

The Sales Development Playbook

An Interview with Author Trish Bertuzzi

Jill: Hi. I'm here today with Trish Bertuzzi, author of a hot new book that just came out called *The Sales Development Playbook: Build Repeatable Pipeline and Accelerate Growth with Inside Sales*. Trish is also the founder and president of The Bridge Group, Inc., which is the number one inside sales consultancy in North America, and Salesforce has selected her as one of the top 24 thought leaders globally. Trish, thank you so much for being here today.

Trish: Thank you, Jill. I'm super excited to be here.

Jill: Your new book is really good. I want to share it with all my followers because I think it has really good insights that everybody can take away.

Trish: I'm hoping so.

Jill: Let me just start out. This book is about Sales Development as a role. Can you explain what that position is, because it's not the same as "salesperson," is it?

Trish: It is not. As you mentioned before, my area of focus is Inside Sales. Inside Sales is very much an umbrella term that covers a variety of functions. In this book we focused on one of those functions, which we and many others have categorized as Sales Development.

Under the Inside Sales umbrella, Sales Development are people responsible for the front end of the sales process. They either set introductory meetings or they generate qualified opportunities for their sales partners.

Jill: This is a growing area of sales right now, isn't it?

Trish: It's absolutely one of the fastest-growing areas in sales there is. We've finally come to the realization that role specialization is the key to productivity.

Jill: These Sales Development reps, who are the very, very, very front end of the sales process -- what do they have to be specialists in that other Inside Sales people don't?

Trish: There are a lot of things they really have to be good at. If you're talking to inbound leads or you're doing outbound prospecting, whenever you're talking to your potential buyers who are inundated by messaging—whether it's voicemail or email,

whatever the case may be—the key to success is rising above the noise. And to rise above the noise, you have to be human, you have to be relevant, you have to be interesting, you have to arouse curiosity, and you have to be able to close on the next step so people will engage with your sellers.

Jill: Because these people don't have a lot of time for conversations, right? Do they actually get on the phone when they talk to people or do they try to do things without getting people on the phone?

Trish: Well, I have a theory. I say no sales starts until somebody had a conversation. So they absolutely use a variety of media to get engaged with the buyer. They're going to have to use a phone, voicemail, email, social, text, video, I don't care what they use to start the engagement, but that's their job is to launch the sales process so the seller can take over.

Jill: You're right, there's a ton of competition in order for anybody to do that. I work with salespeople all the time too, and one of those things that I find happening is that in many sales organizations that I work with, sales people that are out there are working some bigger accounts. Those sales people are really struggling to find the time to do the prospecting. And because they don't do it all the time, they're actually struggling with how to do it well. So the people that you're working with, that's all they do?

Trish: That is their charter, to get the seller to engagement, absolutely.

Jill: I talk to a lot of these companies, and everybody I know seems to be interested in hiring a Sales Development rep and they think, "We'll just hire somebody to make the calls for us." Do you find companies thinking that that's all it takes? That they just have to hire somebody to make the calls?

Trish: Well, I think there's been an evolution about that role. I used to hear a lot, "I'm just going to hire some young hungry kids to bang on the phones."

But then I think we started to realize, "Well, wait a second. I only have one chance to make a first impression, and someone who's young, hungry, and banging on the phones isn't necessarily creating the impression with my potential buyer that I want."

I think there has been a shift to hiring people who are much more articulate, who are much more fluent in the buyer's language, who could establish credibility much faster. And that became a trend, but then those people became impossible to find because demand so far outstrips supply.

Jill: Because they were all moving to, "We're going to offload this work from our field sales reps or our account managers. We'll offload that and get these people specialized to work on phones..." but there's not enough good people.

Trish: Bingo. That's exactly correct. Because of that lack of supply and this unbelievable demand, we've started backpedaling. Now we're going to people with less experience, once again. And it's even got to the point in the hiring model where I say to my clients, "This is not a strategy. Bad breath is not better than no breath at all."

You know what I mean? Don't make a bad hire just to put a butt in the seat, because you know you're doing yourselves and your buyers a disservice.

So now we are hiring people with less experience, but that brings a whole another set of challenges that companies have to be ready to address about coaching, about training, about onboarding, about giving out SDRs the fluency they need to have conversations. So it's brought on a whole new category of challenges that companies now have to address.

Jill: One of the things that your firm does—and I'll move away from the book a little and talk about what your firm actually does—is Playbooks for these companies.

Trish: We do. Philosophically, we believe that you have to give people the language with which to communicate with your buyers, and you have to give them a process they can follow— particularly if you're hiring someone for their first or second job out of college.

If you think about it, Jill, if you're hiring a Millennial or someone who is in their first or second job out of college, they've spent 22 years of their life being told what to do, right?

Jill: Correct.

Trish: By their parents, by their educators. And then they go to the workforce, and we look at them and we're like, "All right, kiddo, you figure it out. Have at it."

Jill: Go get 'em, you're all ready. Right? Go get 'em.

Trish: One of the things that a Sales Playbook does is provide those people with the information they need to understand their buyers, because that is the number one thing that companies need to do to be successful. And then give them the process, the message, the tools, the cadence, and the media they need to be effective at either inbound lead conversation or outbound intelligent reach and what they need to know to have those kinds of conversations.

They can't figure it out on their own, they don't know how. You have to provide them with a Playbook and give them the tools they need to be successful.

Jill: So let's talk about the information that they need to learn about the buyer. From your perspective, what's crucial that they understand? Because you said it

starts with the buyer.

Trish: Everything starts with the buyer. Our theory is you never talk about what you do in the initial stages of onboarding. If you hire someone for their first or second job out of college and you say, "Okay, our target buyer is the CFO," they will go, "Uh-huh."

They don't even know what "CFO" stands for—so how are they going to have conversations with that person?

What you're going to do is say, "All right, ready? We're going to sell to CFOs. Here's what a day in their life looks like. Here's the challenges they face, here's how they're currently addressing those challenges. Here's how they're measured."

Once you immerse your team in that Buyer Persona, then you can say to them, "Okay, got it? You totally got that CFO thing now, right? All right. Now here's what we do to help them be more successful." And all of a sudden they have an "aha" moment and they get it.

Jill: Because they have the foundation now and they understand why it's even needed and what difference it makes.

Trish: Exactly.

Jill: You know, it's funny that you mentioned first and second job out of college. My second job out of college was for Xerox where I was hired to sell copiers. I remember calling on law firms, and they used words like, "briefs," and I had no idea what briefs were except underwear.

I'd come from education and I'd go and people asked me about purchase orders and I went, "Purchase orders?" I didn't know, I didn't know stuff that was so obvious to anybody who had been in business for any length of time. I was totally clueless.

Trish: Exactly. Here's the other challenge when you think about that. You were selling to a buyer in the legal field where they talked about briefs and purchase orders, and I'm sure there was other very buyer-specific language...

Jill: Oh my God, all this terminology I didn't understand.

Trish: Then think about it. If you have an SDR—a sales development rep—and you say, "Okay, you're going to sell to CFOs, you're going to sell to CMOs, and you're going to sell to VPs of Sales..."

Jill: I'm thinking of my younger self who moved into Sales. I would absolutely be in total overwhelm if I had to call on three different people with three different concerns and challenges and responsibilities.

Trish: As an analogy, you basically just asked them to fluently speak French, Italian and German.

That's another thing that we recommend when people think about onboarding, is if you have a new group, "Pick a buyer persona, get people fluent in the language of that buyer persona, and then introduce another." Don't ask them to learn three languages at once.

Jill: Learn French first and then French is a little bit like Italian, so then we're going to move you over to the Italian...

Trish: Bingo. Exactly.

Jill: ...and then maybe we'll do Spanish next because you're getting fluent in speaking all these different languages.

Trish: Love it.

Jill: That's how you train people when you're onboarding people, don't try to send them out to call on everybody, just focus them in on either one position or perhaps one market segment.

Trish: And you have to figure out how people learn to make that all work. Absolutely.

Jill: What do you mean by, "How they learn to make it all work?" Talk to me about that.

Trish: There are ways salespeople learn that you have to be cognizant of. You know how in the olden days, we used to hook people up to the fire hose, right?

Jill: That never worked too well.

Trish: Or we'd say to them, "Go sit with Mark. Mark is smart, right?" One of the analogies that we use in the book is if you said to someone who had never driven a car, "Go ride around with Trish, Trish is a good driver."

Jill: She'll teach you how to drive, just watch her.

Trish: If you just watched me drive, that wouldn't mean you understood the concepts of clutch, brake, direction. It just doesn't work like that.

Jill: If I was just watching you drive, I might just say, "Well, she just moved her hands a lot. She had this round wheel, and she moved her hands a lot, and the car moved when she turned her hands."

Trish: Exactly.

Jill: I might have totally missed the foot action.

Trish: Exactly.

Jill: You spend a lot of time talking about onboarding in your book. How long does it take to actually onboard somebody and get them to proficiency?

Trish: There is no one answer to that question. I'll tell you why. There's no one answer to any question, which is why I hate books that say, "There's one answer. Here's what it is and you should go implement it."

That's actually what caused me to write the book. There are so many books out there that say, "This is exactly how you should do this," and I'm like, "No, there's variables." I even started a hash tag called #variablesmatter when it comes to sales.

I think you have to think about where you are. So the variables that matter are "Do you have brand and name recognition?" Like if you're working for SalesForce.com, and you're an SDR, you can call any buyer and go, "Hi, I'm with Sales Force." They're going to listen to you, right?

Jill: Or they may not like you, because they have perceptions that you're too big a company, or "we can't afford them." Or whatever, but they know where you come from.

Trish: They're going to listen because you're the 800-pound gorilla in the marketplace. Another variable is what level in the organization you're calling into. Onboarding someone who can be fluent talking to a CEO or a CIO or a CRO or a CTO is totally different than onboarding someone who will going to be talking to a manager of application development or a system administrator or someone whose view of the world is a bit more tactical and easier to understand. So that's another variable.

And then another variable is if you're selling—and my fluency is in the technology space, if you know Jeffrey Moore's Technology Adoption Life Cycle—if you're selling it to innovators and early adopters, you have to be super fluent and super articulate in getting them to understand that there's a better way to do something. Versus if you're selling antivirus software or something that's in the majority space that they totally already understand the need for. So, fluency and onboarding really depend on a bunch of different variables.

Jill: I think a lot of people really don't understand that. Like I said, a lot of organizations that have brought one or two people on to start out by giving them the phone and talking about their product. Then the new rep is forced into trying to speak all three languages, and they're failing miserably.

Trish: Yeah and it's actually sad for them because they're not getting the kind of results they want. And it's really sad for the rep because they don't come out of college and

go, "Give me a phone, give me a list, give me some leads, I can't wait to suffer rejection all day long."

But if you do it right, what a mind-blowing career this is. What a mind-blowing career if you can qualify an opportunity.

I always say, "Qualifying is the hardest part. Anybody can close—a monkey can close a deal. All they do is ask hard questions, right? You just ask all the closing questions.

Getting to go/no go is the hardest part. If you do that well, and you can figure out the rest, and it's a huge opportunity. Inside Sales reps are spending 8 to 12 months in a role and they're getting promoted.

Jill: To what? Where are they going after that? I see a lot of young people going into Inside Sales as the SDR or business development reps. I see it happening a lot and I encourage people to do it. What growth path do you see for these people?

Trish: We encourage people to think about internal growth paths. There different levels you can create for SDRs, either based on how far they take the opportunity, or the people they call on or if they pick up new skills. It used to be that the only role for the SDR was into a closing role, and that's still huge. That's still a career path, a great career path into sales.

But when you think about the people we're hiring, first or second job out of college, they probably took the job with you because someone told them they should. A recruiter called them, and they don't know what they want to be when they grow up, right?

So, if you find someone with unbelievable talent in your organization, I think you have to think outside the sales silo and say, "This person is talented."

Give them an opportunity to explore marketing, customer success, finance, sales engineering, account management. Let them explore your company. We get so focused on the sales silo that sometimes we lose talent that we regret.

Jill: That's a really good option because if they can be successful in the Sales Development position—that's a job that requires creativity, requires grit, that requires a depth of knowledge—they're probably pretty savvy people, pretty smart ones.

Trish: And they're tenacious and curious.

Jill: Tenacious, yeah. That's what you want.

Trish: And they're curious.

Jill: Somebody that's going to stick with something and, yeah.

Trish: And I love the whole grit factor.

Jill: Yeah, that research on resilience being so crucial in success today is pretty fascinating.

Trish: Actually on our website, BridgeGroupInc.com, we have a grit quiz that people can take on the Resources page.

Jill: I know you have a ton of other things on the Resources page, so as long as we're there, what else is on the Resources page that you can tell people about?

Trish: We've been doing research on Inside Sales as an industry pretty much longer than anyone else. We founded the business in '98, and starting in about 2007, we started publishing Inside Sales metrics and compensation reports, because those are the areas people are really interested in.

We average about 300 to 400 participants in our surveys and we get very particular with our questions. If you're outside of technology, the results might be interesting but maybe not as relevant. If you're in technology, we offer three different flavors of the metrics and comp reports. We do Inside Sales for SAS, which is self-explanatory, we do sales development, metrics and compensation reports, and then we do something we call the Inside Sales Report, which covers team selling and on-premise software.

Jill: Your reports are really interesting, too Trish, I've been through them and they're well- done, they're easy to read, and they really show some vital information that sales leaders would find extraordinarily helpful, I think.

Trish: Well, thank you, Jill. And you know what the best part is? They're free.

Jill: I would strongly encourage anybody who's listening to check out your Resources pages because the depth of your research and your resources is extraordinary, and you don't find that on very many consulting sites.

Trish: Thank you.

Jill: You're welcome. Trish, our time is running to a close right now and I just want to say once again that I really do love your book. Everything you know comes through that book. It's spelled out really, really clearly and it's funny.

Trish: I'm glad you think so. We did attempt to include humor, as well as information.

Jill: Yeah, and I want to say it's really fun to read because it's sassy. Your voice comes right through. I feel like you're talking to me as I'm reading the book and you're kicking my ass and we're having fun as we're talking about this subject

together.

But I honestly believe that is the book that people who are looking at starting an Inside Sales team or an SDR team—or even people who already have one—should absolutely read and use as a benchmark for what the best companies out there are doing.

Trish: I appreciate that, Jill. That was our goal.

Jill: Yes, and it's on Amazon right now, right?

Trish: It is, in both paperback and Kindle version. Hopefully in the next few months, we will come out with an audio version as well.

Jill: Awesome. Thank you so much for being with us. Anybody who's listening in, go check it out. The Sales Development Playbook by Trish Bertuzzi, it'll be well worth your time. Thank you, Trish.

Trish: Thank you, Jill.