

In the ever-evolving world of SaaS and Technology, the role of a Chief Revenue Officer (CRO) stands as the cornerstone for organizational success. CROs are tasked not only with driving consistent growth but also with cultivating a culture of excellence and empowerment within their teams. To echo Indra Nooyi, former CEO of PepsiCo, "Just because you are CEO, don't think you have landed. You must continually increase your learning, the way you think, and the way you approach the organization."

As we start 2024, we'll explore how not only investing in yourself as a sales leader, but also the ongoing development of your team will help drive long term sustainable growth for your organization. Here are a few key areas to consider:

1. Create and Foster a Coaching Culture

Not only is hiring great talent imperative to any successful sales organization or company, but once that talent is onboard, it is just as important to invest in your team members through coaching, and ongoing development.

- **Coaching as Discovery:** Coaching is a conversation. Take the time to meet your team members where they are, understand and help each rep overcome roadblocks that are inhibiting greater levels of success.

Coaching is not only a long-term strategy for success, but individual and business impact can be realized immediately. Here are a few ideas to start or continue fostering a coaching culture within your organization:

- **Coach the Coaches:** Invest in your managers and leadership team. Over the years, there has been so much investment in front-line sales professionals, and rightly so, but sales managers are often overlooked and do not receive the same level of investment. It is assumed that because an individual has been promoted to a management role, they automatically know how to coach, and manage performance effectively. This is often not the case.

Although individuals may have excelled as an individual contributor, they often receive little investment to excel in their new role and go beyond managing only their behaviors. The Modern CRO sees the importance of investing in their managers and coaching the coach around how to help their team excel and reach new levels of success.

- **Coach the Individual:** The Modern CRO understands the most successful teams are the most diverse. They harness their experience to help managers lean into their strengths, uncover, and overcome roadblocks to personal and team success. By meeting your managers, and in turn, your sales team members where they are, everyone has a personalized plan to achieve success. Too often in the corporate world, 'plans' are seen in a very negative light, but everyone is going somewhere. No matter if you are the top, middle, or bottom performer, we all need a plan.

2. Have a Data-Drive Approach

In the digital age, data is key, and CROs who harness its power to drive decision-making hold a significant competitive advantage. Here are a few ideas on how successful revenue leaders leverage data:

- **Navigating Board Conversations:** There has been much debate over the last few years around quotas, growth targets and how these numbers are determined. The Modern CRO will leverage data to come up with a 'bottoms-up' model to chart the path to success, and can use this information to plan more effectively, or rationalize against tops-down objectives to ensure sustainable growth within the business.
- **Embrace the Science of Coaching:** Rep participation is more important than ever; the most successful leaders don't just build their plan off their top performers. Know that the middle 60% of performers are the key to growth, and so they focus on how to get 5 or 10% more out of each of those reps, which is the difference between meeting or exceeding goals. How do they do this? By coaching. Sharing win/loss learnings across the team. Understanding

time spent on a deal. Building competences and new techniques that improve the parts of the sales process where they struggle.

- **Root Cause Identification:** The key is not just to identify common pain points where reps struggle in the sales process, but to understand why each is struggling (which often varies by rep). There is no shortage of data available to today's sales reps and their managers. But the key is focusing on where a change will make a difference.

3. Think from the Perspective of the Customer

In a customer-driven market, prioritizing customer needs and preferences is paramount for sustainable revenue growth. Here's how Modern CROs adopt a customer-centric approach:

- **Onboarding and Ongoing Learning:** The best sales teams truly understand their target personas - what is most important to them, their responsibilities, challenges, KPIs, Metrics, how success is defined for the role, and how their solution can help overcome those specific challenges, bridging the gap from current to future state.

Have your sales teams experience what it is like to be a buyer; this can include installing your software, using the product for key customer use cases, building reports or dashboards. If team members really understand what their buyers go through daily, this will translate to all interactions, building trust and credibility very quickly.
- **Customer Success Focus:** Invest in Customer Success. Prioritize customer success as a key driver of revenue growth, aligning sales and customer success teams based on data-driven insights to ensure seamless onboarding, adoption, and retention processes.
- **Continuous Feedback Loop:** Through regular feedback mechanisms, they gather insights from customers, incorporating feedback into product development and service offerings to maintain alignment with customer needs.

4. Leveraging the Sales Technology Stack

Within a sales organization the right technology can empower sales teams to drive efficiency, effectiveness, and scalability. Here's a few ideas to get the most out of your sales technology stack:

- **Understand the Use Cases:** Enablement, IT, RevOps, or frontline sellers should not be the only team members that understand how to use the technology. It is so important for sales leaders to understand the technology, how it is being used, and the key use cases to drive more deals, bigger deals, faster deals, and retention. Modern CROs meet with the vendors in value reviews alongside their cross-functional peers, to understand adoption, ROI, new use cases, and how effective is the technology that was originally purchased.
- **Tech Stack Analysis:** Take a full-picture view of your tech stack. See what technologies are currently in use, or what tools are underused, and which make a difference. Don't get stuck on sunk costs – look forward to making sure you and your teams have the tech you need. And eliminate tech that doesn't help your team achieve its goals.
- **Streamline Automation:** Over time, automated processes can get messy. Or something that was part of your process six months ago is no longer something you monitor. By reviewing your automation or implementing new ones, you can remove bottlenecks that hinder deal closures. Streamline and automate routine tasks to free up your sales team's time for more impactful tasks or training, such as behavioral and skill coaching. Today only [9%](#) of a front-line sales manager's time is dedicated to developing their direct reports. This translates to just 3.6 hours out of a 40-hour work week. How much of the rest of their time are they doing time-consuming, routine tasks? Focus on the areas that truly save time.

5. Structured Hiring Process and Career Pathing

Building a high-performing sales organization starts with recruiting top talent and providing clear pathways for career advancement. Here's how Modern CROs approach hiring and career development:

5 Attributes of the 2024 Modern CRO



- **Talent Acquisition:** Hiring great talent must be an ongoing focus vs. one-time event, it is critical that all layers of leadership are involved and continually fine-tuning the process.
For each role in the organization, identify the key responsibilities for that role, and what are the successful outcomes as a result of completing those core responsibilities. Great leaders think about outcomes at the 3, 6, 9, 12+ months' timeframe. As a team member progresses and ramps up to full productivity, skills and milestones to determine success will vary.
- **Competency-Based Hiring:** Once successful outcomes have been identified, get together as a cross-functional leadership team, identify the key attributes that a potential team member will need to achieve success. Build questions to uncover those attributes in a hiring process and have consistent rubric to measure each candidate fairly. Integrate an exercise or experience within the interview process to help uncover specific attributes, align this with the role and core behaviors any team member will need to execute daily.
- **Career Pathing:** Offer clear career progression paths and opportunities for advancement, providing sales reps with visibility into potential career trajectories and the skills and milestones required to progress.

Conclusion

Modern revenue leaders have excellent foresight into what is coming over the horizon, and embody a unique blend of skills, including data-driven decision-making, a customer-first approach, effective sales technology utilization, outcome-based coaching, and structured hiring processes and career pathing. By prioritizing these areas, revenue leaders can foster a culture of coaching and accountability.