

QUICK TIPS & FREE APPS FOR GREATER PIPELINE VISIBILITY IN 2010



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Salesforce CRM Success Series for Sales Managers, Volume 1

This is the first in a series dedicated to the success of frontline sales managers who use Salesforce CRM.

If you, like many sales managers, made resolutions for the New Year that include improved pipeline visibility, better revenue predictability and the elimination of surprises as the month or quarter ends, this article provides some “quick-hit” ideas to consider.

(Since many sales managers are not system administrators and do not have the necessary permissions to make changes in the application, these suggestions are all actions that a sales manager typically has permission to do or are point-and-click changes that should be easily accommodated with a change request to your system administrator.)

PART ONE | FINE TUNE YOUR DASHBOARDS



Hopefully dashboards are already a key part of how you manage your reps and run your sales meetings. (If you don't currently have any dashboards, you can download some excellent free templates. See Part Two below for more information.)

This is a great time to refine your dashboards to make sure they answer critical questions such as, "Do we have enough pipeline?" "What deals need my attention?" and "Are my reps doing what they are supposed to be doing?"

- **Tip:** Keep in mind you may want to have multiple dashboards to highlight different kinds of information. For example, one dashboard may present a more macro view of your business (pipeline trends, product breakdown, competitive insight, etc.) You can use another tactical activity dashboard to manage your team (calls/meetings by rep, pipeline by rep, deals closing this week, etc.)
- **Tip:** Use your dashboard to highlight Big Deals for the current period that you want to monitor as well as Big Deals for future periods to help identify those that you may be able to pull forward.
- **Tip:** Stack rankings (charts set up to reflect a leader board) can have a dramatic impact on sales rep behavior. Even if you have a private model where reps don't see each other's opportunities, you can still show top level information on a dashboard so reps know exactly where they stand compared to the rest of the team.
- **Tip:** Make sure your dashboard components clearly articulate and measure your key objectives. In this example, the chart reinforces the weekly requirement of 12 face-to-face meetings and provides immediate visibility into rep performance against this activity target.
- **Tip:** Dashboards are also a great way to highlight exceptions. Not only does this give you immediate visibility as to what is going on in the field, but publishing this information gives reps they information they need to self-correct and quickly get their names off the list. Some examples of metrics you might consider include:
 - ✓ Deals closing this month without recent activity
 - ✓ Open deals with a close date in the past
 - ✓ Stuck deals that have been at the same stage for x days
 - ✓ Stale deals that are over x days old
 - ✓ Deals missing critical data

Meetings Last Week	
12 Face to Face Meetings	
Assigned	Record Count
John Thompson	15
John Doe	9
Jane Smith	9
John Brown	7
Charlie Green	6
John White	5
John Black	4
John Grey	2

Take Advantage of New Dashboard Functionality

A few small tweaks can have a big impact on how useful your dashboards are to you and your team. The following are some of the recent improvements to dashboard functionality that you may want to incorporate:

Schedule dashboards for email delivery. You can now “push” critical information to your team, your boss, or others in your organization. Automating this process ensures your reps understand exactly what metrics are important and reinforces the idea that the information in the system is being actively viewed by you and your management chain.

The sales funnel has arrived! Your team’s pipeline can now be visually represented on the dashboard as a funnel to make it easier than ever to understand at a glance if your team is as equally focused on prospecting as they are on getting deals over the finish line.

Get details with no click-through required. You can now set-up your dashboard metrics so they provide the details about each segment in a chart by hovering over the chart with your mouse.



New charting capabilities will show you the money... or, at least how the money compares to your quota. New combination charts allow you to chart two metrics on one axis to show things like closed or committed deals against quota.

PART TWO | FREE APPLICATIONS YOU SHOULD CHECK OUT

If you aren’t already familiar with the AppExchange (www.AppExchange.com), invest 15 minutes to take a spin as you can find some applications that will give you this time back tenfold. The site is essentially an online market place for business applications, where you can browse, test drive, and implement hundreds of applications, widgets, and components that are pre-integrated with Salesforce. The apps either extend native functionality or add value and usability to your existing feature set.

All of the links below are examples of FREE applications or components that can provide valuable intelligence or additional options in terms of how to slice and dice your pipeline and analyze your business. (With the exception of the Sales Activity Feed, you do need to be a system administrator to download these into your Salesforce system but anyone can test drive them online.)

[Sales KPI Dashboard](#) or [Sales Activity Dashboards](#) – Even if you already have dashboards built, you may want to browse these graphs to get some ideas for additional metrics that could help you manage your team. If you don’t currently have any dashboards, these templates are a great way to provide some instant visibility.

[Opportunity Push Counter](#) – This app adds a formula field to the Opportunity record, allowing you to track how many times an Opportunity has been pushed from month to month. It provides a great metric for your dashboard and a great way to identify deals that are slipping and reps that may need assistance or training.



[Infowelders Revenue Heat Map](#) – (Pictured at left) Use the heat map to easily visualize Opportunity information on a map of the United States that shows trending and other details about your deals.

[Opportunity Assignment Guide](#) – This is a quick and intuitive way to compare pipeline and performance across your team or for selected reps, providing insight to make fast decisions regarding lead or account assignments.

[In2Clouds Predictive Sales Analytics](#) – This add-on analyzes your historical data and ranks your opportunities based on their likelihood of closing.

[Sales Activity Feed for B2B Sales Managers](#) – This is a favorite recommendation for sales managers as this is one of the few applications that do not require a system administrator to install it and nothing needs to be configured in your Salesforce system. You can simply log in with your credentials and you will be presented with some powerful tools to monitor changes to your pipeline and forecast and see exactly what your reps have been doing.

PART THREE | DON'T UNDERESTIMATE THE POWER OF "STAGE HISTORY"

Visual graphs and charts from dashboards and other applications like those described above can provide valuable information about the health of your deals. However, there is some extremely useful yet simple and often overlooked information presented right on the standard Opportunity page that can provide added insight into what is really going on in a given sales cycle.

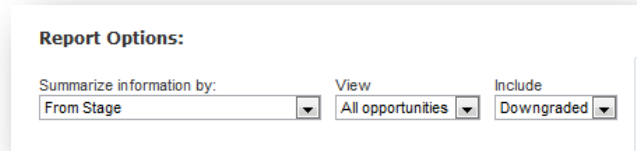
The **OPPORTUNITY STAGE HISTORY** is a standard “out-of-the-box” feature that is located on the Opportunity page below the main Opportunity detail section that tracks key status changes.

Stage History					
Stage	Amount	Probability (%)	Expected Revenue	Close Date	Last Modified

Any changes to the Amount, Probability, Stage, or Close Date create a new entry with the name of the person that made the change, the new values, and a date stamp. You can look at stage history information for any single deal and you can also report on this information to analyze all of your team’s deals by selecting the “Opportunity History” report type option under “Opportunities” in the custom report wizard. (There is also a report template with this same name that is included with the Opportunity reports.)

Selecting this report type provides different options in terms of how you can summarize and filter data than what you see on a standard pipeline report. For example, you can summarize information by the “From Stage” or the “To Stage” and you can filter the report to quickly hone in on Downgraded deals.

Stage History data can help identify deals that might need assistance and provide some additional intelligence to help you assess the veracity of your pipeline and the skills of your team. The following are a few examples of some of the questions you can answer by looking at the Stage History related list and Opportunity History reports:



The image shows a screenshot of the 'Report Options' dialog box in Salesforce. It contains three dropdown menus: 'Summarize information by:' with 'From Stage' selected, 'View' with 'All opportunities' selected, and 'Include' with 'Downgraded' selected.

- How realistic is it that this deal will close this month? (How many times has it been pushed to date?)
- How realistic is it that this deal will close for this amount? (Has the amount been consistently dropping over time?)
- What deals are stuck that may need your involvement? (You can easily report on duration in a given stage to identify or highlight those that exceed the average duration for your sales cycle. As discussed in Part One above, these are powerful metrics to include on a dashboard.)
- Which reps are consistent sandbaggers? (Stage history reports can show you who may be intentionally “pulling” deals in at the last minute or consistently closing deals that are higher than what the opportunity originally indicated.)
- Where in the sales process are you losing deals? How does this compare by rep? (Stage History reports enable you to group and filter your results by the “To Stage” so you can easily see where a deal was before it was lost.)
- How compliant are your reps with putting their deals in Salesforce? (By looking at the stage a deal was in when it was entered, you can assess if your reps are tracking deals from their inception or if they are only entering the ones that are further into the sales cycle.)

About the author: Jodi Hrbek specializes in helping companies maximize their success with Salesforce CRM, including facilitating custom workshops to help sales managers better leverage Salesforce CRM as a proactive coaching and management tool. Jodi can be directly reached at jodi@crmsuccesscoach.com.