

PRECISION PLAYBOOK

COLLABORATIVE SELLING: HOW TO CREATE TRUE BUYER ALIGNMENT

Get practical advice from the experts on how to align with your customers, close more deals, and meet your sales targets. Hint: It has everything to do with internal alignment and collaboration.



WHAT YOU WILL DISCOVER

1

What's changed about the buyer-seller dynamic and why it matters

2

How to collaborate better with your buyers

- Personalize your outreach
- Use data to your advantage
- Create a unified GTM team

3

How to create trust with your buyers

- Leverage the information gap
- Stay curious and skeptical
- Ask the tough questions

4

How to create a sales process that balances governance and autonomy

- Focus on revenue enablement
- Invest in sales coaching and training
- Build a revenue cadence



THE BUYER-SELLER DYNAMIC HAS CHANGED AND YOU NEED TO KEEP UP

Buying and selling have changed vastly over the past few years. If you were to observe your behavior as a buyer of consumer goods, you'd notice a complete change in how you research, shortlist, and buy goods—in store or online.

B2B selling has also undergone a similar evolution. While it could be termed a seller's market earlier, that's not the case anymore. **Buyers today are inundated with options.**

A fact that [Mike Weir](#), CRO at peer-to-peer review site G2, has experience with.

“From 600-700 products in the sales software category in 2019, we now have over 2,000 different products listed on G2,” says Mike. And that's just one software category on one review site.

While today buyers have more to choose from, they also have to deal with the inevitable onslaught of spammy outreach. In addition, they could be just as confused about all the steps in the buying process as you might be as a seller, especially in the enterprise market where deal sizes are larger, buyer needs are complex, and there's often a large buying committee involved.

Combine that with a hard-to-find (and justify) budget in today's macro environment, and you have the perfect storm. In short, as a seller **you have to work extra hard to earn and keep your buyers' attention *and* trust.**

Creating alignment with your buyers is the first and most important step in this direction. Read on to learn how.



HOW TO COLLABORATE BETTER WITH YOUR BUYERS

Not to get too preachy, but if you want total alignment with your buyer you need to embrace collaboration and foster trust. You have to put on your buyer's hat and be able to understand what they are going through and what they are looking for. This means working with them closely from first call to close.

[Tom Williams](#), Head of Clari Align, says it best in [this article for Sales Hacker](#):



There's only one thing you need to do to get a buyer to collaborate: make them believe that you can solve a problem that's costing them money, or that you can make them more money with less risk vs. sticking with the status quo and doing nothing.



Tom Williams
Head of Clari Align



→ **HERE'S WHAT YOU CAN DO DIFFERENTLY:**

PERSONALIZE YOUR OUTREACH

Everyone has access to the same databases full of potential buyer contact info. How do you plan on standing out and getting your target buyer to respond? A good step in this direction is to use intent data, from sites like G2 to personalize your outreach. If you can evolve to scaled personalization, great—you've achieved nirvana.



USE DATA AND TECHNOLOGY TO YOUR ADVANTAGE

The way data and technology work together is what makes selling today vastly different from just a few years ago. We are getting better than ever before at capturing buyer data (and their intent signals) and sharing that data company-wide.

In the context of sales, companies are creating databases that unify, analyze, and create insights from diverse data sources, including:

- First-party sources such as your CRM, purchase platform, and website
- Second-party sources such as G2 (showing you in-market buyers and their search/intent data)
- Third-party data sources that scour the internet to give you additional data points

From there, you can pair that data with sales engagement platforms that actually make it easier to automate, analyze, and take action.



It's actually a great time right now for people who have clarity of focus on their selling strategy to be able to execute really well.



Mike Weir
CRO at G2

CREATE **REAL VALUE** FOR YOUR BUYERS

You can create real value for your buyers by focusing on your core value proposition, and then delivering on that promise through the good times and the bad (including recessions).

You need to ask yourself:

- Do I truly understand the problems I am solving for the customer?
- Do I truly understand what my product promises to do?
- Do I understand how to communicate this core value proposition?

By focusing on these questions, you will always stay relevant to your buyers—and reasonable to their budget.



If your buyer believes you can fix their problem, make them more money, or remove an obstacle to their success, then they'll do whatever you ask of them to make it happen.



Tom Williams
Head of Clari Align

CREATE INTERNAL GO-TO-MARKET **ALIGNMENT**

Gone are the days of sales and marketing working in silos. The siloed approach leads to cracks and slips in revenue all the time. Marketing wants to know why the sales team hasn't touched their 'hot' qualified leads, and sales wonders why marketing can't deliver more leads every quarter.

GTM alignment occurs when two teams meet each other in the middle and agree on crucial aspects of the revenue playbook, including goals, priorities, and KPIs.

CREATE **MESSAGING** THAT RESONATES WITH YOUR BUYERS

Marketers often fall in love with their own language and messaging. It's true.

And in all fairness, you do want your company messaging to be unique. You don't want to say what everyone else is saying, but you still want it to be relatable to your buyers.

One of the best ways for your GTM team (yes, one team!) to get this right is to **read your marketing materials as if you were talking directly to your buyer**. If you get the feeling their eyes would glaze over, then you know what to fix.

CREATE A 'MUTUAL' MUTUAL ACTION PLAN

Most companies base their deal stages on their selling process, not the buyer's buying process. This misalignment adds time (and risk) to your deal timeline. **The antidote is to create mutual action plans that put your buyer first.**

A good mutual action plan helps your buyers move seamlessly through the buying process. They include steps such as internal approval, a sign off from legal, CFO approval, talking to reference customers, and so much more.

[Grab our "mutual" mutual action plan template here.](#)

BUYER COLLABORATION - DOS AND DON'TS

DOS

DON'TS

Personalized outreach

Spray and pray outreach

Combine multiple data sources to make real buyer connections

Use one-dimensional data to create one-sided buyer relationships

Create real value

Focus on features that just look cool but don't add value

Work as one GTM team

Work as separate sales and marketing teams

Messaging that resonates with your buyers

Messaging that makes the CEO happy

Mutual MAP

Non-mutual MAP



HOW TO CREATE TRUST WITH YOUR BUYERS

We know that people perform best when they're in a high-trust environment.

Why should it be any different for buyers and sellers? Here's how to create trust with your buyers:

LEVERAGE THE INFORMATION GAP

The best sellers know that there is often a major difference between what your buyers say they will do and what they actually do. This could be because they aren't aware of the next steps internally (how to get finance approvals, etc.) or they haven't built up enough trust with you to be honest about their doubts. But the best reps don't shy away from this fact. They always maintain a bit of skepticism — they are aware that their buyers are not going to be 100 percent transparent with them.

- They **read between the lines** and leverage that skepticism in a healthy way that moves deals forward.
- They also leave any conversation with their buyers thinking **“Why wouldn't they proceed? What questions or concerns have I not addressed that could keep the deal from moving forward?”**

“We all can drink the Kool-Aid of our companies because we're so close to them. We really believe in the value and we know we can help. But you've got to have the skepticism to say ‘why wouldn't my buyers have the same belief?’” says Mike. This brings us to the next point.

STAY CURIOUS

You want to understand every detail of your buyer's pains, needs, and limitations. You should be able to create a connection with them and see how to add real value.

We sometimes refer to this focus on adding value as value selling and when you value sell, you're trying to accomplish three things with your discovery process:

1. Tie your deal to an executive goal
2. Develop an executive level narrative with quantified ROI
3. Answer why and how “our solution” with tangible use cases and demonstrable value

Over time, this curiosity and deep discovery means that you will build trust with your buyers because they will recognize the fact that you're bringing unique thoughts and ideas to the table.

DON'T SHY AWAY FROM ASKING **TOUGH QUESTIONS**

[Kyle Coleman](#), SVP of Marketing at Clari, says it best:

“Sellers will hesitate to bring up unasked questions because they don’t want to insert doubt in the process. But experience shows us that buyers appreciate it when you can anticipate their concerns, show them that you’ve been there before, and can shepherd them through the buying process.”

When you ask tough questions as a seller, you can help your buyers overcome the fear of moving ahead. So don't be afraid to bring up the common questions that other prospects are asking. You make your buyer feel better, sane even! You make them feel like they're thinking about the evaluation the right way. “It’s a huge credibility builder,” adds Kyle.

For more on this concept, check out [The Jolt Effect](#) and [The Challenger Sale](#).

While it can be a bit intimidating to ask a prospect tough questions, it's a team lead's job to make their sellers feel confident. This brings us to the next point.

It's not only a seller's job to create alignment with buyers. If you're a team lead, the onus is on you to create a work atmosphere where your sellers feel comfortable asking tough questions.

CREATE **PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY** FOR YOUR TEAM OF SELLERS

As a team lead, you have to create psychological safety for your team to raise uncomfortable questions.

It should be perfectly acceptable for your reps to say, “I don't know the answer to that. Let me get back to you in two days once I've talked to my team.”

Leaving unanswered questions gives your sellers a reason to follow up with your buyers and keep the conversation moving forward. Not only is it honest, but you're also creating some urgency or impetus to continue the conversation.

This is why you need to empower your sellers to be curious and have much deeper, honest conversations with your buyers.



Your job is not to have the answer to every question. It's to ask the right questions and know what you don't know.



Kyle Coleman
SVP Marketing at Clari

HOW TO CREATE A SALES PROCESS THAT BALANCES GOVERNANCE AND AUTONOMY

To build a sales team that operates with curiosity, skepticism, and bravery, you have to set up standard processes while allowing each individual to tweak the formula to their unique selling situation and style.

“Process governance and collaboration are like yin and yang. It’s super important to provide some sort of framework and then allow your team to improvise,” says Kyle.

Here’s how to get the balance right:

FOCUS ON **REVENUE ENABLEMENT**

You need to be the master of your product or solution. You need to understand every detail of the software, the buyer experience, and why your customers love your product.

INVEST IN SALES **COACHING AND TRAINING**

Take the time and effort to make sure all your sellers (not just the top performers) have the right skills and training to sell well. Make time for monthly pipeline inspection, weekly game tape reviews, 1:1 coaching sessions, and more. This is how you will create moments for coaching and accountability.

PROVIDE FRAMEWORKS AND WRITTEN GUIDELINES

While sales coaching is great for ongoing growth, you need to build and share a documented process or framework for the important steps in your sales process.

Example: A structured discounting framework to help your team handle customer requests for discounts.



BUILD — AND FOLLOW — A REVENUE CADENCE

The best sales leaders follow a revenue cadence that helps them answer the main question when it comes to revenue: **Are you going to meet, beat, or miss your revenue projections?**

What is a revenue cadence? It's the ongoing motion of revenue moments that revenue teams leverage across quarters to deliver predictable, repeatable revenue processes. The key is to make your revenue cadence comprehensive and descriptive.

See how sales leaders use Clari's revenue cadence builder to remove surprises from their revenue process: [The Clari Revenue Cadence Playbook™](#).

What you'll get:

- Templates for a quarterly business review agenda
- A fill-in-the-blank schedule builder to get your cadence into your calendar
- A step-by-step guide to identify major revenue moments (and how to win them)
- A template for "running the numbers" that gives execs confidence in your forecast

[Download your playbook](#)

Follow these steps to set up the foundation for your team to succeed by creating true alignment with your buyers. As Tom Williams puts it, "It's important to have a plan, but it's worthless until it's validated by the customer. The only way to do that is discovery with the right people, and being collaborative rather than one-sided."

FOR MORE RESOURCES ON HOW TO CREATE TRUE ALIGNMENT WITH YOUR BUYERS:

- 1 Download our [MAP template for De-Risking Deals.](#)
- 2 Get advice from our CEO Andy Byrne via his weekly [RISE UP newsletter.](#)
- 3 [Follow Clari on LinkedIn](#) if you want to stop leaving revenue on the table.

