REVENUE OPERATING SYSTEM

The Executive System for Predictable Revenue

EXECUTIVE PREVIEW v4

“I cannot be successful unless you are successful.”

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Selected manuscript for CEOs, CFOs, CROs, senior revenue leaders and operating executives

A Note to Executive Reviewers

This preview comes from a larger working manuscript built from more than three decades of selling, building teams, leading managers, fixing broken processes and learning from mistakes. I am not trying to create another sales methodology. My premise is that predictable revenue comes from an operating system that connects people, opportunity, process, coaching, CRM, data, compensation and leadership.

I am sharing this with a small group before the full manuscript is finished. I am not looking for compliments. I want to know where you disagree, what I am missing, and whether these ideas would actually work inside your organization.

1. Does this sound like it was written by someone who has actually led revenue organizations?
2. What idea or story stayed with you?
3. Where would you challenge me?
4. Would you want the full operating system after reading this preview?

Dedication

For Jeff Hoyland

Jeff changed my life and the way I think about leadership. He started as an underperforming BDR, worked his way off a performance improvement plan and earned a promotion to Senior BDR. Later, when he was diagnosed with throat cancer, he worried about when to schedule treatment because he did not want his absence to hurt the team's quota. That told me everything I needed to know about him.

Jeff Hoyland and me after his return to work.

Jeff eventually lost his battle with cancer. I still think about him often. This book is dedicated to him because he taught me something no management class ever could: the number is important, but there are moments when the person has to matter more.

Most Revenue Problems Are System Problems

When a number is missed, the easiest answer is to blame the salesperson. Sometimes the salesperson is the problem. But before I reach that conclusion, I want to know what the system is asking that person to do.

Is the commission plan driving the right behavior? Is quota realistic? Are territories balanced? Does CRM match the sales process? Do managers and reps use stages the same way? Are Marketing, Sales, Customer Success, Finance and Operations working from the same priorities?

Before you blame the person, inspect the system.

A CRM implementation does not fix a broken sales process. A methodology does not fix inconsistent coaching. A dashboard does not create accountability if nobody agrees what the numbers mean. The operating system has to connect all of it.

Leadership Starts With Trust, Not Authority

When I inherit a team, one of the first things I do is hand them my resume. They did not get to interview me, so I give them the chance. Ask me about where I worked, why I made a decision, what I am good at, where I have made mistakes. I want them to know who is about to manage them.

Then I turn it around. I want to interview them. Where did they come from? What do they think they do well? Where do they need help? Why are they here? Where do they want to go next? I may inherit their quota history and CRM activity, but that does not mean I know the person.

I cannot be successful unless you are successful.

That sentence sets the tone. My job is not simply to inspect their number. My job is to help them become successful enough that the team's number follows.

The Battle Helmet

Jeff Hoyland was underperforming, so I put him on a performance improvement plan. But I never viewed a PIP as paperwork designed to make someone leave. I met with him, took him back to the basics and worked the plan with him. He got off the PIP and was promoted to Senior BDR.

A few months later Jeff was diagnosed with throat cancer. Before treatment, he came to me and asked when he should schedule it so his absence would not hurt the team. I told him he was crazy. Get treated immediately. I would worry about the team's goal.

He was scheduled to return on a Monday. The Sunday before, I went for a haircut and decided to shave my head. On Monday I grabbed the battle helmet we kept on the floor. The team assumed they were about to get one of my speeches about going into the trenches.

Instead, I told them what Jeff had asked before he left. I told them that if he could show that much dedication to the team while facing cancer, I wanted to show my dedication to him. Then I took off the helmet and revealed my shaved head.

There was not a dry eye in the room. I did not need to give the battle speech. The team crushed quota that month. When Jeff's cancer later returned, the team organized a transportation schedule to get him to treatments.

Your people will remember what you did when the number was not the most important thing in the room.

Compensation Creates Behavior

I inherited a BDR plan with a quarterly goal of 30 meetings. The pattern became predictable: five meetings in month one, five in month two and 20 in month three. The AEs complained that the month-three meetings were lower quality and arrived exactly when they needed to be closing quarter-end business.

We moved the team to 10 meetings per month. Then I reduced the commission paid simply for setting the meeting and added kickers when an opportunity reached proposal and again when it became closed-won revenue. I ran the numbers for each rep to show that better opportunities could actually pay them more.

The hockey stick disappeared. Meeting quality improved. AE trust improved. Most importantly, BDR compensation became connected to revenue instead of activity.

If you pay people to set meetings, do not be surprised when they become meeting setters.

An 80% Opportunity With No Activity Is Not an 80% Opportunity

A manager cannot inspect pipeline by looking only at opportunity name, value, stage and close date. I want notes and last meaningful activity on the same report.

I have seen opportunities sitting at 80% where nobody has had meaningful contact with the prospect in 45 days. Sometimes the email history is five versions of "checking in" or "touching base" with no response. That is not an 80% opportunity. That is a salesperson hoping the customer comes back.

Every stage needs entry criteria, evidence, exit criteria, stale criteria and close-out criteria. And before leadership uses CRM data to judge the salespeople, leadership should use CRM data to understand how the salespeople are using CRM.

A field in CRM is not automatically the truth.

Methodology: Diagnose First. Prescribe Second.

At Quest, we had a roughly $125,000 opportunity in progress. We were using MEDDPICC, but I felt it had become an afterthought instead of a process.

During a 1:1, I challenged the rep's Decision Criteria. My question was simple: "How do you know?" It turned out the criteria were her interpretation, not the customer's actual criteria. On her next call she asked directly. Now we knew what the customer would actually use to evaluate the bids, and we could make sure our response addressed it.

The problem was not MEDDPICC. The problem was treating completed fields as knowledge. I would never walk into a new company and announce a methodology just because I used it somewhere else. I want to understand what is already working, what is missing and what information everyone involved in the opportunity actually needs.

Do not implement a methodology because you recognize the acronym.

Listen for the Prospect's Reason to Buy

If a prospect says, "I'm concerned about my product being held up in customs," I do not want the rep racing to the next question. I want them to repeat what they heard and go deeper: Why? Could the product go bad? Is there a customer commitment? Is something more important than the delay itself?

Prospects will often tell you the pain that could become the reason they buy. Sellers miss it when they are waiting for their chance to speak or trying to get to the next cool feature.

I use call recording and AI notes because technology should give the seller more attention to spend on the customer. When a BDR sourced the opportunity, I also like them involved in the call when practical so the original pain, promises and follow-up do not get lost between teams.

Don't listen for your opportunity to speak. Listen for the prospect's reason to buy.

One Business, One View

Executives do need visibility, but the purpose is not to create another wall of metrics. A useful operating view should answer five questions: Where are we now? Where should we be? What's coming? What's at risk? What needs action?

Area	What leadership should see	Early warning
Marketing	Calendar, campaigns, events and ICP focus	Changes affecting Sales or other teams
Sales	Pipeline by stage, last activity, notes and next steps	Stalled deals, weak next steps, stage risk
Implementation	Projects, schedule, budget and next milestone	Delays, overruns, next-stage risk
Customer Support	Tickets opened/closed, resolution time and outstanding issues	Recurring or high-impact issues
Customer Success	Last activity, renewals, adoption, expansion and advocacy	Silent accounts, contact changes, renewal risk
Finance	Budget vs. actual and upcoming/unbudgeted spend	Cross-department budget impact
People	Morale, performance, PTO, coverage and recognition	Burnout, retention and key-person risk

But information cannot only flow up. Employees need to understand the company's priorities, why the measures matter and how their work contributes. Facts and risks flow upward. Priorities, decisions, context and expectations flow back down.

A good executive dashboard should tell me what is about to happen, not only what already happened.

The Leadership Lesson I Learned Too Late

I have spent much of my career thinking about other people's careers. Who should become an AE? Who would be better in Customer Success? Who could become a manager? What training does someone need before the next role?

What I did not do nearly as well was build the same plan for myself. Through acquisitions and major organizational changes, I focused on stabilizing teams, retaining people, hitting the number and making sure the people who worked for me had opportunities. I rarely stopped and asked what I needed to do to become a bigger part of the new organization.

I am proud of that leadership philosophy. I would not change the commitment to my people. But I would tell every leader reading this that developing your team and advocating for your own career are not mutually exclusive.

Take care of your people. Just don't forget that you are one of the people too.

What I Want From You

This is still a working system. I am continuing to test the ideas against executives, former coworkers and people who have built revenue organizations themselves.

If something here is useful, tell me why. If something is wrong, tell me faster. If a framework would fall apart inside your company, I want to know where. The goal is not to write a book that sounds smart. The goal is to build something leaders can actually use.

Thank you for taking the time to read it.

Mike Conrad