Accelerating Sales Pipeline with Contact Roles in Salesforce

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Sales Pipeline Woes

Businesses often find themselves in a time crunch to close more deals and meet sales targets. Particularly this happens near the end of a month, quarter, or year. Every company tries to get smarter about this, and in fact, we are seeing a widespread trend in strategizing for this specific problem, especially using data and intelligence. We are seeing greater demand for specialized sales operations and revenue operations roles to focus on using these insights to drive more revenue. What methods can a sales or revenue operations manager utilize to create quick wins for the business in these time crunches?

In this guide, we will teach you to make the most out of your CRM utilizing the concept of buyer groups.

The Buyer Group

The term "buyer" is self-explantory when speaking of consumer goods, but in the B2B world, purchases usually are made via a buyer group. For example, HR software for managing job candidates is mainly used by HR professionals but would require approval by finance and IT, and may even be evaluated by heads of several departments with a vested interest in the hiring process. So when selling to this organization, one must consider all the potential individuals in the buyer group who may influence the purchase (these are called "personas").

It is important to recognize the buyer group in each opportunity in your pipeline. Many sales organizations neglect implementing a more strategic method of engagement with the multiple individuals or personas of a buyer group. In fact, oftentimes a salesperson may even actively engage only one persona of the buyer group until the other key individuals get looped in or self-identify (usually via a forward of an email and a subsequent CC). The more proactive method entails a more disciplined habit by sales reps to include each key persona when appropriate. And while each prospect account might have variations of personas in the buyer group, there are generalizations you can establish and basic persona frameworks your sales organization can utilize.

It is important to have insight into the buyer group dynamics for the opportunities in your pipeline, and we will illustrate how this could be very instrumental in accelerating your pipeline for some easy and quick wins. In the following, we will show you how to implement buyer groups in Salesforce.

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Three Classifications of Buyer Groups

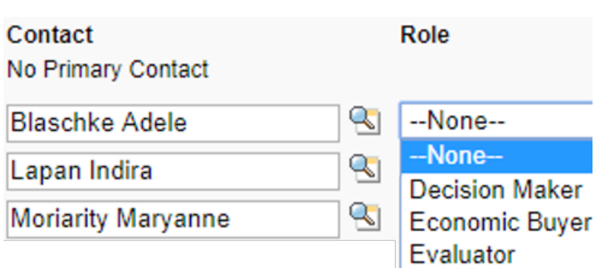
In the above example, there was a main Decision Maker, Economic Buyer, and secondary Evaluator. This is one way of classifying the buyer group roles, called *Purchase Role*. In this guide, we use three main ways of classifying the buyer group roles.

- Purchase Role - personas classified each for their role in the evaluation of the purchase decision. An example set of these could be: Decision Maker, Economic Buyer, and Evaluator.
- Job Function - personas classified each for their role in an organization. These are usually job titles, standardized to be more descriptive of the function (e.g., Finance in lieu of A/R Manager).
- Job Level - personas classified each for their seniority. Many times, this is useful when purchase decisions are influenced differently by senior roles vs. junior roles.

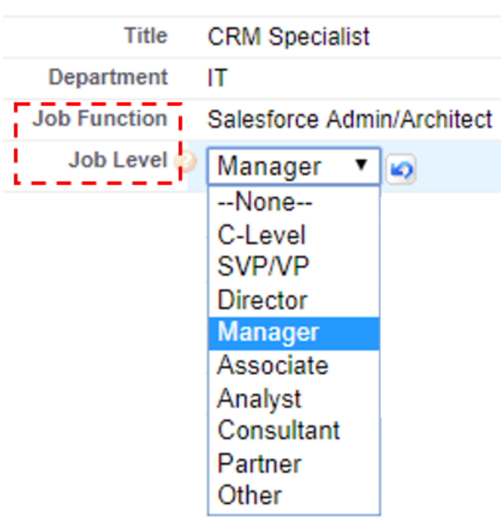
Adding Buyer Groups to Salesforce

You want your sales team to add one or more of these buyer group classifications to Salesforce in order to improve engagement with accounts and conduct reporting (which we'll go over in a later section). For Purchase Role, we use the Contact Role picklist on the Opportunity since each Opportunity is tied to a purchase, and thus has different purchase roles. Conversely, we place Job Function and Job Level on the Contact detail since this allows your sales team to regularly update individual Contact information regardless of whether there is an Opportunity or not.

Purchase Role on Opportunity



Job Function and Job Level on Contact



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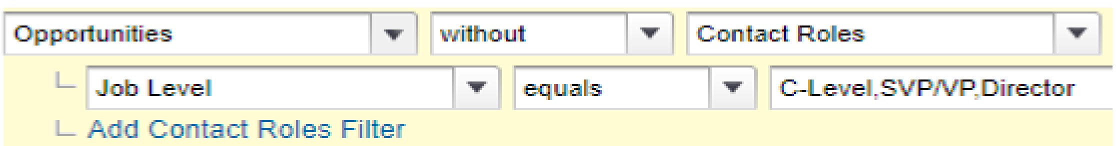
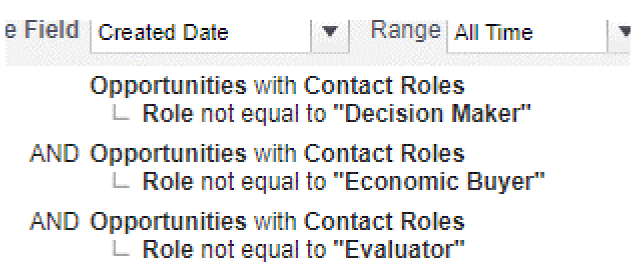
Accelerating Pipeline Through Gaps in Buyer Groups

With your buyer group fields in place inside of Salesforce, you can start instructing your sales team to populate this data for each Contact and Opportunity. You may find that your company (like many others) experiences certain patterns around the engagement of buyer groups. Generally, earlier engagement with key personas in the buyer group improve the conversion rate and velocity of a deal. Therefore, one great way to find acceleration opportunities in your pipeline is in buyer group gap coverage.

For example, let's say your company intends to mandate the engagement of senior Job Level personas. You might then want to pull all Opportunities where there exists no Contact above the Manager level. Use a Cross Filter in Salesforce to do just that. We show this example below.



You can do the same for Job Function using the above, substituting the Job Function field and a specific job role to filter for. Finally, you may want to ensure that your sales team includes key Purchase Roles in the deal. For example, you may believe for your company that all three roles of Decision Maker, Economic Buyer, and Evaluator must be identified to move a deal forward. As in, every Opportunity must have all three, and you want to ensure that no Opportunity is missing any one of these three. Again, you can use a Cross Filter for that.



Note: you will want to run a separate report for all Opportunities without any Contact Roles at all.

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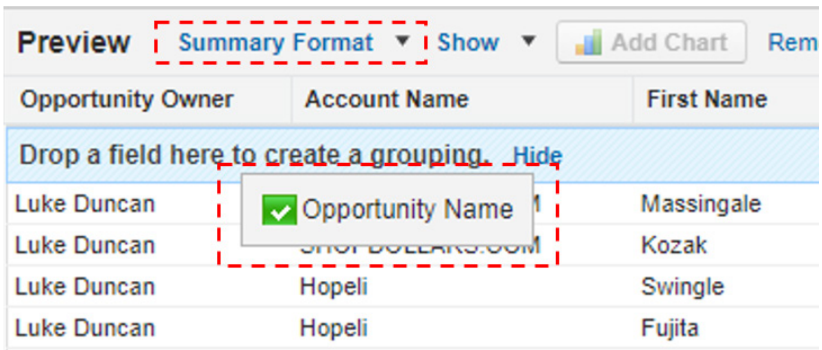
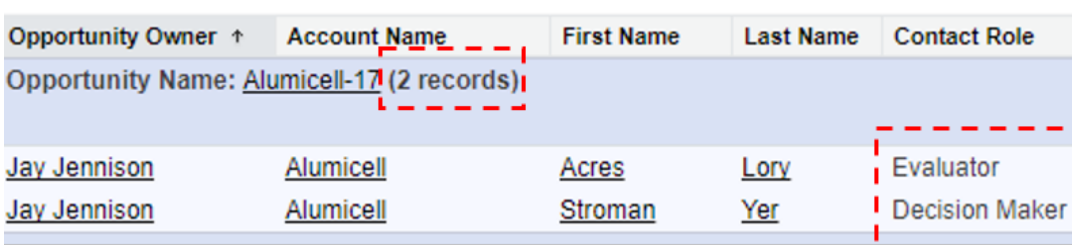
Accelerating Pipeline Through Gaps in Buyer Groups (cont'd)

After adding the right Cross Filters, put the final touches on the report by ensuring that you have the right layout and data columns to make the report actionable. After all, the purpose of the reporting is to create steps to cover the gaps in buyer group identification. For the data columns, you want to at least have the Opportunity Owner and the respective buyer group role (in this case, Contact Role, Job Function, or Job Level). As for the layout, select Summary Format and group the records by Opportunity Name. The below screenshot highlights the steps for Summary Format and Opportunity Name.



When you run the report, you get all of the Opportunities that are missing the buyer groups selected in your filtering. In the below snippet of a report, we are filtering for Opportunities lacking any one of the three Purchase Roles of Decision Maker, Economic Buyer, and Evaluator.



For this Opportunity, named Alumicell-17, there are only two Contact records found, Evaluator and Decision Maker. This Opportunity is missing the Economic Buyer. It looks like Jay Jennison could use a push to identify the Economic Buyer and ensure there is adequate engagement with a comprehensive buyer group at Alumicell (while also recording that data into Salesforce). The full report would show all Opportunities where your sales team can fill in gaps in buyer group engagements. This process, which can be repeated for Job Function, Job Level, or any buyer group you may choose, would enable the sales team to accelerate its collective pipeline by covering these buyer group gaps in Opportunities and improving buyer group engagements.

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Conclusion

With the addition of a few fields that represent your company's buyer group, your sales team can start tracking and proactively engaging the different personas that matter for a deal. In fact, your company can reap the benefits of higher conversion rates throughout its pipeline as well as improved velocity in closed deals. While maintaining this data takes effort and diligence, the benefits of proactive identification and engagement with buyer groups can certainly make the strategic planning and time investment worthwhile.

About Full Circle Insights

Full Circle Insights delivers marketing and sales performance management solutions to optimize a company's marketing mix and drive more revenue. The company offers multi-touch attribution, comprehensive funnel metrics and lead management technology. Built 100% on the Salesforce App Cloud, Full Circle Insights' products complement leading marketing automation solutions.

Founded by former Salesforce executives, CRM implementation veterans and marketing automation specialists, the Full Circle Insights industry pioneers are seasoned in creating marketing measurement foundations to grow revenue.

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