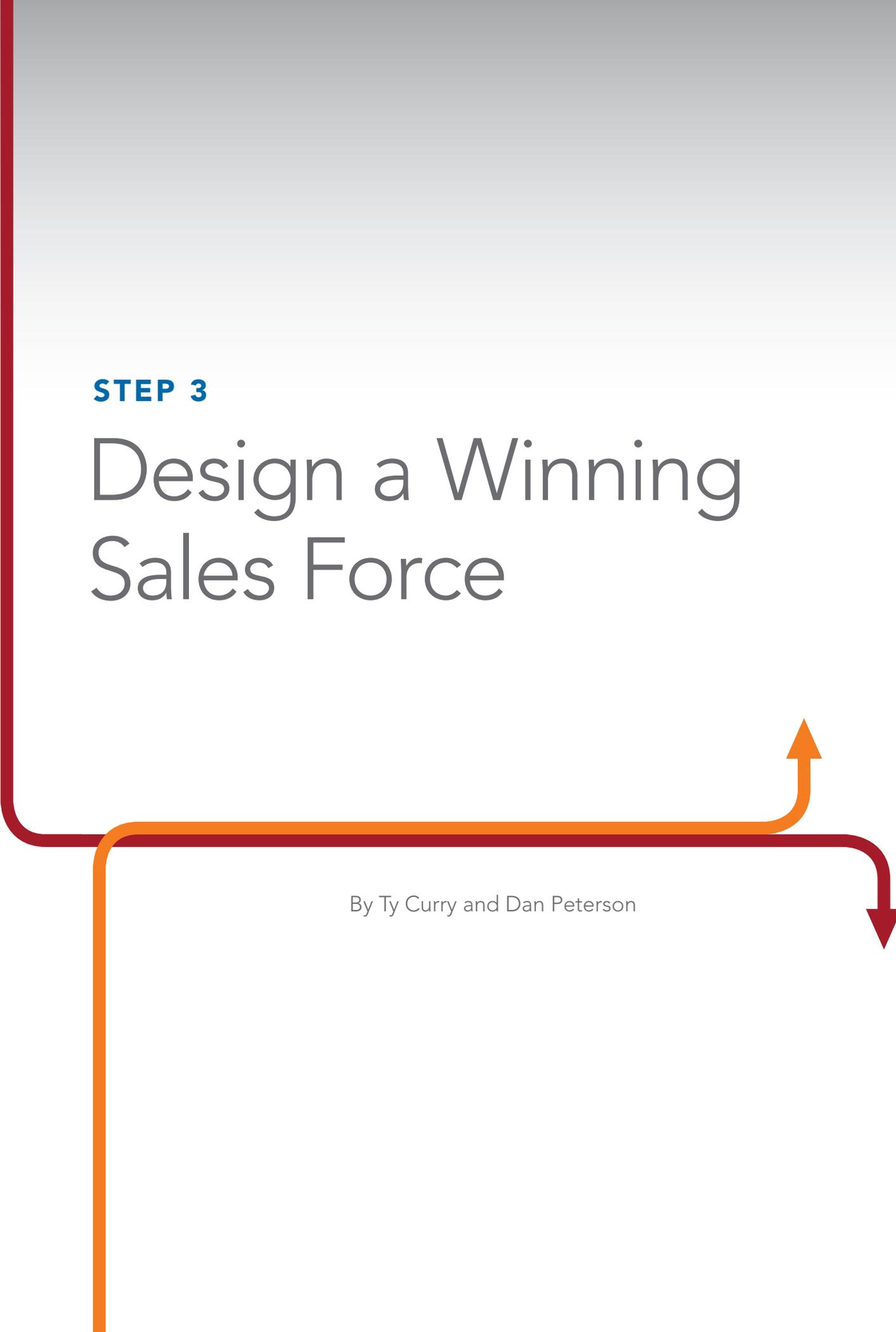# Profitable Sales Growth
in Six Steps

By Selling Power Editors and ZS Associates Experts

SellingPower ZS

Design a Winning Sales Force

By Ty Curry and Dan Peterson

Improving the design of the sales force often starts with one simple question:

what do our salespeople do all day?

That's because good sales force design involves promoting the selling behaviors that will drive the right results. Ty Curry, Regional Managing Principal at ZS Associates, says that, more specifically, good sales force design is all about "structuring your sales force in such a way that you're cost-effectively driving the right selling behaviors among the right salespeople in front of the right customers."

Here's an example offered by one of Curry's colleagues, Dan Peterson, Managing Principal of Operations at ZS Associates. Recently, Peterson helped a B2B services company redesign its sales force. One of the first things he discovered was that the field salespeople were doing too much of their own prospecting and lead qualification. Experts at ZS Associates often refer to this as "role pollution."

"Sometimes the issue is that sales reps are spending a lot of time on activities that someone else should be doing," Peterson says, "for example, troubleshooting problems with existing customers, collecting overdue payments, initial lead generation or qualification, or any number of other things that could take away valuable selling time."

After Peterson helped the B2B services company design and create an inside sales team to help with generating or qualifying new leads, the field sales force gained about 30 percent more selling time. "That enabled the organization to allocate resources to penetrate new industry verticals," he says.

This kind of [organic sales growth](#) is exactly what a good sales force design aims to facilitate. Of course, achieving good sales force design is easier said than done, but Curry and Peterson stress that almost all sales leaders can make immediate improvements. As with Peterson's client, scrutinizing how salespeople spend their time is a good fundamental step.

In addition, they say answering the following three questions can help sales leaders enhance the existing design of their sales force without starting from scratch.

1) What selling opportunities are sales reps pursuing?

"Salespeople should be pursuing the most attractive prospects and spending time with customers who have high revenue potential," Peterson says. "Sometimes, the sales force is either undersized to handle certain segments, or salespeople are spending time on the wrong customer segments."

Sales leaders are often surprised to learn that the sales force is spending disproportionate amounts of time on low-opportunity customers or segments. They'll hear anecdotally about single successes or unhappy customers, but they won't realize that they're investing a lot of effort in pursuing a market segment or group of

Tips for Successful Sales Force Design

It's one thing to know you need a properly designed sales force, but what about actually designing it? Here are three vital tips from ZS on designing the sales force to maximize growth:

- Examine how you [assess account potential](#) and how reps are pursuing that potential. Are you pursuing the accounts with the greatest potential or chasing low-value targets that might be easier to win?

- Companies need to regularly evaluate [the design of their sales territories](#) and deployment of their salespeople, relative to market opportunity and strategic goals. Data, analytics, and software can provide valuable insight.

- Not every sales force needs a redesign to prioritize company sales goals. While structure ultimately drives selling behavior that aligns with company goals, it helps to communicate priorities and reinforce those priorities with coaching, training, and incentives.

accounts that represents little opportunity for revenue, according to Peterson. They need to see the big picture.

2) Does the structure of our sales team support company goals?

To create an efficient and effective sales structure, sales leaders should examine which customer segments sales reps are targeting and how sales reps are prioritizing which products to sell.

"Left to their own devices, sales professionals often stick to whatever selling routine they're comfortable with or that has worked for them in the past," says Curry. "The best way to make sure you're selling your chosen products to your chosen segments and verticals is to design a structure that prioritizes those goals."

3) How well is our sales force covering the market opportunity?

In order for sales reps to be effective, good territories and territory plans must align with strategic goals. "Salespeople are often given a territory that represents far more work than they can effectively handle," Curry says. "That can lead to poor penetration and untapped sales opportunities."

Another problem is territories that lack enough customers and prospects. "In this scenario, salespeople end up chasing unprofitable opportunities, and the sales organization ends up wasting resources," Curry says.

In the end, a well-designed sales force will enhance customer and prospect coverage, drive selling efforts to priority customers, segments, and product lines, and increase organic growth for your sales organization. ▪

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