



Sales Leader Growth Forum

SBI's **Chief Revenue Officer** Growth Forum brings together industry leaders to shape the future of B2B go-to-market strategies and discover new ways to drive unforgettable growth. This dynamic, roundtable-style session with market-leading sales executives yields highly valuable peer to peer benchmarks and advice.

Meeting Insights – February 2023

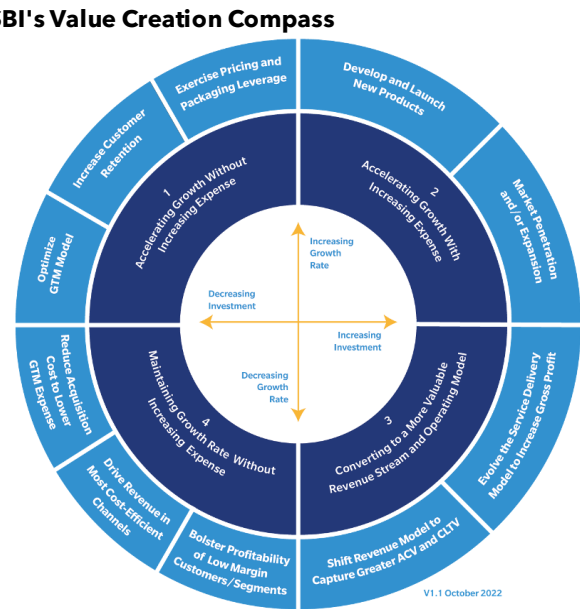
SBI recently hosted a dozen market-leading CROs and sales leaders by invitation only for a roundtable discussion on navigating market uncertainty and finding new ways to create value in 2023.

Longer Decision Cycles but Pockets of Strong Demand

Sales leaders are seeing a significant increase in buyer scrutiny around the business case for and funding of new investments. This scrutiny, coupled with more people getting involved in buying decisions, is leading to drastically slower sales cycles and reduced win-rates. More losses than ever are falling to “no decision”. One bright spot appears to be customers in smaller businesses, where if there is a good fit buyer decision-making has not slowed.

Despite buyer scrutiny, sellers are still progressing and have shared optimism regarding opportunities with their existing customer base. While new logo deals are proving difficult to close, current customers have an increased appetite for cross-sell and upsell opportunities.

Driving Value Through Tight Execution

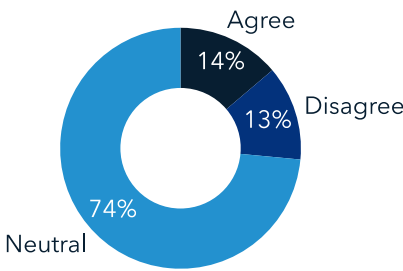


- A common theme across sales organizations for 2023 is a focus on Sales effectiveness. Sales leaders used words like “execution”, “excellence”, “transformational”, and “let’s go!” to describe their emphasis for the year. They see this as a time when their investments in underlying sales processes and structures will pay dividends.
- This focus aligns well with where the majority of their organizations are focusing from a value creation perspective. Among this roundtable group, more than 60% reported their organizations to be reducing their expenses for the year, with 20% facing decreasing growth rates (i.e., finding themselves in quadrant four of SBI’s Value Creation Compass).
- Many sales leaders are driving a pivot toward value selling and tightening alignment to identified customer need. This is creating a shift in the skill set and approaches taken by sellers. This in turn increases the burden on sales managers to better partner with their teams.

Evolving Seller Engagement Drivers, and A Focus on Managers

- While many Sales organizations are still facing lingering open headcount and territory driven by the great resignation as they start 2023, a few were able to pull hiring forward and began their year fully staffed in time for SKO.
- In addition to faster hiring, those without concerns about open territory have focused on maintaining bench teams of fully- or partially-ramped reps to pull from when encountering attrition.
- Few express confidence in the quality of their new seller onboarding programs. Those who have been successful have emphasized setting realistic targets for longer than might be typical (e.g., 18 – 24 months instead of the first quarter), and building up seller capability along the way.

Executive agreement with the statement:
“We are highly productive in ramping new sales talent”



N = 102
Question: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following go-to-market talent-related statements?
Source: SBI Fall 2022 CEO Survey

“Success this year is going to be **about our actions as leaders**, and how we remove any barriers and navigate the messages well.”

- Sales leaders have recognized a shift in what drives seller engagement and performance in recent years, which is even more important in a challenging sales environment. Today’s sellers are less focused on maximizing payouts than in the past. They are more focused on what they will learn, how the work aligns with their values, and whether leaders keep their promises. This puts a premium on sales leadership skills.
- Even stronger than concern about sellers, however, was concern about sales managers. Sales leaders are seeing them as burnt out. They worry about managers carrying a heavy burden as they keep their teams engaged and productive while driving adoption of new initiatives and approaches.

SBI’s Takeaways and Advice

- Continue to emphasize capturing new revenue from existing customers.** Redirect marketing investments toward dedicated and targeted customer marketing, and engage sellers in diagnosing and matching offerings to demonstrated customer need.
- Avoid the temptation of near-term productivity gains to inflect earnings.** Cost-out actions often fail to solve for commercial capacity and have a long-term negative impact on sales productivity.
- Align onboarding learning objectives with clear, specific metrics** that are tied to business outcomes, rather than vague progress reports without context to the business. Target the approach to specific skill deficiencies of the new hire, with clear interim outcomes and a weekly activity cadence to accelerate learning.
- Conduct an in-depth talent assessment to understand what is driving seller productivity in today’s challenging market.** SBI can help with a robust model of seller behaviors and an easy-to-deploy survey to evaluate your salesforce quickly and at scale.