

How to Sell During a Recession: Tips for Sales Reps

27/09/2023



[Learning how to sell](#) during a recession can be tricky. When the economy begins to suffer, it's not just businesses that struggle. Consumer purchasing habits change, and winning deals becomes a lot more difficult, even for the most experienced sales professional.

Although it remains to be seen whether we'll enter a new recession soon, the economy is definitely in a difficult place. Profits are down, interest rates are up, and layoffs are everywhere.

For sales professionals, the best way to stay ahead is to be proactive. Here's everything you need to know about prepping yourself for an economic downturn.

Does Sales Deliver Recession-Proof Jobs?

Articles about recession-proof careers are misleading. While there are certainly some roles that seem to thrive during an economic downturn, no job is completely safe. Even if your skills and experience are in high demand, true job security is difficult to come by these days.

While a sales career might not seem as secure as a role in the federal government, or in a fast-paced law enforcement office, sales reps are in a relatively good position. Even when consumer buying trends change, and sales cycles lengthen, every business needs a good sales team.

In fact, during a recession, some companies will invest in their sales teams more than usual, looking for ways to increase their performance, and therefore the company's bottom line. While there's no such thing

as a recession proof job, you can rest assured there will always be companies out there looking for sales professionals with the right skills.

In fact, [since 2021](#), the number of companies advertising for sales roles has increased. With talent shortages in the market, you may be surprised at how many roles are available.

Recession Sales Skills You'll Need in a Downturn

Sales professionals need a broad range of skills (both hard and soft) to thrive in any role. This is true regardless of whether you're facing a recession or not. However, some characteristics may be more appealing to employers during an economic downturn.

Some of the most important sales skills you'll need to continue selling products and services, and reaching your quota during a recession include:

- **Adaptability:** In a recession, sales teams often become more agile. They need to experiment with a range of different sales strategies, often at speed. They also need to adapt quickly to different market trends and customer preferences.
- **Emotional intelligence:** During a recession, many companies focus on preserving their existing customers, and increasing customer lifetime value. The ability to empathize, build rapport, and create relationships with consumers will be crucial.
- **Resilience:** The sales process always requires resilience, but during a recession, you'll need to show more endurance than ever. You'll need to follow up with leads more frequently, keep pushing for deals, and work harder to achieve your goals.
- **Time management:** Every second counts when it comes to recession sales. Failing to follow up with customers quickly, or respond to their needs fast could mean you lose out on a deal. Excellent organization and time management skills can be essential.
- **Communication:** As always, during a recession, salespeople will need to be excellent at communicating, not just with customers, but with sales managers, and team members too. The better your communication skills, the more you'll thrive in your role.

On top of all these things, sales professionals working in a recession will need to be creative, excellent at solving problems, and ready to take on leadership tasks at a moment's notice. It can be challenging in the short-term, but honing your skills for a recession can make you a more valuable team member in the long-term.

How to Sell During a Recession: Top Tips

For sales organizations, selling during a recession often means adapting to new strategies and methodologies quickly. You'll need to get to know your target audience, understand their new pain points and concerns, and update your sales process accordingly.

Here are some quick tips to help you master how to sell during a recession.

1. Invest in research

Often, what separates [high performers](#) from everyone else in a sales team is their ability to research and prepare for each conversation with a prospect. During a recession, the priorities and goals of your customers are likely to change.

Making sure you know what your customers need from you now, what objections they might have, and what hurdles you'll need to overcome will improve your sales process. The more research you have, the more you can adapt your messaging to capture the engagement of your audience.

1. Build deeper relationships

Your existing customers are often more valuable to your business than any new leads during a recession. They not only provide access to consistent revenue, but they can also advocate for your brand and help to drive new business to your door.

With this in mind, it's important to focus on building deeper relationships, and getting the most out of every prospect. Look into the factors that increase customer loyalty for your brand. Find out what causes existing customers to churn, and consider opportunities for upselling and cross-selling with existing clients. Improving your customer lifetime value will positively impact on your bottom line.

1. Earn Trust

Learning how to sell during a recession often means discovering how to overcome more objections from prospects. With tighter budgets to work with, customers are going to be more discerning about how they choose to spend their money, both in the B2B and B2C world.

The best way to boost your chances of winning deals is to earn your customer's trust. Present yourself as a trusted advisor, offering advice on how they can overcome their pain points and reach their goals. Provide access to useful information, case studies, and testimonials. Don't forget to leverage social proof too, reviews can be extremely useful when building your credibility.

1. Invest in training

When the sales landscape becomes more challenging, training helps to ensure sales reps can stay one step ahead of the curve. Business leaders should continue to invest in training and coaching opportunities for their team members. Showing them how to use new strategies like [social selling](#) and video prospecting can improve your chances of earning leads.

Similarly, sales professionals should invest in their own education. Collaborating with other team members, learning from peers, joining forums and taking online courses can all be extremely useful. The right training will ensure every team member can adapt to the new world of sales a lot faster.

1. Qualify leads carefully

While validating leads is important in any sales environment, it can be particularly important during a recession. Every moment a rep spends with the wrong prospect is a moment wasted. That's why it's so

crucial for team members to do their due diligence and ensure market fit.

Research every prospect in advance and make sure you learn as much as you can about their needs, expectations, and budget. At the same time, make sure you know when to follow up with a prospect and walk away. If you're not going to get a sale, move onto the next lead.

1. Adapt your sales pitch

In every sales pitch, sellers often focus on drawing attention to the benefits that customers will get from their products and services. However, during a recession, it might be more beneficial to focus on the pain points your solution will help buyers to avoid.

Customers are more likely to act to avoid a problem than they are to pursue a benefit. With that in mind, think about the key issues you can help your prospects overcome. Can you help a B2B business avoid losing clients, revenue, and productivity? Can you assist a consumer in protecting their health, wellbeing, or overall quality of life?

1. Experiment

Recessions aren't the best time to stick with the 'if it's not broke don't fix it' mantra. During an economic downturn, everything from your market to your competitors and customers will be changing. That means you'll need to be open to experimentation.

Switch up your marketing strategy, trade cold calls for [cold emails](#), try sales methodologies you never considered before and track their results. What worked for your business when the economy was flourishing might not be the same as what works today.

Stay Strong During the Recession

Although it's difficult to say whether we are officially heading towards another recession or not, the outlook does seem bleak. Whether the economy rebounds or not, developing the right recession sales skills, and having a plan for endurance will be crucial.

Investing in your strategy for a 'recession-proof' sales strategy now could ensure you can accomplish more, and even keep your business afloat in the years ahead.

Want to learn more about preparing for a recession, and mastering your sales skills? Join the Hard Skill Exchange today for guidance from the top sales professionals.