



18 Tech Sales Terms Every Entry-Level Rep Should Know

Tech sales is full of jargon. Understanding these words will help

BUYER PERSONAS

A buyer persona is a description of a type of person or role that is most likely to use your product and why. The buyer persona helps sales reps identify the person(s) within a company whom they should prospect and what information most resonates with them.

It's important to understand who you're selling to. I used to sell to sales, marketing and product leaders, but now I'm selling to DEI and HR leaders. Those buyer personas are very different. This impacts everything from their interests to what messaging and marketing resonates with them to what factors in their industry will be most important to them.

CONVERSION RATE

Conversion rate measures the average amount of activity it takes to move a customer from one part of the sales process to the next. It can represent things like the number of emails it takes to secure a meeting with one buyer or the number of meetings to close a deal. It's a useful statistic to help with sales activity planning and forecasting.

This is something I always paid attention to, especially the number of emails sent to secure a meeting and the number of meetings to close a deal. It's important to have a clear understanding of what activities are needed to hit your number based on your organization's historical sales data.

DISCOVERY

Discovery means asking questions to understand the buyer's problem and determine whether you can help them solve it or not. Those problems can be complex, so it requires asking great questions and digging deeper to glean information from the buyer.

I've worked in other types of sales that don't use this term, but it comes up all of the time in tech. Everyone knows the word discovery, but it's the application to sales that can be confusing. Someone would say to me, "Oh, did you do discovery?" I'd be like "What?" It didn't click, but once you start saying it, you get used to saying it. Like for me, I might say "It's really important to ask great discovery questions," rather than "It's important to ask great questions."



DECISION-MAKER

The decision-maker is the person who makes the final decision and signs the contract to approve the sale.

This is something I would easily mess up earlier in my career. If I was selling a marketing tech item or an HR tech item, I'd think my decision-makers are the CMO [chief marketing officer] and CHRO [chief human resources officer]. Wrong! Don't assume and don't come out and ask: "Are you the decision-maker?" Ask your point of contact to tell a story about how a similar product has gotten approved in the past. They will most likely share insight and the names of people involved in the process that will help.

GATEKEEPER

The gatekeeper is someone who is tasked with protecting the time of the person who has the authority to make purchasing decisions. It can be an executive assistant or an employee of the person with buying authority.

As a sales rep, you'll be spending a lot of time talking to gatekeepers and figuring out how to get to the decision-maker. A lot of job descriptions will list getting past gatekeepers as an important skill. It can be challenging for a new rep because if you don't know the term, you won't know what they're talking about. We try to coach other companies to spell the term out for candidates.

OBJECTION HANDLING

Objection handling is a common sales skill that involves having a ready response for the buyer when they have a question or concern with your product.

Objection handling and figuring out how to overcome objections is just what everybody does in sales. This is another skill we see come up all the time in job descriptions and we encourage companies to spell out for candidates.

PIPELINE

A pipeline refers to a list of sales opportunities you're working on, often organized by the stages of the sales cycle.

The pipeline is what the manager will use for planning and forecasting. Generally speaking, there are four to six phases in the pipeline. Every company names them something different. At Aspireship, we have initial interest indicating the customer is open to learning about Aspireship; then discovery call, which means you've had the first call with them to learn more about their situation. Once you've had that initial call and it makes sense to move forward, they move to education, during which the sales rep educates them about what the company does. Then they move to the decision stage, in which they'll choose to work with us or not.



PROSPECTING

Prospecting is one of the most common terms used in sales. It means to find and generate business through actions like calling potential customers, emailing them and scheduling meetings. A customer will often be called a prospect.

We use that term a lot when we're talking about the ins and outs of what a sales development or business development rep does.

WHALE

Taking a cue from *Moby Dick*, whale is used to describe a huge enterprise prospect that has the potential to spend a lot of money with your company. Like Herman Melville's white whale, the prospect is also risky and rare. It requires a lot of resources to land, but if you do close one, it can contribute 50 percent or more to the company's bottom line.

For new reps, it's important to understand the weight of the situation when your company has a whale in the pipeline. If your VP of sales and sales engineers are focused on closing a whale, it might not be the best time to ping them about things you can figure out on your own. Take advantage of that opportunity to be self-sufficient with your own goals when the rest of your team is all hands on deck.

BANT (BUDGET, AUTHORITY, NEED, TIMELINE)

BANT is a sales framework designed to help sales reps keep a pulse on all of the deciding factors involved in a purchase. Budget stands for whether or not the buyer has the financial resources to make a purchase, authority reminds the rep to ask if the person they're speaking with has purchasing power, need invokes questions to determine how the product can help the customer and timeline stands for understanding when the customer wants to implement a solution.

BANT is a much older selling methodology and many people think it's no longer useful for today's ever-changing market, but I think there's a lot of value in understanding the fundamentals. As [a sales development rep], it can be an extremely powerful tool to leverage when trying to qualify prospects during the mid-funnel workflow – but it has to be done right. Remember that the conversation goes both ways; avoid sounding like you're reading off a checklist.

CONSULTATIVE SELLING

Consultative selling is a sales approach that focuses on building relationships with your customers to identify and provide a solution to their needs.



That's pretty much what tech sales is about. You're learning about your client, their needs and solving a problem. I really think about it as a sales approach that leads with asking questions to understand their problems and then understanding if you can or can't solve those problems with your solution.

CHALLENGER SALE

Challenger sale is a methodology from the book *The Challenger Sale*, that involves using your expertise to challenge the buyer's assumptions and help them find a solution. For example, if a buyer has an ineffective process but doesn't want to make a change, the rep would gently push back with use cases and research about the impact of solving that inefficiency.

The challenger sale method can help you create a better relationship with your customer. It comes up most often in a sales enablement conversation, where people are looking to improve their skills or as part of a training to help reps get better at their job.

INBOUND VS. OUTBOUND

In inbound sales the rep primarily sells to customers after they've interacted with the company's marketing and reached out to learn more information. In outbound sales, the rep's job is to look for companies that they think will be a good fit for their product and reaches out to them first through cold calling, email and social media.

It usually comes up when a candidate interviews for a job and the application might ask for candidates to have one to two years of outbound experience. There are differences between inbound and outbound, but the core of what makes a good seller doesn't change. You need to be organized, you need to do good discovery and be an effective communicator. The only difference you need to understand is that inbound is a more reactive sale while outbound is more proactive.

BDR/SDR (BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT REP/SALES DEVELOPMENT REP)

Business development rep (BDR) and sales development rep (SDR) are both entry-level roles within sales. An SDR is typically the one handling inbound leads, while a BDR will go outbound to find the leads. Some organizations will have employees start as an SDR and then promote them to BDR. Others just have one or the other.

We train our candidates to do either role, but it's important to understand the differences in the positions to frame job expectations. I'll tell a candidate there's a BDR role open, which means you're going to be doing a lot more cold calling (calling a prospect without any prior introduction) and cold emailing (emailing a customer without any prior introduction). Or I'll tell them it's going to be an inbound role, but there's also going to be another step to get to an account executive closing role, which is SDR. It's just important to know what you're walking into.



CRM (CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT SYSTEM)

The CRM, or customer relationship management system, is often referred to as the lifeblood of a sales organization. It refers to a platform that tracks all of the information a company needs about its customers, including customer data, the sales pipeline and revenue. Examples of CRMs include Salesforce, HubSpot and Pipedrive.

Anyone who is going to be in sales needs to know what a CRM is and how it generally works. The CRM tracks every action you're making in your role. Your leaders are looking at the platform to check your progress. They're looking at who your prospects are and where they are in your pipeline, along with your revenue. These are all important sales terms to know, but the CRM is the heart of it all. That's the vault of information.

KPI (KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATOR)

KPIs, or key performance indicators, are the metrics and activities your manager will use to evaluate you. KPIs vary for each company, but they can include targets related to emails sent, calls made, reply rates and meetings scheduled.

These are the metrics your manager will be evaluating you on, on a daily basis, so you need to have a good handle on your KPIs as a new rep. KPIs are how managers break down their overarching goals into smaller tasks. Every organization will have different KPIs, but to set yourself up for success, always maintain visibility into your numbers. And remember, there's always room for improvement.

ICP (IDEAL CUSTOMER PROFILE)

Ideal customer profile refers to a set of descriptions that defines your company's ideal target customer. It often includes details like the ideal company size, industry and pain points the customer experiences.

It's all about optimizing your time. Understanding your ICP will help you decide which customers to focus on and which ones to avoid because they aren't likely to buy your product. When you're looking at your opportunities, your manager will ask you if the customer fits the company's ICP.

MRR (MONTHLY RECURRING REVENUE)

MRR, or monthly recurring revenue, is the money that people are paying each month for their product subscription.

The MRR highlights the health of your revenue and plays an important role in the company's growth. It's also a useful way to describe deal sizes. You'll either describe the contract in terms of the annual subscription amount or by the monthly amount the customer pays.



POC (PROOF OF CONCEPT)

A proof of concept is a document, presentation or small project that allows prospects to confirm the performance of a solution without fully implementing it. Think of it as the step above a trial.

New SDRs should always be trying to understand what goes into closing a deal, even if they don't want to eventually become an account executive. A POC is just one lever that an account executive can pull to demonstrate value to the prospect. It's a great learning experience if you can understand why the prospect requires a POC, who is involved in running a POC and how the POC improves the chances of a closed/won opportunity.