

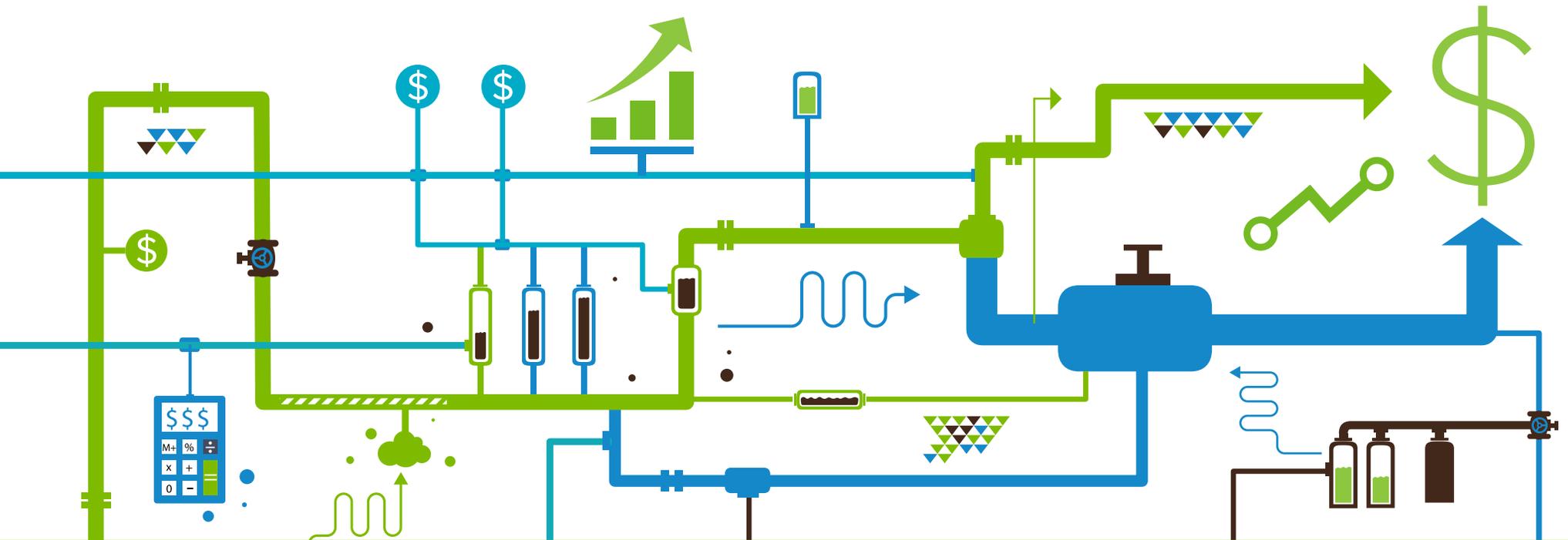


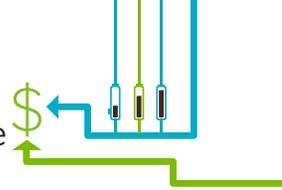
THE PT SERVICES GROUP®

NEW PROSPECTS. NEW BUSINESS. SINCE 1992.



Strengthening Your MSP Sales Pipeline





Introduction

Think back to high school. You can probably recall going home for the summer and coming back in the fall to discover that one of your “little” classmates has suddenly sprouted by a full foot, going from 5 foot nothing to 6 feet tall. He looked like he swallowed another person.

In terms of expanding your business with a stronger sales pipeline, that’s the kind of growth we are talking about, and that’s the kind of growth this e-book seeks to help you find. You won’t, however, find that next level with referrals alone.

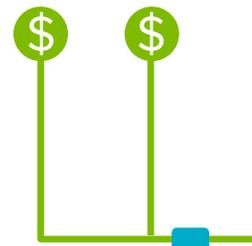
Yes, referrals are a powerful source of new business opportunities. **The recommendation from an existing client sets the stage for a successful client dynamic: the prospect enters the first conversation already somewhat comfortable with you as an expert and your business as a solution.** You still go through the formalities of introducing yourself and the services you offer, but you get to skip the difficult process of taking a cold lead and initiating a completely new relationship.

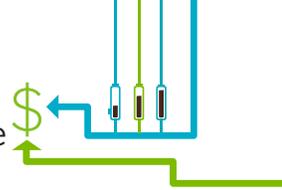
In terms of generating new business, referrals are an essential piece of a profitable, well-rounded sales pipeline. Many managed services providers, however, come to rely exclusively on referrals for growing their businesses. **The rewards are significant, and the sales process is less demanding, but that approach eventually leads to a plateau in growth.** We find that what separates the good from the great is an aggressive approach to initiating new relationships in areas that are not necessarily natural or comfortable.

To reinvigorate your pipeline, we need to look at three foundational pieces:

- The structure of growth-oriented sales pipeline
- The “Be-Memorable” formula for engaging cold but high-value prospects
- Playing the long-game from step one with a loyalty-focused sales process

With those components in place, **every new opportunity you encounter becomes more profitable and more valuable.** They open the door to new business in the short-term, and improved retention and an increase in referrals in the long-term.





Part 1. The MSP Sales Pipeline

The Ingredients for a Well-Rounded Pipeline

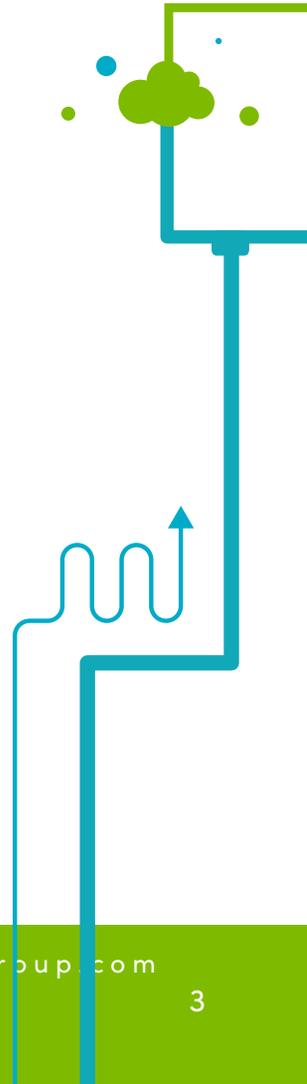
If your sales pipeline is powered almost entirely by referrals, you are taking the following risks:

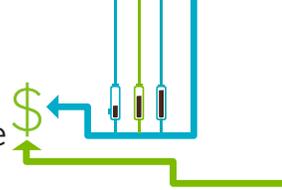
- Referral activity can be inconsistent, which could create long periods of stagnation.
- Referrals will rarely lead you to a new market or audience
- Even in the best of times, referral activity is inconsistent and is largely driven by the total sum of your other marketing and brand development efforts.

Instead, your sales pipeline should be comprised of referrals as well as efforts that specifically target completely new audiences or markets. You could explore a new market locally, or you could expand into a new region. By initiating these new relationships, you **increase your potential for referrals exponentially, and you give yourself greater control over the growth of your business.**

A sales pipeline that mixes referrals with other sources of new relationships will usually contain the following pieces:

- Appointments with potential prospects
- Referrals from existing clients
- Relationships with key centers of influence





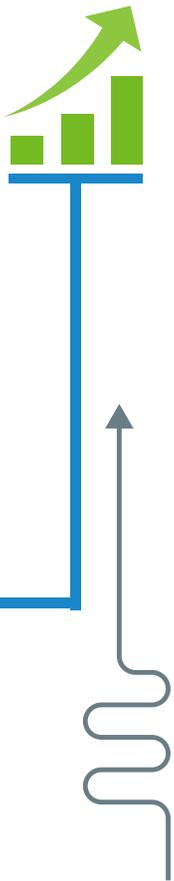
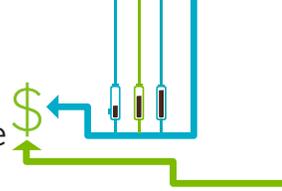
“ An old saying goes that if you are not moving forward, you are moving backward. Even in the face of success, resting on your laurels can undermine the potential of your future. ”

- Repeatable methodology integrated into a backend system that allows you to:
 - Build a well-organized and consistent drip marketing system
 - Implement personal one-on-one follow-up with prospects that goes beyond sending emails
 - Host quarterly webinars designed to engage prospects and current clients
 - Achieve consistency outbound activity
- Greater consistency of activity and pipeline building efforts designed to lead to new business opportunities and sales.

Unfortunately, the realities of initiating new relationships deter many MSPs from continuing that facet of their new business efforts once new prospects or new clients start to come in. Finding new prospects is time-consuming, which can be hard to justify when you have a roster full of existing clients that need your attention, and the process of engaging cold leads can be frustrating.

An old saying goes that if you are not moving forward, you are moving backward. Even in the face of success, resting on your laurels can undermine the potential of your future. Apple, despite its explosive growth, continues to innovate and challenges its employees to behave like entrepreneurs — even going as far as to call them intrepeneurs, entrepreneurs working within an existing company. GE, an international giant with its hands in everything from household appliances to x-ray technology, continues to invest in new technology and in new markets. Even athletes like Kobe Bryant are famous for spending many late nights pouring over game footage and early mornings shooting foul shot after foul shot.





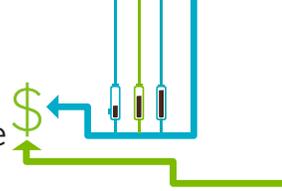
The most successful companies and individuals are successful because they never stop growing. They never stop trying to achieve. In our space, we measure growth by both the volume and quality of clients that an MSP serves.

Is finding new prospects to generate new business the best use of your time? Is it your best skill? Many MSPs (including their salespeople) answer no to both and admitted to strongly disliking the prospecting process, so they come to rely entirely on referrals because of their reluctance to initiate relationships.

Beyond Referrals

We find that **most MSPs do not reach this level on referrals alone.** If you don't have the time or desire to prospect on your own, an appointment setting program or some other outsourced marketing activity can become the cornerstone to a highly profitable sales pipeline.

Ultimately, the growth of your business depends on you and your willingness to challenge your own status quo. You might be able to comfortably get-by on referrals alone for the rest of your career. However, you risk missing opportunities that more aggressive competitors will capture first and you risk hitting a slump in sales when your pipeline — powered solely by referrals — hits a lull. **The worst risk of all: you may never tap into your full potential as an MSP. Think beyond referrals. Grow your business with a well-rounded sales pipeline.**



Part 2. Connecting with Cold Prospects

A New Perspective on Cold Leads



When I began my own sales career, I followed the classic wisdom of playing the numbers when it came to cold leads. If I met with 40 qualified opportunities (prospects that fit my ideal prospect profile), I may expect to close 8, and for the remaining 32 I would follow-up with a drip marketing campaign and hope that someday in the future they would think of me and reach back out.

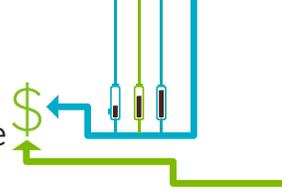
The concept of a drip system — using emails or webinars and perhaps a phone call from time to time — to re-engage prospects who didn't convert is fine in theory, but I also believe that it can become a sales crutch. **When we have faith in our drip marketing, we may be tempted to not push as hard during the sale, or we may avoid the more difficult conversations** because we know in the back of our minds that we have a system in place to continue marketing to this prospect.

Don't abandon your drip marketing campaigns but instead, think about entering each sales conversation with the mindset that it is a unique self-contained opportunity. If we don't deliver a great sales experience, that's it. We missed our shot.

I say this because it reframes the moment we should be trying to build for our prospects.

The Magic of Moments

Think of it this way: When you visit Disney World, the big bet is on the experience you have while you are in the park. Disney has an incredible marketing team, and they continue to market to guests after they've left the park, but no follow-up call or email will ever be as powerful as the memories that were built in the park itself. If you had a memorable adventure at Disney World, follow-up marketing may give you the idea to go back, but **if your time there was lackluster, no amount of drip marketing is likely to convince you to book another trip** to see Mickey Mouse.



Prospects remember the experience fondly or they don't. It's that black and white.

B2B sales is not so different. **If a business owner (or key decision maker) takes a meeting with you, they have already done something out of the ordinary.** Your high-value prospects already work with someone in your field, and the prospect may not even believe that they need a new solution.

But for one meeting, they committed to hearing what you have to say. They're stepping into your park and are giving you the chance to be memorable.

The Be-Memorable Formula

Here's how to build a memorable sales experience that is unique to you and the factors that set you apart from your competition:



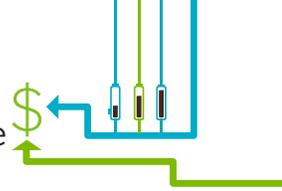
- **Hone your message to make it more compelling.** The average sales pitch drifts toward a mediocre average. Develop a story about who you are and who you help that rises above simple service promises and speaks to your prospect in a way that engages their emotions.



- **Be bold.** Part of creating a memorable sales experience is talking and behaving in a way that your competitors don't. That doesn't mean being obnoxious, but it can mean disagreeing with a prospect, standing up for yourself if you aren't treated as a peer, and embracing difficult conversations instead of shying away from them.



- **Challenge the way your prospect thinks.** Many business owner prospects have well-developed perspectives about their business, but if you can make them see something differently, you lay the groundwork for something memorable. Yes, you and the prospect will be uncomfortable for part of that discussion, but if you present your ideas well, your prospect will see you not as a salesperson but as an innovator with worthwhile insights.



- **Be creative with the experience you craft.** You don't need to bring a costumed character to a meeting to stand out. For example, one of our clients mails his prospects copies of his book before his appointment setters make a call. His prospects remember that he sent them a gift and take the meeting — perhaps out of an innate sense that a gift warrants reciprocity of some sort. Find places where you can go beyond the status quo to stand out to your prospects.



- **Stop talking so much and ask more questions.** Then stay quiet except to ask more questions. We have a desire to keeping talking and fill the silence when we should be fully attentive to what the prospect has to say.

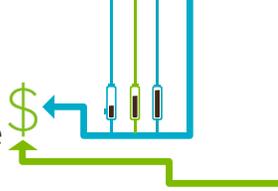


- **Finish strong.** Part of creating a memorable sales experience is ending on a positive note. This means knowing when to end a meeting and step away, and it also means respecting and keeping time commitments. Build a strong exit into your sales process so that you can withdraw at the right moment instead of overstaying your welcome.

As you reimagine your sales experience, know that you don't have to innovate at every twist and turn. **Being memorable is not about doing everything differently but rather about making a few key choices that stand out to your prospect.** To return to our Disney World example, in the book *The Power of Moments*, the authors tell the story of polling guests throughout their day. When they asked guests at the end of every hour how they rated the last hour, they saw responses like 6.5 out of 10, or 7 out of 10. When they switched to asking patrons at the end of the day, they got responses like 9 out of 10 or 10 out of 10.

It turned out that guests used a highpoint during the day and the final moment of the day to assess how they felt about the whole experience.

So, go **build a highpoint for your prospects and deliver a sales experience that leaves you and your message echoing in their minds**, which leads to the next step, whether that's the next appointment or a signed check.



Part 3. Playing the Long Game from the Beginning

From a Moment to a Lifetime of Loyalty

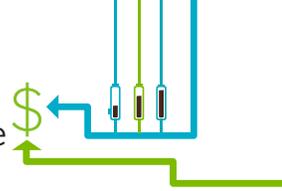
Customer experience and client success are big buzzwords in the MSP space, and for good reason. **When you wow your customers and are proactive about their needs, you build a powerful sense of loyalty that boosts retention** and perhaps even leads to clients subscribing to additional services.

These are undeniable critical parts of your business that deserve your attention. The problem, however, is that most conversations about customer experience totally omit the role that your sales process plays. In reality — and this has been our experience with our appointment setting clients and the prospects they engage — the true potential of customer loyalty or customer experience is rooted in your sales process.

Here's why:

- Your sales process represents possibly the **first or earliest impressions** a future client has of your business and how you work.
- Your sales process is an opportunity to walk away from prospects who aren't a good fit and to **zero-in on ideal prospects**.
- Your sales process **paints a vision for your future client and sets expectations** that your business has to meet.
- Those expectations include not only service and deliverables, but also the **dynamic of how you and your future client will work together**.





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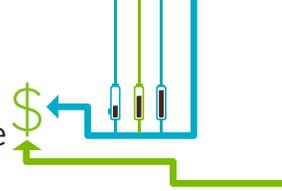
When your sales process does not align with the business client loyalty ultimately suffers. Too often, salespeople will say anything just to get the sale – even if that means leaving the customer confused and frustrated. However, it doesn't need to be that way. **Instead of just getting the sale, your salesperson should paint an exciting vision of what working with your MSP will be like and what unique benefits you can provide.** If you can deliver those benefits, it is a surprisingly compelling statement about who you are and how you work.

Building Loyalty from the First Touch

A best practice is to approach the sales process as the beginning of the client experience. This will reframe and challenge how you and your team are approaching sales today.

The following opportunities can be used to drive client loyalty:

- 1. Know who you are and what makes you compelling.** We describe this as storyboarding because much of the first engagement with a prospect is storytelling. If you can communicate what sets you apart from your competition from the very first interaction, it will provide momentum that carries you from sales conversations all the way through service. If you don't know what makes you special, your prospects and clients won't figure it out for you.
- 2. Forget under- or over-promising.** Promise, and deliver. That's it. If you under-promise in the sale, you hide your true value from the prospect, which cripples your momentum right out of the gate. If you over-promise, well, that's obvious. Deception never ends well. Instead, know what makes you great, and lean into that so that you fully meet client expectations.
- 3. Empower your sales team to say no.** Not all revenue is good revenue. If you focus on bringing in the right clients — those who fit your culture and your specialties — you dramatically reduce the friction in your business and set your team up for success. If you consistently allow problem clients into your business, your once enthusiastic team will drag, and that angry phone call they had with “that guy” can spill over into the next interaction with your top client.



- 4. Keep the momentum going after the handoff.** The salesperson is the first person off the blocks to represent your brand, but the transition from sales to service and beyond are also important. For your prospect, the experience should be consistent and seamless, so when you decide on a message for your sales team, extend that message throughout the rest of your business. As prospects and clients interact with various team members it should all feel like the same business to them, so get your entire team on the same page.

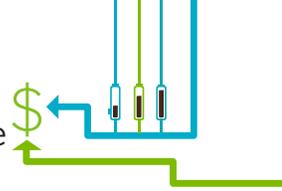
Client experience and client loyalty are undoubtedly big opportunities for your business. If you start tapping into that opportunity with your sales process, you will be far ahead of your competitors who are still waiting to get to customer service to **deliver their first “wow.”**

Your Next Steps

Once you reset the foundation of your pipeline and reorient your sales and marketing around these ideas, **your next step will be to engage new prospects who are not referrals.** That should mean a mix of **outbound marketing**, a fresh look at how you network in your **community at events**, and a deep conversation into more aggressive growth strategies like **appointment setting — where a firm like ours calls prospects on your behalf and tees you up with the first meeting.**

These new prospects are the fuel for your engine. Once you start pumping these new opportunities through the pipeline and processes we just discussed, you will see your **business not only grow, but grow with the right kinds of clients.**

And that means a brand-new world of returns.



About the Author:

Brad Stoller, National Director of Business Development, The PT Services Group

Brad Stoller is working to change how MSP's look at their sales processes. He consistently authors articles, provides video instruction for MSP sales tips, and holds numerous sales related webinars to help MSP owners, managers, and sales personnel. As the National Director of Business Development for The PT Services Group, Brad has interviewed hundreds of MSP owners in order to develop a new way of focusing on quality first time appointments and sustainable, exponential growth.



About PT Services Group:

The PT Services Group is committed to helping you open the doors to new prospects and new business. While the methodology and expertise behind our appointment setting and data collection programs are powerful tools, the secret to their effectiveness is the people using them. We are owned, operated, and staffed by professionals with expert sales knowledge. Visit our website at ThePTServicesGroup.com to learn more.



About Barracuda MSP:

As the MSP-dedicated business unit of Barracuda Networks, Barracuda MSP enables IT managed service providers to offer multi-layered security and data protection services to their customers through our award-winning products and purpose-built MSP platform. Barracuda MSP's partners-first approach focuses on providing enablement resources, channel expertise, and robust, scalable MSP solutions designed around the way managed service providers create solutions and do business. Visit barracudamsp.com for additional information.