

The Difference Between Sales and Business Development

By Jim Ries

Sales and business development are just two different ways to refer to the same activity – getting your company's product or service into the customer's hands. Right?

Wrong! Both positions exist to help grow your business, but they contribute in very different ways.

- Sales = ABC (Always Be Closing)
- Business Development = ABO (Always Be Opening)

Sales is about selling the product or service to the final customer at an agreed price by using specific tactics and techniques. Business development is a process of identifying new business opportunities, distribution channels and markets, and cultivating partnerships.

Sales has a transactional nature with



a focus on selling a product or service to the customer. The sales process is a short term approach, based on the execution of a plan for distribution of goods and services. Business development has a

relational nature, with a focus on selling solutions to strategic partners. The business development process is a long term approach, based on devising a plan for business expansion.

In sales, the seller comes first, and the focus is on what the seller is selling. In business development, the customer comes first, and the focus is on understanding the customer's needs.

Sales and business development should be considered as complementary halves of a whole, and the degree of separation between sales and business development will vary. Smaller companies may have sales reps who are responsible for both prospecting and closing. As companies grow, the roles should be further defined, with two separate teams focusing on what they do best.

Everything sold or bought is based on a relationship, and when you have a good business development pipeline, you can see your sales grow as prospects develop into clients who turn into loyal referral creating customers. It's easy to get sales and business development mixed up, but they are two separate positions with unique roles and responsibilities. By making the distinction today, you can position your company for more success in the future.

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With over 30 years of management experience, **Jim Ries** is responsible for managing the performance, administrative functions, and business

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