

Planning for the JANUARY 2021 KICK-OFF

After a year like 2020 the world is never going to be the same again and it should not be.

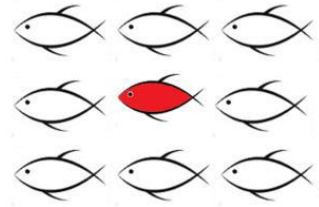
With the traditional SALES KICK-OFF planned for January, it is the perfect platform to tell the crew what the year ahead holds for them and what is expected of them. The danger will be that we hold onto too much of what is stale, old, and out-dated. Whether it is processes or principles, trying to keep what is familiar or comfortable just because it was the norm before 2020, 2021 is the year for change.

With January 2021 just round the corner and as we start to plan 2021 and beyond, we should be looking to get rid of the shackles of the last few decades and start looking at new ways, changing those processes and principles that are no longer fit for purpose and look at creating new processes and principles for the new decade, concentrating on what is important.

Urgent and important

Making **flexible working** mandatory if appropriate, making it an '**outcome-based culture**,' embracing a **team playbook**, getting everyone to input into the collective and create a '**best practice playbook**' and sharing the knowledge across the whole team.

If you can, ensure there is some form of **learning and development program** in place to guarantee that everyone has the knowledge they need and really understands the processes. Ensure that you have an audit trail on every prospect, even those that do not progress at the time, make sure that they have been thanked for their time in the process.



Pick up on any of the gaps that you have in the process, there is nothing worse than dropping an opportunity that might not be happening today but is a **'sure thing'** for a future tomorrow. Make sure that you know what every stage, all of your prospects are at, what needs to be done, what's left to be covered, who else needs to be qualified in or out or brought on-board. Use this time, to plan the scheduling system for the resources that is needed for today and tomorrow. Know what resources are needed if you need to increase the bandwidth to the next level or moving into a new territory. What is the realistic onboarding time to get someone up to stream and firing on all 12 cylinders?

With 2021 and beyond, we will be looking to grow and spread the risk across a wider footprint than usual, to pick up the loss from 2020; spend December planning the different scenarios that may be needed. Look at the traditional markets across Europe and the US but also look at the Middle East and Africa, the Far East and the LATAM markets; all are mature these days. So look at what you need and how you can gain the foothold that you need and how you will look to gain it, so it can be exploited down the line, 'speculate to accumulate'.

How many feet on the ground do you need, is it practical to split a territory and build larger teams? Instead of one person looking after Northern Europe, should it be a team of 5 or 6? Can you hire someone that can grow quickly into a leadership role and manage the additional people? Yes, if you hire smart you can, get them to do 6 months at the 'coal face' and then transition and build a team around them, we all want people that can lead from the front.

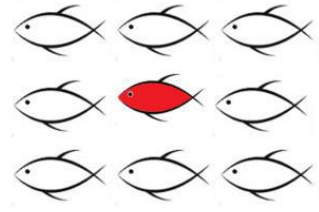
Channel and Partners

Re-consider your channel and partner strategy, where does your product or service sit with the partners? Do you need to realign this to the current future, or do you need to step it up or down a level, to find more productive partners? What support do you need to put in place, what resource do you need, sometimes all it takes is a really switched on pre-salesperson who can educate and empower the Channel. Get them tooled up with the technology, the stories and the playbook, it is not always about having a Channel & Partner Director in place who may just micromanage them. Getting a hands-on Pre-sales engagement person who can better educate and show them often delivers a bigger return.

Many different ways to skin a cat - Targets and Quotas

What about **annual sales targets**, are they realistic, or 'pre 2020' or just viewed as aspirational and in fact unachievable?

Targets and quotas are important but create purpose driven salespeople, give them the stories, and the benefits they are selling to; they will build better relationships if they have belief and purpose. They will also improve the playbook each time they go out, get them to share that with the team, find out what works best and better.



Fit for purpose

I am seeing many organisations drop the traditional \$1m targets to \$800k paying 18.5% commission for hitting the quarterly target (\$200k) and 37% for anything over the \$200k, with a 50/50 OTE. It is certainly motivational and realistic and very 2021.

For those that excel, it certainly gives a win-win for the rep and the company. Success and fairness are good for the culture, it creates its own competitive fever. Driving a culture of over achievement across the team, which is always healthy and often better than the traditional, stick and carrot. Set the goals you are looking for and plan how you and the team are going to achieve them.

Culture

The corporate culture is always born in or out of the sales team, make this positive and it becomes catching, control it, feed it, keep it transparent with a high level of communication and you create a place and environment that people want to work and excel at even if they are working from home most of the time. Make it fun, get them engaged and keep them engaged throughout the year not just at the 'Kick-off'. Motivation starts here but you have to have a follow through, throughout the year, milestones on a quarterly basis.

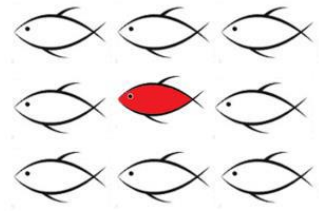
Good culture is made, it does not happen on its own. If its currently flat (as one might expect it to be from 2020) now is the time to pick it up, attach the booster rockets in your '2021 Kick-off'. So, what can you do to reset the clock, light the touch paper, and feel confident that you can stand back and enjoy the light show?

Marketing

Getting the connection with marketing is critical in 2021, not just in and around the product material or the new personas but the digital journey. Sales needs to integrate and stop being a stand-alone silo, your people want to belong to a bigger team, the company as a whole, not just the sales team. They want the serotonin hit of the sale but want the dopamine hit of belonging as well.

Create a **social media program**, work in partnership with marketing, put in place a program to feed '**content**' into the '**personal branding**' of your salespeople, giving them personal purpose and getting them to own the content. Help turn them into '**Trusted Advisors**' in their industry for their clients, let them become the voice of authority that clients want to connect with and listen to. It makes for an easier sale and allows them to upsell more easily, giving you overall bigger sales.

In my day it was always 'SALES & MARKETING', believe it or not it was done for a reason and people are starting to understand why again. Unfortunately, these days, in many organisations we now appear to have a disconnect and sales goes cap in hand to seek help from marketing, change this. Our hope is that a good CRO, is someone who has the ability, to join the two together again.



About the Author

Howard Longstaff has over 25 years of experience delivering people within the talent acquisition arena. He has worked extensively across the UK, Europe, USA, Canada as well as in South America, Australia, and New Zealand.

Over the last 20 years he has specialised in two fundamental areas, although he often covers a wider remit due to his thirst and understanding of technology. **The first area** which he has a **real passion** for, **building 'Sales Teams'**, pulling together the very best **'A Players'** and creating something incredibly special for his clients.

To do that, he needs to have a clear understanding of what his client wants, so establishing clear communication with the client is paramount, understanding the nuances of what they are looking for and documenting this. Understanding the technology, the opportunity, and the growth potential all help to find the **'right fit, first time'**. He is one of the few head-hunters that is willing to guarantee his work, offering 12 months free replacement.

The second area he loves getting involved in, is the **leadership team, the C-Suite**, helping to get the balance right, cover the gaps in knowledge, skills and experience, working on the assumption that **'No one is perfect but a team can be'**?

Howard is someone who thinks outside the box, has an eye for detail, but is perceptive, looking beyond the surface of just skills and experience. He wants to know and understand the candidate behaviour as well as the emotional intelligence, the motives that drive the candidates he interviews. He is looking for the best fit for his client but also looking to ensure it is a fit for the candidate as well.

In the last 25 years he has also built his own companies and opened offices in **New Zealand, Los Angeles, New York** and most recently several companies in **London**. Specialising in technology companies, he has delivered permanent resources across practically every department. This has predominantly been for technology start-ups (Enterprise Software Co's) but also for many leading management consulting and enterprise clients.

Howard is someone that uses technology to enhance the hiring process, to save time, money and effort and take the pain out of the process, but to find those **'Exceptional People, who are so hard to find'**. He operates a **'Private Client Video Portal'** keeping everything together, the video, as well as **psychometric behavioural assessments** on candidates and interviewing on an **emotional intelligence** level. He has repeatedly built teams across three continents, so has a good breadth of knowledge across the **talent acquisition arena**.