

Unlock Sales Readiness:

Advice from the Experts

vertical IQ[®]





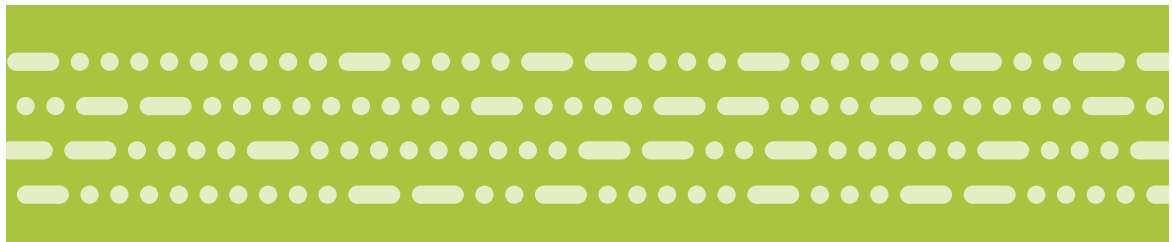
Here at Vertical IQ, we often talk about the importance of being ready.

Whether you're in sales, marketing, or account management – in banking, accounting, insurance, consulting, or tech – we believe that having access to the right tools and insights is key to truly connecting with customers and prospects.

But don't just take our word for it. For this eBook, we went straight to the experts, interviewing thought leaders, industry experts, and subject matter experts (SMEs) to understand what Sales Readiness means to them.

**TOOLS. PREPARATION.
VALUE. TRUST. LEADERSHIP.
COMMUNICATION.**

These are just a few highlights from insights we are excited to share in this eBook. We think these valuable ideas will help everyone (including seasoned professionals dedicated to one niche, rookie generalists, and those somewhere in the middle) feel more ready to connect with buyers, build relationships, and close sales.





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Larry Levine

CO-HOST, SELLING FROM THE HEART PODCAST
AUTHOR, "SELLING FROM THE HEART"



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WHAT DOES SALES READINESS MEAN TO YOU?

When it comes to sales readiness, I think you need to ask: What are you doing on a daily basis, to prepare, plan, and practice? Where's your accountability? Where's your self-discipline? What are you doing to hold yourself to high standards when it comes to how you coach and train yourself, as opposed to relying on somebody else?

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FURTHERMORE, SALES READINESS MEANS ...

Creating equal business stature.

If you want to **ELEVATE YOUR GAME** and get engaged in a very deep conversation, you need to have **DEEP BUSINESS SUBSTANCE**, and you need to have high business acumen. You must be knowledgeable and speak their language.

Building trust and credibility.

The way you build **TRUST** and **CREDIBILITY** is to understand how to bring **AUTHENTIC RELATIONSHIPS** to the forefront and combine that with **MEANINGFUL BUSINESS VALUE**. It's about connecting and relating to people in a human way. **WE ARE ALL HUMANS**, but we've dehumanized the sales profession. We've made it about our products. We've made it about our companies.

Holding sales leaders accountable.

Sales **LEADERS** are responsible for creating environments where **PREPARATION, PLANNING,** and **PRACTICE** are at the forefront. As a **LEADER**, they are responsible for creating the culture and providing the **TOOLS** and **COACHING** their salespeople need to succeed.



LARRY LEVINE

Brynne Tillman

CEO AND LINKEDIN WHISPERER, SOCIAL SALES LINK
AUTHOR, "THE LINKEDIN SALES PLAYBOOK:
A TACTICAL GUIDE TO SOCIAL SELLING"



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WHAT DOES SALES READINESS MEAN TO YOU?

I believe there are three levels of sales readiness. The first level is about understanding the value that your product or service delivers to your customer. The second level is about understanding the industry you are selling into. The third level of sales readiness is going deep and wide into each individual prospect – what matters to them as a company, what matters to them personally, what initiatives are they focused on, etc.

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FURTHERMORE, SALES READINESS MEANS ...

Shift beyond the transactional.

If someone is coming to a bank for a loan, it is important to understand the **IMPACT** that loan will have on that individual and their business. Look beyond just what the money will buy and try to understand the real reason behind the transaction. What **CHALLENGE** is it helping them solve? What **DREAM** is it helping them create? What emotions are involved?

Earn the right.

If you invest in learning their industry and their clients' industries, you can now have a conversation that's truly relevant to them. You can now become a **TRUSTED ADVISOR**. You have earned the right because you took the time and made the effort.

Detach from the commission.

Detach from what the prospect is **WORTH** to you and attach to what you're worth to them. It's absolutely vital that a good **RELATIONSHIP-DRIVEN, AUTHENTIC** salesperson shows up in **SERVICE** and does not show up just to make a sale.



BRYNNE TILLMAN

Jack Hubbard

CEO AND CHAIRMAN,
ST. MEYER & HUBBARD, INC.
HOST, JACK RANTS LIVE,
LINKEDIN LIVE PROGRAM



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WHAT DOES SALES READINESS MEAN TO YOU?

At a global level, sales readiness means using the right tools, being well-trained and knowledgeable about those tools, and being very knowledgeable about the customer. This will help ensure that you have the right questions ready when you start that sales conversation. I've always said the buyer has the answers, the banker has the questions. All too often, the salesperson isn't quite ready to ask the right questions.

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FURTHERMORE, SALES READINESS MEANS ...

Infrastructure and culture are key.

Is your **ENTIRE ORGANIZATION** ready to **SUPPORT** the salesperson? Leadership needs to create a **PERFORMANCE-BASED** culture, provide the right tools, and be ready to coach. The support staff needs to understand their **ROLE** in supporting the salespeople and understand the sense of urgency. Even the operations people need to be **SALES-READY**.

Understand the price of ignorance.

How much does it **COST**? That is typically the first question a CEO asks when I recommend investing in tools or other resources to support their team. That is the wrong question. What is the **PRICE OF IGNORANCE**? That is the question they should be asking. They have salespeople out there who desperately need help. If they aren't willing to invest a few dollars in tools or resources to help them, what will that cost them in terms of **LOST RELATIONSHIPS, LOST VALUE**, and more?

Think about what's next.

So many salespeople are focused on preparing for that initial conversation, but they stop short of planning for what's next. This should be the last step in call preparation. What can you leave behind or follow up with that offers real value to your client? Something as simple as a timely article about your client's industry can ensure that you actually have another conversation.



Jimmy Pittenger

HEAD OF FINANCIAL INSTITUTION
CORPORATE CLIENTS, S&P GLOBAL
MARKET INTELLIGENCE



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WHAT DOES SALES READINESS MEAN TO YOU?

Sales readiness looks a little different today than it did a few years ago. Covid changed not only the challenges our clients are trying to solve but also the way we sell. We just brought forward a massive amount of technology change in the way that we interact with clients.

While sales readiness still requires a deep understanding of your client's business, it now involves more virtual communication. That requires a different type of preparation and communication and can make it harder to stand out as a vendor.

Doing everything you can to show your clients that you care about them and understand their business can go a long way in this new world.

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FURTHERMORE, SALES READINESS MEANS ...

Follow up and follow through.

Great **COMMUNICATION** and great **DELIVERY** have always been of utmost importance, but they are more important now than ever. If a client emails you, **RESPOND** immediately to **ACKNOWLEDGE** that you received it and that you're working on it. You don't need to have all the answers immediately, but you need to get the answers and get back to the client in a quick time frame. Following up and following through are incredibly important in this new sales framework. They go a long way when it comes to earning your client's **TRUST** and building that **RELATIONSHIP**.

Do your due diligence.

Do what you can to really **UNDERSTAND** your client's needs. Maybe that means looking at their most recent 10k, their balance sheet, or their most recent quarterly income statement to better understand the movements of their **BUSINESS**. Do your research to better understand their **INDUSTRY** and to better understand why those movements are happening. Leverage the abundance of **DATA** that you have access to, whether it's through LinkedIn, S&P, Vertical IQ, or any other number of resources available today. Ask **QUESTIONS** in a way that shows you know something about them and their industry, and ask yourself how you can **SOLVE** a problem for them.



JIMMY PITTENGER

Viveka Von Rosen

CO-FOUNDER AND CHIEF VISIBILITY
OFFICER, VENGRESO
AUTHOR, "LINKEDIN MARKETING: AN
HOUR A DAY" AND "LINKEDIN: 101 WAYS
TO ROCK YOUR PERSONAL BRAND!"



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WHAT DOES SALES READINESS MEAN TO YOU?

When determining if you are sales-ready, ask yourself if you have a clear understanding of your buyer's pains, challenges, and needs.

If you haven't prepared and done your research, you are not sales-ready and you haven't earned the right to engage with them.

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FURTHERMORE, SALES READINESS MEANS ...

Ask and listen.

When you have a meeting, **ASK** a question and **LISTEN**, ask another question and listen. Allow the buyer to tell you what they think they need. Now, they might be wrong, and you may know they are wrong. But asking those questions and listening to **WHAT THEY HAVE TO SAY** is going to give you whatever information we were not able to gather before the call and the information you need to help **SOLVE** their problem.

Personalize, add value, and engage.

PERSONALIZE your outreach to the individual and that persona's pain points. Demonstrate that you understand their pain, and use **CONTEXT** (using industry research, a timely article, relevant information about your solution, etc.) to address that pain and reinforce your **VALUE PROPOSITION**. Rethink your **CTA** (call to action) with engagement. Don't go into it with just a meeting or sale in mind. Ask for their opinion. Invite them to an event. **EARN** that meeting and build positive sentiment.

Align your brand with your buyer.

Think about your **PERSONAL BRAND**. If you are trying to engage with someone, chances are they will eventually look at your personal LinkedIn profile. Make sure your profile is **BUYER-CENTRIC**. Like you, your profile should offer something of **VALUE** and should be a **RESOURCE** for them. Post articles, ask questions, share expertise. Build your profile to focus on their needs, their challenges, and their desires.



Nick Miller

FOUNDER AND PRESIDENT,
CLARITY ADVANTAGE



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WHAT DOES SALES READINESS MEAN TO YOU?

The classic definition for sales readiness would be equipping salespeople with the knowledge and skills they need to have conversations throughout a buyer's journey – whatever that journey is, depending on the segment and the challenges they're trying to solve.

From a leadership standpoint, sales readiness starts with hiring the right people and giving them the training and coaching they need to ensure they are empowered to have conversations that add value beyond just your products.

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NICK MILLER



FURTHERMORE, SALES READINESS MEANS ...

Learn to listen.

Don't listen only to what was said; truly listen to **UNDERSTAND** the meaning behind **WHAT** was said and **WHY** it was said that way. Then, have the confidence to say, "Tell me a little bit more about that," or ask, "What do you mean by that?" By doing this, you are really **FACILITATING** a **DISCOVERY** process of **LEARNING**. It is not necessarily discovery about the cues that will lead to a product sale but discovery about somebody's values, priorities, and ways of thinking.

Hold management accountable.

The biggest challenge with **SALES READINESS** isn't with the salespeople themselves. It's with senior and middle management. Have you designed your team leader jobs so that they can **COACH**? Do you hold them accountable for **COACHING** and **DEVELOPING** their people? Do you hold them accountable for managing a market from a **STRATEGY** point of view? Almost always, the focus is on the individual salespeople. In reality, **SUCCESS** or **FAILURE** starts with the managers.

What else?

Banks and many other sales forces fail to prepare their salespeople to have **CONVERSATIONS** that **ADD VALUE** beyond the products. They might know your product, but **WHAT ELSE** do they have to offer? What's the **VALUE** beyond your product? What is the **PERSPECTIVE** they can bring? What are the stories and experiences they can **SHARE** to help people think it through?



NICK MILLER

Are you sales-ready? Vertical IQ can help.

Our organized, intuitive platform with hundreds of highly insightful Industry Profiles was designed to help you build stronger relationships and sales through actionable, convenient, and focused Industry Intelligence.

**LEARN MORE ABOUT HOW READINESS
WINS AT VERTICALIQ.COM**



About Vertical IQ

Headquartered in Raleigh, N.C., Vertical IQ is a nationally recognized leader in Industry Intelligence. Whether they're pitching a local brewery or a national biotech, successful sales and marketing teams use Vertical IQ to better understand a prospect's or client's business challenges before, during, and after sales meetings. Covering more than 560 distinct industries, 3,400 local economies, and more than 97 percent of the U.S. economy and Canada, Vertical IQ equips users with the confidence and credibility to make memorable first impressions and sustain enduring relationships.

