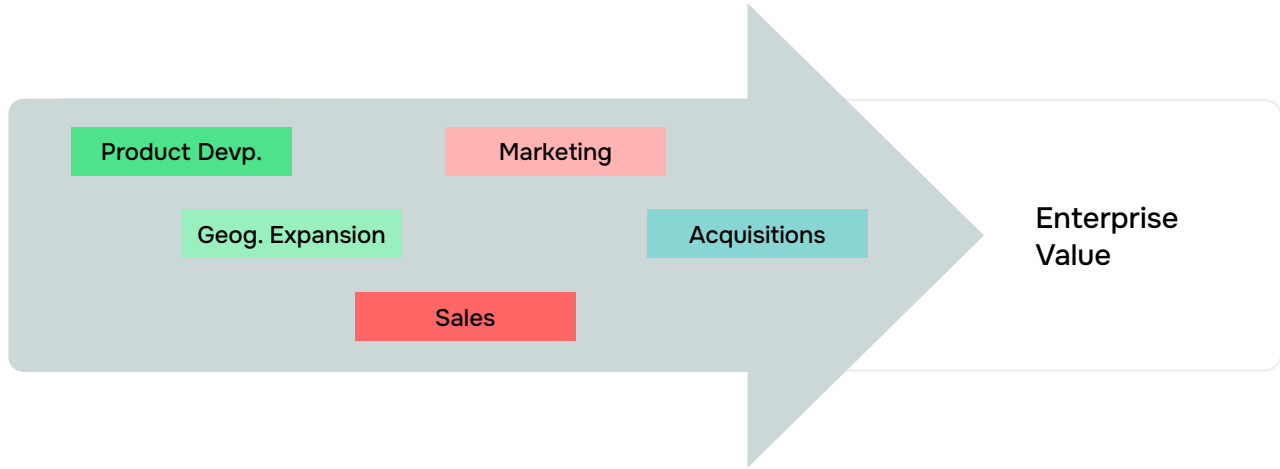


Enterprise value is a function of operating profit and a growth premium. This means that a fast-growing business is more valuable than a slow-growing one. Given the same level of operating profit as the operator of a business, you're responsible for maintaining a sensible trade-off between operating profit and growth.



If you maximize operating profit, your business doesn't grow and quickly becomes irrelevant.  
And if you maximize growth, you fail to generate a commercial return on shareholders' investment.

Here's what typically happens in a typical organization. You start with an understanding of the importance of growth and all its constituent parts. And then you add the requirement to generate operating profit.



Given that your organization has a finite capacity. And given that the people expected to contribute to growth and operating profit are the same, you inevitably end up with the pursuit of operating profit consuming all the organization's capacity, meaning that the effort expended in pursuit of growth is reduced to zero.

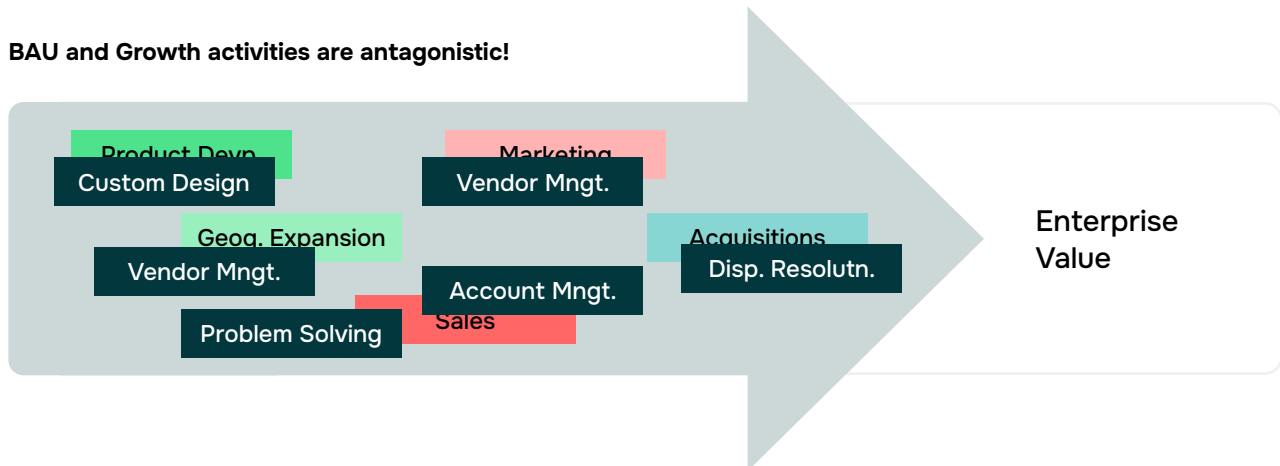
Here are two common examples.

1. A salesperson who is expected to look after existing accounts and win new ones ends up spending all their available time on the former.

2. An engineer who's expected to work on custom solutions for existing customers, as well as the development of new products, ends up allocating virtually none of their creative energy to new product innovation.

The bottom line is that the activities required for growth and those necessary for revenue generation are antagonistic. If you attempt to perform both sets of activities within the same environment, the effort expended on one set will go to zero. And we all know which set that is!

**BAU and Growth activities are antagonistic!**



# A fast-growing business is not a single system

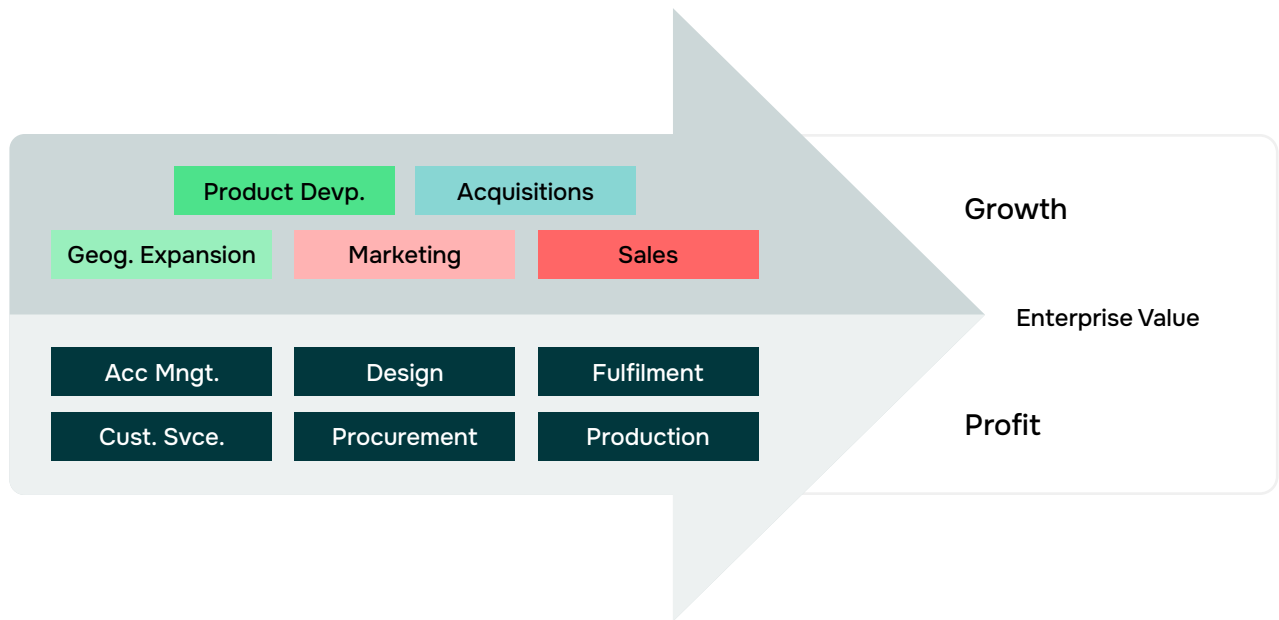
There's only one practical way to avoid this, and that's to split your organization into two discrete groups.

There's the **Business-As-Usual Group** that focuses on generating operating profit, which primarily consists of the pursuit of revenue. And then there's a **Growth Group** that focuses on growth.

The Business-As-Usual, or the base group, is responsible for converting potential revenue into actual revenue. The Growth Group is responsible

for growing the basket of potential revenue that powers the base group. That basket of potential revenue takes the form of accounts and goodwill.

Practically, we already understand the growth formula. It's new products, new territories, new acquisitions. Together with the catalytic effect of marketing and sales, the profit formula is a simple value chain that stretches from an embattled inquiry all the way through fulfillment.



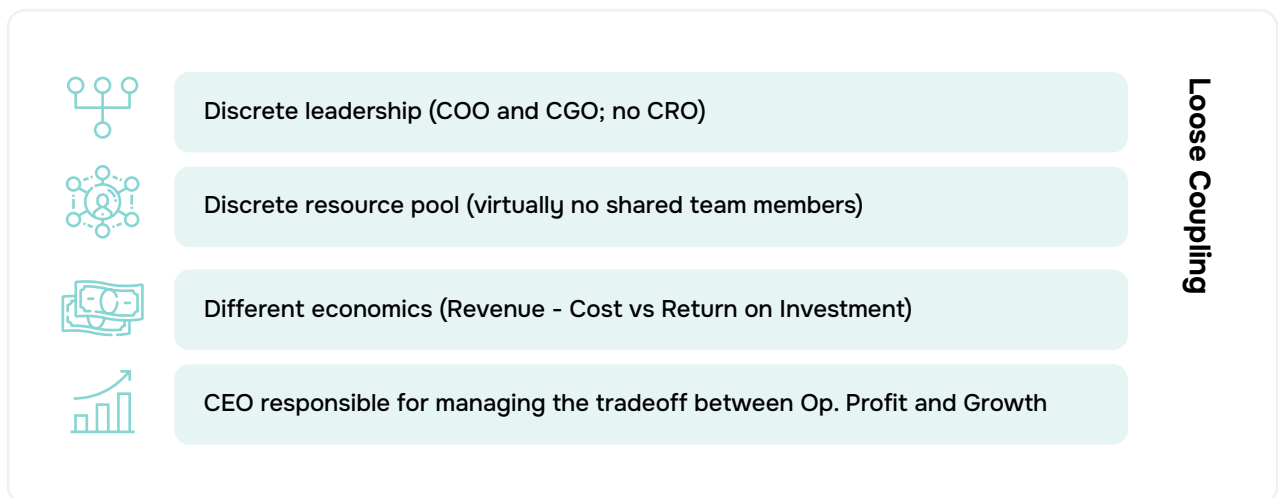
# Two discrete groups

The essential characteristic of this model is the discrete nature of these two groups. I'm not describing two departments within a larger organization. I'm describing two autonomous groups.

These groups must have their own leaders. My preference is that your Chief Operations Officer assumes responsibility for the BAU

Group, and that a Chief Growth Officer leads the Growth Group.

These groups must have their own resource pools with virtually no shared team members. If there are team members who must be shared, then these individuals must have a high level of protective capacity, and their time must be formally scheduled.



These groups have different economics, which means they must be accountable to different metrics. The BAU group seeks to maximize operating profit. The Growth Group seeks to maximize return on investment.

The CEO remains aware that these two groups are pursuing their own local optima and is solely responsible for maintaining the optimal balance between growth and operating profit.

Interestingly, this model is not a new one. You can observe it operating exactly as described in technology startups and in quick-service restaurant chains. You can probably think of other examples as well.

The key message here is that if you want to maintain consistent growth as your organization scales, then you need to redesign your organization. This redesign consists of two discrete groups. Business-As-Usual to generate operating profit and the Growth Group to generate its namesake.

# What becomes of salespeople?

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Let's finish our discussion by returning to where we started: your sales team. We found that what seemed like a trivial problem—prospects declining to take calls from salespeople—was actually caused by a more significant issue: the lack of compelling propositions.

This, in return, is a consequence of a less-than-optimal organizational design. Let's assume you fix the design problem by creating a dedicated Growth Group. What are the implications for salespeople?

One thing doesn't change. It's still very difficult for salespeople to get potential customers to pick up the phone. But now you have fewer salespeople. They spend a greater percentage of their time selling new categories of product to existing customers, and those are much easier conversations.

To the extent that they do pick up the phone and attempt to initiate conversations with strangers, they're now leading with much more compelling propositions. You no longer allocate total responsibility for growth to your sales department and hope they manage to pull a rabbit out of a hat. You now have a deliberate, concerted, and properly resourced growth engine.

## Build a small, highly skilled, very well-paid internal sales team and use them as an accelerant to drive growth

But structural changes are required. You need to expand the scope of your operations group to include account management and customer service. You will also need to restructure your sales department according to the new model. You need a small team of highly skilled and well-paid internal salespeople. This team should work exclusively inside and they should be paid salaries, not commissions.

This team should be deployed as an accelerant for all of your growth initiatives, whether that's selling new categories to existing accounts, winning new accounts in a new territory, or even assisting in the pursuit of acquisitions.

## Reallocate legacy team members to new roles

Most members of your legacy sales team are unlikely to be excited about this new sales growth role. And that's okay. You should reallocate these folks to roles that are a good fit for their current modus operandi.

Some can become strategic account managers within your operations group. Others might join your engineering team as subject matter experts. Some might become field specialists, visiting client sites to perform discrete tasks in support of either the growth or the business-as-usual team.

Now, this is, of course, a significant undertaking. There's risk involved, but of course, treading water can be a risky strategy to especially in shark-infested waters.

## Decision time

So let me finish with a question. Your salespeople, those folks who struggle to get prospects to pick up the phone, why did you hire them?

Was it because you wanted highly paid customer service reps? Or was it because you wanted your organization to grow?

# 90-minute Mini Organizational Design Workshop

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If you agree that it's because you wanted your organization to grow, then it makes sense to determine your course of action sooner, rather than later.

To that end, Justin (the author of this special report) has put together a 90-minute workshop for you and your leadership team. The objective of the workshop is to figure out how to structure your organization for growth without inflating operating expenses.

## Why do it?

It's free (as in beer).

It'll help your team figure out how to structure your organization for growth without increasing expenses.

It's only 90 minutes, hosted on Google Meet (or your preferred web meeting app).

No fluff, no sales pitch. Just you, Justin, and your leadership team working to solve your growth puzzle.

You can schedule it here:

[info.ballistixspe.com/mini-org-design-workshop](https://info.ballistixspe.com/mini-org-design-workshop)

# Questions

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## **In a small company, can employees split their time between the Growth team and the Business-as-Usual team?**

I'm going to give you a short answer, and then I'm going to give you a longer, more nuanced answer. The short answer is no. They can't. And the reason I say that is the core problem that we're trying to address is the antagonistic nature of the two sets of activities.

The reality is that if you have one resource pool, consisting of people who are responsible for both business-as-usual (BAU) activities and growth activities, the effort expended in pursuit of growth activities inevitably diminishes to zero. This is because people are trying to split their time between two sets of different activities.

The solution to this problem is to divide people into two distinct groups. I understand that in a small business, there's a limit to how quickly operating expenses can be inflated.

Interestingly, if we go back to the beginning of a business on day zero, we start with no revenue at all. Then, on day one, you bank a customer's first check and experience infinite growth (from zero revenue to the first check).

During these early startup days, the founder dedicates 100% of their time and energy to growth. And then as tech and other functions start to come in, the founder becomes conflicted between the desire for growth and the need to perform activities that generate revenue.

Obviously, priority is given to revenue-generating business-as-usual activities. The danger is, however, as you start to scale the organization, you end up scaling not the initial activity—the one that caused you to go from 0 to 1—but scaling the business-as-usual activities. Before long, you have no growth activities at all.

## **So how do we get around this?**

One solution is to hustle like crazy, especially if you're a very small business, until you reach a size where you can add growth resources. Now, a critical point is to recognize why we're adding people. Are we adding people because we want them to contribute to the generation of operating profit, or are we adding people because we want them to contribute to the generation of growth?

This is a critical point to consider when hiring your first salesperson. Why are you adding a salesperson? Is it because you want growth? Or is it because you want revenue?

You should not add a salesperson at all until you find yourself in a situation where you're prepared to grow. Then you want to ensure that your salesperson is in the Growth Group, not the BAU group.

That means that you need to design their modus operandi. And design all of the workflows that they participate in, such that there is no way that they can get drawn into Business-As-Usual. This is to ensure that they focus exclusively on hunting for new business and nothing else.

They don't get drawn into detailed requirement discovery. They don't get drawn into the detail into solution design proposal generation. And they definitely don't get drawn into onboarding new accounts or managing existing accounts.

If you allow your salesperson to have any involvement in those activities, what will happen before you know it is 100% of their time will be dedicated to BAU, and the effort expended on growth goes to zero.

## Can you cheat the growth formula, even just a little?

Sure, you can cheat a little bit. In the software industry, people talk about timeboxing. I think of time boxing as a poor man's division of labor, and the way time boxing works is you discipline yourself (or your team) to focus on one specific activity for one specific period of time each day—no exceptions! Say from 9.00am to lunch time, Monday to Friday.

You could say, "Because we can't afford to have division of labor, we're going to allocate three hours a day to focus exclusively on growth activities."

Like timeboxing, it can work, but only if it's rigidly enforced. For this reason, I'm hesitant to recommend it because one of the challenges of running a small business is that you often lack the same level of discipline that you might have in a large organization, simply because you can't afford it.

Now, I mentioned in the presentation that sometimes you will need to have resources who contribute to both groups. Here's an example. If you have an engineering group and you have one or two subject matter experts with deep domain expertise, they may need to contribute to both new product development and custom engineering, for example.

If you have individuals like that, you want to ensure that they have a tremendous amount of productive capacity. In other words, you need to design your organization so that they cannot become the bottleneck.

You also need to formally schedule their time to ensure that there's a sensible mix of effort expended on growth versus BAU. You might say, "Well, I'm going to allocate slots in this person's calendar, and we're going to ensure a 70/30 mix of slots. We will then audit this weekly to ensure the mix is maintained."

## How important is innovation for growth?

Innovation isn't just required for growth—it's the fountainhead for growth. In other words, if innovation is removed, growth eventually comes to a halt.

The problem with innovation is that everybody thinks they're innovators, just like everyone thinks they're

a good driver. But the reality is that most of us are not innovative because we fail to flex the innovation muscle, and we fail to develop what is a latent ability. By the same token, everyone of us is a reasonable driver.

But if you get on a go-kart track, you quickly discover that there's a hell of a difference between being an average driver and a good driver. And the key to becoming a good driver is to flex that driving muscle.

So, as part of creating a formal Growth Group, you must ensure that there are a small number of people in the organization who focus their time exclusively on innovation.

It's that focus that's important. If you dedicate time to innovation and do it consistently, week after week, month after month, you will eventually become proficient at it. In most environments, your competitors aren't devoting the same level of effort to innovation.

## What typical results do you get when you deploy this new model?

One of the problems with it being a new model is that we don't have a lot of official results, because traditionally, we haven't taken the level of formal responsibility for creating the Growth Group.

When *The Machine* was published, almost ten years ago now, I prefaced the book with the idea of replacing your chief revenue officer with a chief growth officer. We have been advocating to our clients the innovation aspect of the growth model for nearly as long.

We have been working with them to try to quarantine their sales resources and focus them exclusively on growth. The results that all our clients have seen and continue to see are a testament to the growth model I am advocating. I'm saying, "Let's take what we've been doing informally for the last 15 or 20 years and formalize it and approach it more aggressively." I think it would be reasonable to expect that the adoption of a formal approach to growth will lead to improved results.

## Do people really not pick up the phone anymore?

The title of this presentation is “How do you sell when no one answers the phone?.” What we have seen is a fairly dramatic decrease in the number of prospects who answer the telephone. Now, that’s a very concerning thing, because if you are a salesperson, you can talk to existing customers easily enough. They’ll answer your calls. You probably have, you know, their cell phone, and they’ll recognize your name, and they’ll answer your call.

But suppose you’re attempting to hunt for new business. What a lot of our client salespeople are finding is that virtually no one picks up the phone, which makes the pursuit of new business extremely difficult.

My advice is to broaden the aperture and recognize that the goal isn’t sales in isolation. The goal is growth. We’ve reached a point where it’s necessary for organizations to go down this path. You have to. And if you don’t believe me, gather your sales team. Get them to dedicate half a day to calling strangers in organizations that you would like to do business with, and sit in a damn room with them and listen to them calling and failing to talk to individual after individual after individual.

You’re going to end up forming the same conclusion yourself. As I mentioned in the presentation, many executives are unaware that it’s virtually impossible for their salespeople to engage with potential customers, as they rarely attempt to do so. And on the occasions that they do try, they don’t feel that it’s in their best interests to communicate their lack of success to the CEO.

## At what point do you move the customer from the Growth Group to the Business-as-Usual Group?

I would say, at the point at which the deal is signed. Now, sometimes, depending on the environment, the

deal is signed, and then there’s a whole bunch of pre-work that needs to occur before you receive the first order.

Let’s take industrial distribution as an example. Let’s say you go and convince a new customer that you’re going to become their supplier of fasteners. Let’s say, a contract gets signed either formally or an agreement gets made informally before you can invoice the customer. There’s often a massive amount of work that needs to be done. You know, auditing their current consumption, mapping the SKUs they currently purchase from competitors to the SKUs in your ERP, and setting up systems. If you’re offering vendor-managed inventory, you would be installing bin systems and setting up protocols if there’s EDI involved.

In an environment like this (and I’m deliberately pointing to an extreme example), what you want to do is have your salesperson win the deal and then hand it off to an onboarding group, which would be part of operations.

In a technology company, this wouldn’t be called onboarding. It would be called customer success. But it’s the same concept. The onboarding group is responsible for onboarding the customer, which involves getting their first order. However, the onboarding process is considered complete when the customer has adopted a steady-state behavior.

At that point, onboarding disengages and moves on to work on the next account. In complex environments, our clients will actually have salespeople pitch onboarding slots. They’ll say, “We don’t have a slot available until late August. Would you like us to lock you into that slot? That’s actually a closing technique that salespeople will use.”

Then there’s a formal handoff to the onboarding team. And then once the customer has reached a steady state, there’s a handoff from onboarding to customer service. If it’s a major account, then there’s already been a relationship established with a strategic account manager who’s also a part of the operations group.

## Is there an ideal balance between talking and asking questions in a cold call?

On one hand, many prospects find it's best to listen first to see if the conversation is worth their time. I agree absolutely. So, I've never liked the advice that sales trainers give that you sell by asking questions.

The advice is half correct and half incorrect. If a prospect is interested in having a conversation with you, the Socratic approach works very well. It works well to ask questions. So you can say, "Mr. Prospect, why are we even talking today?". And they will say, "Well, I'm talking to you because I'm so frustrated with the experiences I'm having with that supplier."

And the salesperson can say, "Well, tell me more. What do you like? What don't you like? What would you most like to change?". The customer will describe exactly the solution that they want. So I'm all on board with the idea of selling by asking questions. However, this presupposes that the prospect is actually having a conversation with you. If they're not having a conversation with you, if they're holding the phone six inches away from their ear trying to determine whether or not you're a friend or foe, then asking them questions is not a good strategy.

What you need is an elevator pitch that grabs their attention. You need to say, "I know you're busy, Mister Prospect, but the reason I'm calling you is because we've been working with GE and we've cut their, you know, assembly time on their ABC product from three hours down to 35 minutes. If you allow me eight minutes, I can show you how we've been able to do that. Do you have eight minutes now or should we schedule a time for later in the week?".

That's why you need an elevator pitch. You need to be able to make a promise that sounds too good to be true and then ask for a commitment of a small amount of time. Even in that case, with a conversation like that on the telephone, if you're lucky enough for the prospect to say, "look, this sounds like a crazy

proposition, but I will give you those eight minutes to see if you can make good on that ridiculous claim", you're not going to be asking questions for for the eight minutes.

You're going to be doing a pitch to prove that the crazy promise you just made has some substance behind it. If you can achieve that, then you can ask questions. That's the point in the sales conversation where the prospect flips from being the pursuit to being the pursuer. As a salesperson you need to wait until you recognize that the prospect is pursuing you for information before you start trying to sell by asking questions.

## In Academia, the same people who chase research grants are expected to be budgeted and allocated to the research team doing the project execution. Any thoughts on translating your Growth Group and Business-As-Usual ideas to research grant funding?

I think you've already figured out how to translate them in the phrasing of the the question, I mean, the obvious answer is to have a group that focus on chasing the research grants. I think if a business operator were to take over a university, the idea would be to have a dedicated team who focuses on chasing the research grants and pull in the subject matter experts on a limited basis to participate in the pitch, rather than having the subject matter experts who are going to be doing the work, to do the whole pitch.

If I were to consult to a university, I would say build a Swat team that chases the money. Really, that's not such a radical idea. That's what you would do if you were a normal business, right? If if you're, a Subway, you don't have the people who are responsible for making sandwiches go out there and try and sell franchises. You have a dedicated Swat team called Public Corporate Development who are responsible for going in and pitching to franchise operators.

## Should the Growth Group be out in the field or in the office?

There are very few reasons why you want your Growth Group to be field based. If you are going to be out in the field, you want to make sure that you're doing something that absolutely cannot be done to the same level of quality from the office.

One thing that should not be done by the Growth Group out in the field is commercial sales conversations. You don't need to be in the field to do that. If you look at defense contracts for example, most of the conversations are video conferences, if not all of them.

One thing that absolutely should be done in the field that isn't done at all in most organizations, is having whoever is responsible for new product development spend time in the field. In other words, go and actually spend blocks of time in your customers businesses. A big criticism I have of a lot of our clients is they don't have a profound understanding of how their customers businesses work.

They think they do. They have a vague understanding. They've been able to infer a bunch from their interactions with existing and potential customers. But there's no one in the organization who has actually gone and sat in the customer's business and watched how it operated. Those organizations who have invested to do this tend to be the innovative ones.

My view is if you want to innovate, don't do it from a distance. In fact, before you even start innovating, go and spend blocks of time like days, days or weeks sitting in, observing, taking notes, participating in meetings and, and ask your customers if you can do it and tell them that you're going to give them priority access to whatever insights you get.

Tell them you want to come up with an irresistible proposition for their business such that they're prepared for you to come and hang out in their business. In most cases, they'll be delighted for that to happen. And work on the shop floor with the operators, sit in the office and listen to customer service reps on the telephone. Actually immerse yourself in their business and develop a profound understanding of how their business functions. Learn their language, learn the metrics that they use formally and informally. Learn all of the little protocols, and then come back to the office and start the innovation process. That absolutely should be done in the field.

## How do you determine who fits best in the new type of roles you've described?

I don't think it's as difficult as it sounds. My advice is to visualize the role or visualize the activities, the critical activities that are required of the person who fills that role. Then sit in a room with a bunch of other business leaders and ask the group, "Who do we all know who would be a perfect fit for this role given the set of activities?".

It could be someone's son or someone's daughter. It could be someone who works in the plant, or a competitor's salesperson. Whenever I ask that question of a group of executives, there's consensus typically within ten seconds.

Once we've identified that person, it'd be great if you could go and recruit them. But if you can't go and recruit them, that's okay. You need to go and find the person most similar to that person that you can possibly find. That's the that's the easiest way to do it.

If we have to run an ad, let's run an ad that describes our perfect candidate and ask the people who are searching the job board, "Is this person you? If so, please call us. We have a great role with a tremendous benefit package in mind for you."

### What's the downside of this approach?

If there's one downside to this model, it's that your current sales team may not be as excited by it as you are! And it's easy to see why. You're asking them to hand in their car keys and spend all day, every day, on the phone relentlessly chasing new accounts as part of your new Growth Group.

This is less interesting than their current role, even if it pays the same (perhaps more).

Most organizations that go down this path do not try to shoehorn their existing salespeople into this new sales role. Most will move their best salespeople into field specialist or technical roles and staff the new Growth Group sales team with fresh recruits.

But, it goes without saying that you have a difficult decision ahead. The traditional sales model and the new Growth model are so fundamentally different that you really need to choose one or the other.

There is no middle road. Maintaining the traditional model will keep the peace with your sales team. But the cost is a slower rate of growth. There's also the risk that a competitor might embrace this model before you do and use their early start to upset the balance of power in your marketplace.

Either way. If you agree that this new model has the potential I claim it does, it makes sense to determine your course of action sooner, rather than later.

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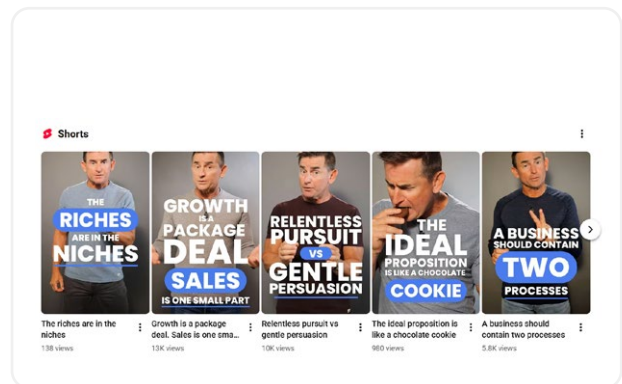
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