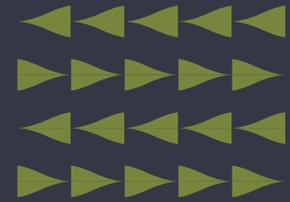




eBook

# Hard Times? Double Down!

Top Women in Sales Reveal Their Secrets  
to Navigating a Downturn



# Introduction

Sales has always been among the toughest professions. No matter how convincing your pitch might be, even the most interested prospect sometimes won't be able to purchase due to conditions beyond their control — and yours. Add times of uncertainty and a possible recession to the equation, and the already challenging path to meet sales quotas just became an even more steep uphill climb.

The pandemic accelerated the digital transformation of processes like the way people work and buy. And now we face the prospect of a looming economic recession that could lead to slashed purchasing budgets and more headwinds for sales pros.

## What to do?

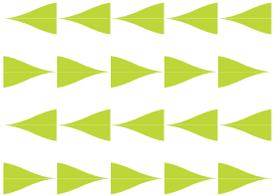
Even in the toughest of times, women in sales have always shown resilience and a can-do spirit. Since the National Association of Women Sales Professionals celebrates [Women In Sales Month in October](#), we thought we'd ask some top women sales leaders for advice on how they navigate the challenges of a potential downturn.

All of these amazing leaders made our list of "100 Powerful Women in Sales," which you can see [here](#) (#1 to 50) and [here](#) (#51 to 100). We organized the advice they shared with us in four categories:

- 
1. People and relationships
  2. Mindsets and habits for success
  3. Sales strategy and tactics
  4. Values-based motivation

# People and Relationships

Sales is eminently about human relationships. Top sales professionals bring a deep understanding of human motivation and relationships to the table. Sales leaders have always been skilled at fostering value-creating, sustaining relationships, not just with their customers but also internally with their teams. Let's read about how some top women in sales do that, especially in uncertain times.



# People and Relationships



In tough times, it's easy to make fear-based, rash moves, but instead you should be doubling down on the things that got you here: 1) people, 2) operating in line with your values, and 3) adapting to the new environment. **We are laser-focused on investing in our peoples skills, inputs, and engagement levels because we believe that's what drives sustainable, long-term success. People over everything else.**

**Dini Mehta** 

Chief Revenue Officer  
Lattice



I focus on relationships: personal and deep connections with my clients. That means really **listening to where they need support and clearing obstacles for them internally and externally.**

**Chantel George** 

Founder and CEO  
Sistas in Sales



Achieving our sales goals, regardless of economic climate, is all about being **proactive vs. reactive**. Think of what you can do now and for the long term, not what you should do as a result of short term issues. By being vocal and visible on platforms like LinkedIn, for example, we create a continuous stream of inbound demand. If we look to help those buyers — even if it's not selling our services to them — they may become a new referral source, which continues to compound the inbound leads we have, again, regardless of climate.

**Sam McKenna** 

Founder  
#samsales Consulting

# People and Relationships



How can I support my team in a downturn?  
Simply by **encouraging them to be more efficient with their time, be the most helpful in the room, and then create, duplicate, and retain success as much as possible.**

**Lilah Nielsen** 

Founding Member, Salescast (podcast)  
and SDR Nation



In good times and bad, the best salespeople gain trust and, ultimately, new business, when they **solve for what the customer needs** rather than simply selling what's 'on the truck.'

**Amy Slater** 

Vice President, Global Strategic  
Technology Alliances  
Genesys



During an economic downturn, it becomes even more imperative to **understand the strategic priorities of your customer or prospect. By doing so, you can connect your offering to what is truly important to them and help them justify their investment.**

**Wendy Harris** 

Head of EMEA  
Gong

# People and Relationships



Economic downturns are a huge opportunity to be even more human and personal with customers, to strengthen relationships. Set yourself apart in different ways such as using video and social selling, and listen even more to the challenges, pains, and goals your customers are working with.

**Andrea Bowers**   
Account Executive  
AirDeck



Everyone is in the same storm, just on different boats. This is when I start reaching out to clients with an empathic heart to first know how they are doing on a personal and business level, and then work to understand what major concerns they have to address their challenges head on. Some may even be looking for new ideas and opportunities that can help their organization stay recession-proof.

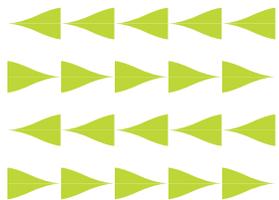
I found that this is a great time to aggressively listen to my clients and map my product or solution to their needs showing the value benefits and ROI they would get to either save

money or make them money. My sales cycles were longer for two reasons: 1) There were more decision-makers needed to sign off on the deal and 2) I offered more complimentary trials so that my clients were extremely confident in the solutions they were buying.

**Shawanda Roberts**   
Global Vice President of  
Sales & Marketing Activation  
Frost & Sullivan

# Mindsets and Habits for Success

Mindsets can make or break your fate in sales and in life. And the habits formed to support the mindset are what yield results in the long run. When tough times come, sales professionals may not be able to control macro events that impact their customers (such as the global economy), but they can control what they do every day and how their outreach might vary. What habits and mindsets enable sales pros to remain resilient and positive? Top women sales leaders shared tangible and actionable tips.



# Mindsets and Habits for Success



**Time block prospecting and follow up every week.** Even though I run our business, I am the face of it and talk to buyers directly. In all my years of running the company, when I lose sight of growing the pipeline and hitting sales goals, we've lost revenue. When I keep focus, as we do now, with a daily standup revenue meeting and time blocks to talk with buyers, we grow and prosper.

Additionally, having a mindset of “supportive beliefs” — **focusing on thoughts that support my goals**, rather than “unsupportive beliefs”

that can undermine my efforts — is critical for success. **We each determine our level of success.** Mindset is a big key.

**Lori Richardson** 

B2B Sales / Revenue Growth Strategist;  
Virtual Sales Kickoff Speaker, Author,  
#WomenInSales Champ  
Score More Sales



Spend more time than usual reaching out to past customers to see how the economy is impacting them, share any ideas or guidance I have that may be helpful to them, and also **ask them if they have any referrals for you.** When you've worked your behind off to help customers be successful in the past, it's amazing how future conversations with them create opportunity. The opportunity can be with that 'customer for life' or through a referral they offer you.

**Anita Nielsen** 

President and Owner  
LDK Advisory Services

# Mindsets and Habits for Success



**Consistency has served me well during each of these tough sales situations. What I am in control of each day is my ability to source 10 new leads, make 20 more calls, or send 5 more hyper-personalized emails.** By focusing on the habits and actions that were 100% in my control, I've consistently exceeded my quota.

No downturn can last forever (knock on wood) so in addition to consistent habits, I set myself and my prospects up for success in the future.

**By leading with a help-first, sell-second approach, I've been able to foster genuine relationships.** Those relationships have been the determining factor in getting more than one deal closed earlier & at a higher price.

**Leslie Venetz** 

Founder, Sales Team Builder LLC



When it comes to achieving my goals during an economic downturn, **it's all about getting creative and spending more time nurturing relationships, as thoughtfulness can really help you make a difference with clients, even if they aren't in a buying cycle.** Make a note to yourself about sending your prospects something of value, or even send them an encouraging LinkedIn video based on a goal they shared, and notice how those small actions positively impact your relationships and overall performance.

**Penelope Yamauchi** 

Director of Candidate Experience  
Vendition



Every interaction that I have with a prospect or customer needs to **focus not on selling software or a solution, but on helping people solve their problems.** You are no longer selling software or a solution, you are helping people solve their problems. If you can help solve their biggest challenges and can provide value, then you differentiate yourself from every other sales rep.

**Liz Klebba** 

Account Executive  
Snowflake

# Mindsets and Habits for Success



Don't spend too much time with customers not in your ICP, but rather **focus on a smaller number of prospects** serious about making a change from their current state. What moves the needle is finding the pain early in the discovery process, adding value specific to them, and creating a sense of urgency around making the change.

**Jill Goldworn** 

Vice President, Sales Strategist  
Annex Cloud



Instead of being concerned about how it's going to negatively impact my numbers, I'm using it as an opportunity to lean into what salespeople have always been great at — **adapting, listening, and asking questions.**

**It invites me to rethink how I'm reaching out to people, the questions I'm asking, my tone, my call to action. Who am I really targeting?** Now, I'm not saying to switch it up with everything, but it's an opportunity to really hone in on the value you provide and to who. **Push yourself, but don't exhaust yourself** to the point of no

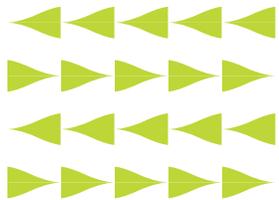
return. Celebrate early, celebrate often. Set minimum and maximum goals. Think about achieving goals daily, weekly, and quarterly to help you stay on track, but never lose sight of the bigger picture.

**Teila Evans** 

Head of Partnerships  
tEquitable

# Sales Strategy and Tactics

Although an outsider may think of a salesperson's role as straightforward, the reality is that salespeople are often consumed with a number of tasks that are relevant to the sale (primarily around researching), but can be very time-consuming and not necessarily proportional in results to the efforts made. The key is to find the right balance of actions that drive sales. Effective selling always has a clearly-defined strategy behind it and is done with tactics that align with (and drive) that strategy. How do successful women sales leaders think about strategy and tactics in uncertain times? We asked, and they answered.



# Sales Strategy and Tactics



**Prioritize deals that have the largest potential** and execute well on them. Executing well means focusing on the fundamentals of enterprise selling, such as constant discovery, mutual action plans, executive sponsorship, and team selling. Optimize pilot processes and get the right executive sponsorship to balance the customers' need to test for success while also ensuring your time is spent wisely.

**Reva Pellerin** 

Strategic Account Executive  
Vidyard



**Figure out your business case. How will you help your customers achieve their specific goals in spite of the headwinds?** How will you add value in a way that's different? How can you eliminate obstacles that are going to be even more painful during a downturn? In terms of tactics, analyze the data to understand what's working and what's not, increase high-quality inputs, and **put more effort into driving personalization and relevance.**

**Sarah Hicks** 

Director of Coaching and Consulting  
Predictable Revenue™ Inc



**Focus on doing more with less.** This means optimizing for efficiency and effectiveness through being ultra-intentional about where you spend your resources of time, people, and budget to ensure the most return and value for every type of spend. Use your time to be a strategic thought partner helping your customers navigate through tough times. It will pay off through retention, and later, expansion.

**Rosalyn Santa Elena** 

Founder and Chief Revenue Operations Officer  
The RevOps Collective

# Sales Strategy and Tactics



Regardless of the economy, value-focused selling with a clear thread to ROI is what our selling teams are consistently articulating to our prospects. We've found that **meeting businesses where they are versus overselling creates stronger relationships and trust. Draw upon industry trends and market knowledge to create value-packed POVs and positioning that shows prospects you 'get' what they're up against and are here to help them.**

**Jill Santos** 

Regional Vice-President, Marketing Cloud,  
Retail & Consumer Goods  
Salesforce



**Focus on the actions that improve yield across your existing sales and marketing motions.** For instance, we have a lot of A/B tests running on all our paid ads to make sure they perform well.

**Alina Vandenberghe** 

Co-Founder & Co-CEO  
Chili Piper



Align across the entire revenue funnel from lead acquisition through the sale and continuing with customer support and retention, with a central focus on delivering value to customers. Our leadership is in the data every single day to make informed, next-best action decisions. There are still customers who need your solution — **you just need to be agile in your approach and responsive when the data tells you to pivot or double down.**

**Rebecca Grimes** 

Chief Revenue Officer  
Ruby

# Sales Strategy and Tactics



The pandemic taught us there's nothing to be gained by taking your foot off the gas when markets get soft. Rather, lean in and become a student of how your prospect's pains have changed with the market conditions: 1) Sharpen your messaging to meet your prospects with insights that can help their business in down economies, 2) Work on getting necessary visibility into top of funnel conversion rates and drive efficiency where you can, and 3) get your team ready for a lot of market listening and message iteration. **Collect, analyze, and ship messaging rapidly until it aligns with your prospects' current pains, fears, and problems. To be relevant in a tough market is your superpower.**

Jessica Watts 

Co-Founder, Mud City



Bringing more women into sales and elevating them into leadership is a high priority of companies of all sizes. Over the course of the pandemic, the number of women in sales — and many other fields — dropped precipitously during the pandemic. **While it might be tempting for companies to tighten their spending in this downturn, my approach is to help them understand that there is no better time for them to be investing in the professional development of the women on their team.**

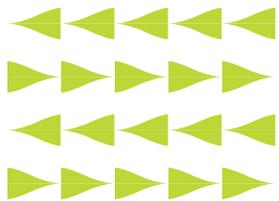
Attrition costs average 1.5 to 2 times an employee's annual salary. Spending on professional development is a fraction of that cost and women who participate in the Women in Sales Leadership Forum complete the program energized, engaged and ready for new challenges. That's invaluable.

Gina Stracuzzi 

Co-Founder & Director  
IES Women In Sales Leadership Forum

# Values-based Motivation

Motivating sales teams in times of economic uncertainty is most effective when the message is based on shared values. Everyone is facing similar challenges now on a global scale, and those shared experiences are what sales leaders should leverage to support their teams and maintain seller resilience. How do top women sales leaders show the way forward with their values and enable individual and team resilience when the going gets tough? Read on.



# Values-based Motivation



Although the economy may be uncertain, what is certain is that by increasing your sales velocity, win rate, and deal size, you can overturn your personal downturn. **Move forward with the same discipline, heart and tenacity as always.** And when it comes to objections, I always say “The reason they won’t do it is the reason they must do it.”

**Shari Levitin** 

CEO

Levitin Group



Break everything down into micro goals and enjoy the small wins, including conversations, meetings booked, email replies, demos booked, networking, learning new skills, overcoming objections, etc. You don’t have to meet your full blown quota to ‘achieve’ your sales goal, as long as you’re giving it 110%. **Remember what you can control and what you can’t. As long as you’re making intentional choices to succeed, you’re an achiever in my book.**

**Jillian Bruno** 

Manager, Sales Development

RocketReach.co



All you can control are your actions, not the outcome of those actions. **So I try my best not to attach my self-worth to the outcome of my work.** But the truth is that 84% of sales reps missed their quota in 2020, and now in 2022 we’re in another kind of economic downturn. Think of worthwhile tactics to help move the needle: going wider in your scope of outreach, sending out surveys for direct feedback to support use cases, running business justification workshops, and following up consistently. But the bottom line is not attaching your personal or professional happiness to the outcome. My advice? **Do your best, don’t stress, and ignore the rest.**

**Risa Khamsi** 

Account Executive, SMB

Stack Overflow

# Values-based Motivation



Repeatable success lies in our ability to **master the way we drive, not how we feel when we reach the destination.** You can master 'driving,' but I've never seen someone master 'arriving.' Habits drive our results — not vice versa.

**Gabrielle Reyson**

Senior Account Development Representative  
UserGems



A mutual understanding of the circumstances with all prospects is the first step. **Be empathetic and patient.** Although this can be difficult, it will land more trust and understanding with prospects to move forward—leading to stronger communication and future upsells.

**Gabrielle McLay**

Account Executive  
Vidyard



**Economic downturns are an opportunity to reveal true pain a company might be facing. If what you're selling can help relieve that pain, then there's still an opportunity to make that sale.** Don't overthink it. Economic downturn or not, keep pushing and you WILL see results.

**Yaalit Pereira**

Account Executive, EMEA  
Vidyard



In situations where there are big trends that we can't control, it can be easy to deflect any accountability externally to what's going on around us. **Focusing on what we can control is the best way through.** That control may take the

form of dials, outreach, calls or continuing to level up your sales skills.

**Kelly Marberry**

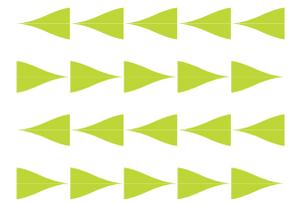
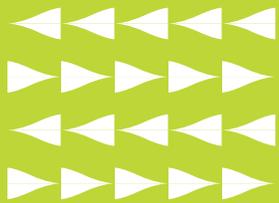
Sales Leader and Account Executives  
LinkedIn Sales Solutions, LinkedIn

# Conclusion

What comes across most clearly from the amazing women sales leaders who provided so much great advice for this eBook is how committed they are to achieving success for themselves, their sales teams, and their organizations. While every sales leader is unique, what they have in common is the ability to drive results by adapting to different sales contexts, by making the best of even the most uncertain sales situations.

We hope you've learned something you can put into practice in your own sales career, downturn or not, whether about strengthening customer relationships, developing great sales habits, defining strategy and tactics to succeed, or aligning your actions around your core values.

The entire team here at Demandbase wishes you success during Women in Sales month and every other month too!





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