# Crank Up Sales Volume
Using Your ERP Solution

Introduction

Sales should never be a guessing game, at least if you're serious about doing it well. Bringing cold hard data to the table when you make a pitch is far more likely to net you a sale than walking in with only a smile as your game plan.

It's no secret that ERP systems offer a treasure trove of data for distribution companies looking to optimize their processes. What many companies don't know or don't realize, though, is that all this data can provide the jump-start needed to increase your sales output too.

If you aren't using data that's mined from your ERP system to inform your sales methodology, it's high time you started. Here are some of the ways to use your ERP system to dig up the right data for increasing your sales.
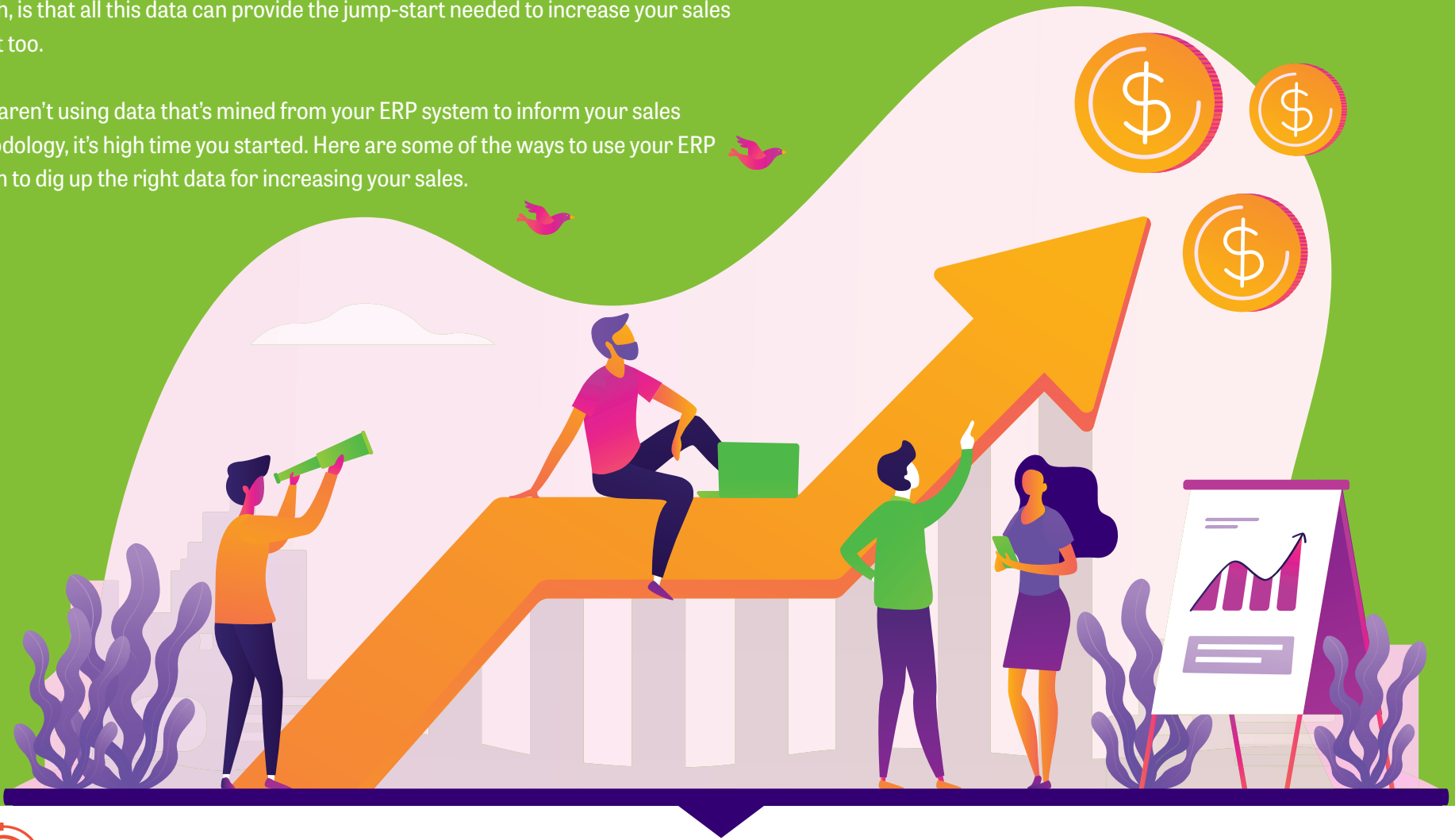
Know Your Customers

If you follow the Pareto Principle, ***20% of your customers are responsible for 80% of your sales.*** With this in mind, it should come as no surprise that customer retention is huge. Keeping those customers happy will lead to more sales opportunities than digging up new ones will, but how can you use your ERP system to maintain that relationship?

1. Get a quick overview of your customers
Your ERP system gives you all kinds of customer data. Take that information and start to look for trends. What are your customers buying, and when? What's the typical order size? Use this data to make educated guesses about when customers place their orders and what products and quantities they need, then set yourself reminders to reach out to them based on these patterns.

2. Get specific details on each account
Once you've got the high-level overview down, it's time to dig deeper. Use your ERP system to track the touch points and interactions you have with your customers to help you identify the finer details for each account. Your ERP solution is a Rolodex on steroids — if you can't use it to track all of your customer interactions, you want to ***start looking at another solution.*** Keeping track of conversations, interactions, and customer busy seasons helps you better manage each account. In turn, this will grow trust and deepen relationships, enabling a better partnership between you and your customers.

Know Your Product

You can't increase your sales output if you're not a champion of your own product or service. Luckily, you don't have to store all this knowledge in your head. It's right there for the taking in your ERP solution. Here are a few ways to understand your product better by using the data within your system.

Assess Profitability

To boost your sales, you have to know which items are your top performers. And if you already know what your best sellers are, your ERP solution can tell you the *why* behind it. Costs, sale prices, sales history, quantities sold — it's all available at the touch of a button, and it will help you develop a deeper understanding of your own company's profit margin.

Take Stock

If you promise a customer a shipment by a certain date only to find out that what they ordered is on backorder, you risk straining that relationship. Or worse still, they may place their order through someone else. *Use your ERP system to keep a keen eye on your inventory levels* and give customers accurate information about available quantities.

Product knowledge is an absolute must for sales personnel. Understanding your products' features helps you present their value accurately and persuasively, and using an ERP solution to bolster this knowledge is the perfect way to build product knowledge. It's no secret that customers relate better to enthusiastic sales staff who know their products.

Know Your Channels

Without knowing where most of your sales are coming from, it's tough to focus on growing the right channel. Accurately evaluating sales channel performance is only possible through the use of an ERP system that *consolidates all channels into one central location.* Centralizing all of your channels offers a new level of insight that just isn't available with a separate conglomeration of various applications. Here's a few channels you may want to consider:

Ecommerce: If you're selling online (and who isn't these days?), *you need to be familiar with the ins and outs of your various ecommerce channels.* Promoting your business online has huge benefits, including brand recognition, better company visibility, extended reach toward acquiring new customers, and of course, a 24/7 one-stop shop for your customers to buy your products.

Direct: Ah yes, the best kind of sale. The highest profit margin for your company with the most control over the entire sales cycle. You should have the best understanding of this channel innately, since it's happening right out of your home office. When customers call you to place an order for the product your company sells, that's a direct sale.

Resellers: This is anybody who takes the product you sell and sells it for you. If your resellers are already well-known within a given market, they can save you the time of establishing a brand presence. Because of their influence, your product will automatically seem more credible.

If you can build a strong reseller channel, it's a highly profitable effort. Tracking the sales of goods through resellers with your ERP system will help you see how this channel is performing, and it will help you determine if there are action steps you can take to push the growth of this channel even further.

Omnichannel: This fancy little buzzword is a system that takes all the benefits of using multiple sales channels and funnels them into a single sales order fulfillment process. *Omnichannel sales allow you to manage all your channels at once*, from one central hub, so you don't have to deal with each one individually.

With an ERP solution that offers analytics on all of your channels, you can create live comparisons of channel performance. If you're not seeing a return on one channel, you might decide to invest more time developing it, or maybe re-allocate resources to focus on the channels that produce better numbers. When your ERP system seamlessly connects to all of your channels, making informed decisions on where to spend your efforts to increase your sales is a much simpler process.

Know Your Company

Your company exists to meet a need, but it's up to you to align with this need. Most companies have some type of mission statement that's readily available, but often struggle when it comes to casting this vision down to employees.

In these situations, an ERP solution probably isn't top-of-mind, but taking in a holistic picture of your company can provide a solid footing for reaching your own goals and metrics. A great ERP solution makes this company overview more data-driven. You'll be able to see the why behind the work, leading to greater personal commitment and productivity. Here's how your ERP solution can help you get to know your company better:

Access meaningful reports
ERP software tracks the information that provides insight on current order management, shipping, purchasing, and inventory management. Use this information to monitor trends in your company's operations. Pay special attention to the metrics that help you meet and exceed customer demands.

Check the forecast
Understanding supply and demand is a sales fundamental, and *the best way to stay on top of both is through accurate forecasting.* While you might not be responsible for purchasing inventory, you are responsible for selling it. Contact customers to get an estimate of expected demand, and use your ERP system to sync this demand with the available supply. Are your customers going to increase or decrease the amount they buy from you due to seasonality? Better let Purchasing know so your company is prepared! Some ERP solutions even provide alerts if stock levels are too low, so you can make accurate projections moving forward.

Know Your Company (Continued)

Bring your toolbox

You absolutely have to master the tools you have available if you want to beat your competitors. Every company will offer a different toolset, and unfortunately, it's often up to you to make the most of the resources available. For a successful career in sales, look for an ERP system that offers the following:

1. A mobile application: A mobile app allows you to instantly put in an order while talking to a customer instead of waiting for the next day when you are back at the office.

2. CRM functionality: When CRM and ERP systems fully integrate with each other, your company has a single view of all customer interactions. As we mentioned previously, staying on top of these is a necessity for building strong relationships with your customers.

3. Customer case management: Not to be confused with CRM, *case management concerns tracking, improving, and executing the back-of-house processes.* Handling returns, replacements, and keeping customers happy with their products is made easier with case management.

You certainly want your ERP software to do more than these three things company-wide, but as far as sales performance is concerned, these are must-have tools.

Know How To Be Efficient

ERP solutions are ultimately designed for efficiency, so it should come as no surprise that this efficiency can be tapped into to maximize sales performance. There are several ways to leverage efficiency when working to use your ERP system to increase your sales output.

Efficient use of multiple sales channels

We already mentioned sales channels, but it's one thing to simply have multiple channels, and another thing entirely to use them efficiently. An ERP system can (and should!) integrate multiple sales channels and consolidate information from the entire sales process.

Juggling disparate applications to track each channel takes too much time and magnifies the likelihood of errors. There's also the issue of data syncing between different applications — if you sell enough inventory on one channel to the point that it wipes out your available stock, how long does it take for your other channels to "see" the updated inventory levels? Integrating all channels into a central hub keeps data accurate and up-to-the-minute.

Increasing sales is all about keeping your customers happy. Spreading your channels over multiple applications ultimately makes this harder to do. Make sure your ERP solution has the capability to execute an omnichannel sales strategy. It'll make boosting your sales numbers that much easier.

Know How To Be Efficient (Continued)

Efficiency through integrations

Available integrations are a crucial element to consider when you're seeking to increase sales performance. Opting for an ERP solution that doesn't provide you with integration options to enhance your ERP software's performance will inhibit your company's potential for growth.

If your ERP system doesn't **offer a healthy list of useful integrations**, that's a big sign that it might be time to re-evaluate your ERP setup. Because integrations can elevate the overall performance of your ERP solution so well, they are an important facet of ERP software's inherent advantage. If you're not at the very least exploring the integration options available to you, you could be missing out on a major sales performance boost.

Efficiency through automation

When you're not holding the reins on every single order your customers place, you can spend more of your time prospecting and selling. **Automation eliminates redundant, repeatable tasks,** clearing your schedule so you can focus on the bigger picture.

Accelerating your order processing workflow via automation will have an outsized effect on your business' overall productivity, but that's only one of the benefits that automated order processing brings. Automation also increases your accuracy in data entry, decreases the risk that an important step in the process will be missed, and frees up your time, letting you attend to more pressing matters.

When customer satisfaction and beating the competition are on the line, you need to be putting your best foot forward when it comes to processing orders quickly, efficiently, and accurately. Automation in your ERP solution is the key to keeping your sales team on the cutting edge and ensuring success.

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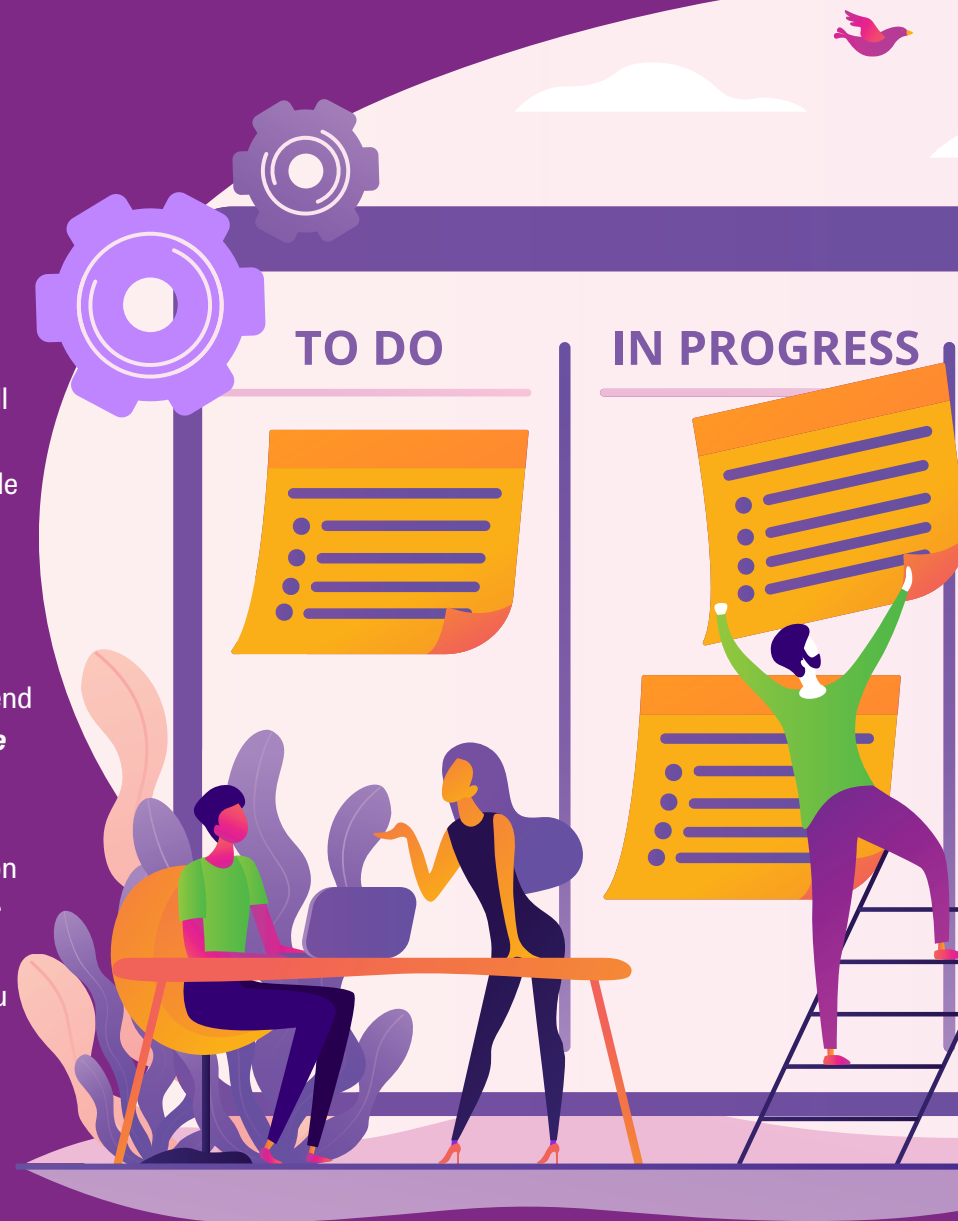
It All Comes Down to Your ERP System

Using an ERP system for increased sales performance requires keeping a close eye on your data, but this is time well spent that will pay off in the long run. The secret is using your ERP solution to better understand your customers, your products, and your company, and then using these insights to continually improve your sales methodology.

There's much to be gained from increasing the productivity of your sales, whether it's growing the profitability of your company or unlocking more time to focus on doing what you love. To see what else you can accomplish with the right ERP solution for your company, *contact us to start the conversation.* We're out to make your operations radically better.

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