



ENTER THE NEW ERA OF REVENUE OPERATIONS & INTELLIGENCE

Identify and deliver actionable sales
insights at the customer level

WHITEPAPER



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Every B2B sales team – from VP to operations manager to field rep – is under tremendous pressure to win new business, fend off competitors, and grow existing customer revenue. New, and sometimes competing, corporate objectives and large books of business make it difficult to prioritize efforts or keep sales teams focused on the most impactful opportunities.

According to *The Forrester Wave™: Revenue Operations and Intelligence, Q1 2022*, “B2B organizations need insights that identify risks, patterns, trends, and correlations as well as the impact of these on business outcomes... Reps need guidance on what deals to prioritize and the next best actions to take.”

The report goes on to conclude that sales and revenue operations teams “need evidence that their elements of the go-to-market strategy are performing and can identify actions for optimization when they are not.”

The imperative is clear. Sales managers and sales operations teams must lean on data science-driven solutions to ensure sales force effectiveness. Revenue operations and intelligence software, which has grown highly sophisticated to match the scale and complexity of B2B sales, removes the mystery and friction inherent in the status quo. These solutions do so by taking the burden of manual data analysis off the sales operations team’s plate, and delivering to sales reps direct, accurate revenue-driving actions to take, including:

- **What** products should I be pitching to my current customer base? Which customers are most likely to buy which products?
- **Where** is customer churn taking place and which customers will continue to defect to a competitor if I don’t act now?
- **Which** products should I pitch to win back lost business?
- **Which** opportunities are most worthy of my time to pursue?
- **Which** customers are in jeopardy of not fulfilling volume commitments or other types of contract compliance?
- **Where** are we high or low on inventory, and where should a product substitution or **product alternative** campaign be run?
- **How** can we better align our sales efforts with marketing campaigns?

These cases and many others fit broadly under the scope of solutions known as revenue operations and intelligence.

In this whitepaper, we will focus on how this solution is used to translate the enormous amount of customer, product and transaction data that exists inside B2B companies into **actionable sales insights that sales teams want to pursue**.

IN THIS WHITEPAPER:

- The Importance of Revenue Operations in B2B
- How Revenue Intelligence Solutions Work
- How Revenue Intelligence Insights are Delivered
- Examples of Sales Acceleration in B2B
- Long-Term Benefits of Revenue Operations & Intelligence

WHY IS REVENUE OPERATIONS IMPORTANT IN B2B?

B2B companies thrive on forging deep relationships with customers and nurturing those over time. The cost and risk associated with chasing prospects, while necessary, will rarely be as reliable or important to the bottom line as growing and retaining current customer business.

According to [Forbes](#), “It can cost five times more to attract a new customer than it does to retain an existing one.” Meanwhile, an increase in customer retention rates by 5% grows profits by 25-95%, per [Bain & Company](#) research. Selling more to the customers you already have is thus less expensive, more effective and strategically important. So why do B2B companies struggle to consistently take advantage of these opportunities?

The answer lies in the growing complexity of the customer landscape. A field sales rep may have 50 or more accounts in his or her territory, if not more, and up to tens of thousands of products to sell to those customers. Further, sales reps are often tasked with executing a multitude of other corporate initiatives, making prioritization a constant challenge.

Modern sales teams need the kind of intelligent guidance only a predictive, science-driven solution can provide. Sales operations managers and sales VPs are increasingly turning to advanced applications that translate data into actionable insights for sales reps that can be successfully operationalized.

HOW DO REVENUE INTELLIGENCE SOLUTIONS WORK?

The dynamics explored above lead to mountains of manual work, which is ultimately an ineffective approach to enabling B2B sales teams. There’s simply no way to uncover all new relevant opportunities, continually refresh those insights, and systematically deliver them to salespeople using traditional business intelligence tools or spreadsheets. Consider the typical, large B2B company with thousands of products and customers: Even with an army of analysts, generating guidance for each unique opportunity is an insurmountable task. Giving sales teams timely, relevant sales guidance is only possible through a platform that can uncover insights using data science and operationalize them in a closed-loop manner.

So how does revenue intelligence work to identify and operationalize accurate, timely insights? Here are some specific examples of action types.

Increase Wallet-Share with Growth Insights

Advanced data science can identify a company’s ideal customers based on customer spend patterns, total spend and the breadth of products purchased to create purchase pattern profiles that are applicable to the rest of the customer base. It then matches each customer to the closest purchase pattern profile to generate insights that guide reps directly to growth actions. In other words, what else a customer should be buying.

Retaining Customer Share with Recovery Insights

For every customer, sales reps need to be proactively alerted when purchase volume begins to drop. To do this effectively, advanced data science takes a comprehensive look at transaction history to compare what each customer is currently buying versus what that customer was buying during an earlier benchmark period. Contrasted with traditional business intelligence reporting, it eliminates noise by accounting for buy-cycle patterns, seasonality, one-time purchases, or volatile buying behavior, to exclude false positives. With immediate insights into when purchase volume is declining at the product subcategory level, sales reps can take action to retain the business before the customer defects.

Finding Best Fit Products for Prospecting/Whitespace Insights

Give sales reps direct answers to the question: Which products should I pitch a new account? Here, data science shines by mapping the new customer profile to a discrete ideal customer purchase profile that reveals what the new customer is most likely to buy. A complex prediction is simplified by data science and the sales reps see precisely which products are most likely to result in a win for net-new accounts.

Win-Back Lost Business with Tailored Product Insights

When sales are down, it's critical to surface intuitive guidance to sales reps as to where win-back opportunities exist in their patches without asking them to analyze in-depth spreadsheets. Revenue intelligence solutions run a quick peak-year comparison analysis by product category and scope the results down to a manageable focus for sales teams.

Targeted Selling of Excess Inventory with Inventory Insights

At times, sales teams are put to task of helping move excess inventory. Bulky spreadsheets don't help them decipher who is most likely to purchase that inventory nor do they help them prioritize this sales initiative versus other sales, pricing, marketing or corporate objectives vying for their time. With revenue operations and intelligence software, it's straightforward to identify the customers with the highest propensity to purchase the inventory while enabling the sales ops or product category manager to prioritize the inventory insights against the other sales initiatives in play by revenue impact, promotions, strategic focus area or other customizable, user-defined criteria.

Flag Contracts Not Meeting Volume Commitments with Contract Compliance Insights

Many customer agreements include stated volume commitments that must be met for customers to retain their discount. Help sales reps stay on top of these commitments with contract compliance insights, which look at agreement and shipment data and considers the length of agreement and run rate, to flag agreements with volume commitments that are not on track to be satisfied.

Target Selling of Preferred Brands of Substitutes with Product Substitution Insights

Private label products can deliver higher margins at lower prices for customers while building brand loyalty, yet helping sales teams identify opportunities to sell private label when customers are seeking comparative products presents yet another spreadsheet scale issue. Revenue intelligence allows back-office teams to run a one-to-one product mapping of comparative branded products to private label SKUs and run a data science-driven query to identify the customers currently purchasing the branded products. Sales reps can focus on the highest-value product substitute insights, see visual analytics of spend history supporting the insights, and quickly take action on the most impactful opportunities to convert sales to a private label brand, or any other preferred brand.

HOW DO REVENUE INTELLIGENCE INSIGHTS GET DELIVERED?

There are scores of business intelligence tools that can be set up to derive insights into customer buying patterns and performance indicators. Coming up with insights is only half the battle, however. Companies need to operationalize them in a systematic way. Revenue operations software establishes a closed-loop feedback mechanism that continuously improves the revenue intelligence model over time. What separates a truly advanced revenue operations and intelligence solution is its ability to continually refresh insights and successfully operationalize them in a business.

The solution automatically consumes the results of the previous opportunities it has generated to inform the model for the future. Which opportunities were acted upon? What was the success rate? How should recent customer purchases influence future insights? As intel comes in from reps in the field (“This restaurant went out of business, that’s why they haven’t purchased from us this month”), the model takes it in and learns from that feedback.

WHAT DO EXAMPLES OF SALES ACCELERATION LOOK LIKE?

We’ve discussed how revenue operations and intelligence solutions can provide sales teams with the targeted and actionable customer insights they need to effectively grow revenue, delivered faster than what was previously possible. Now, we’ll walk through some customer case studies that demonstrate how actual B2B companies are gaining an edge.

METRO Turkey

METRO Turkey, a foodservice delivery and wholesale distribution company, operates with massive product lists and many customers; this complexity rendered the detection of all opportunities to grow wallet share and prevent customer churn while efficiently executing marketing campaigns impossible. With **predictive sales analytics** powered by **Zilliant Sales IQ™** and revenue operations by **Zilliant Campaign Manager™**, the company achieved a revenue lift of 38 million Turkish Lira in six months despite the pandemic wreaking havoc in the foodservice distribution industry.

Industrial Distributor

For many industrial distributors, manual processes create substantial complexity for their sales teams due to the number of SKUs and customers served. This inefficiency makes the task of retaining and growing business while moving excess inventory and following up on unconverted quotes impossible.

The sales leaders at one industrial distributor were grappling with these challenges and sought to increase the sales team’s efficiency and effectiveness. They embraced Sales IQ™ and Campaign Manager™ to replace cumbersome, data-intensive manual processes with timely, specific, and prioritized actions to empower sales reps and increase revenue.

Pro a Pro

The French food service distributor Pro a Pro serves more than 40,000 customers and operates 22 warehouses. Its business had recently expanded to serve a wider range of customers, big and small, increasing the mix of products on offer considerably. It became a challenge for the sales team to efficiently reach this new clientele, while still providing excellent service to traditional customers. Pro a Pro chose Zilliant Sales IQ™ to uncover cross-sell and recovery opportunities that are delivered to the sales team automatically.

METRO France

METRO France is one of the largest entities under the METRO AG food service umbrella, with 99 traditional stores and rapidly growing delivery and eCommerce businesses. The sales role has become exceedingly complicated as the business grows more dynamic and omnichannel.

It became apparent that METRO France needed to employ a more personalized approach with customers while empowering salespeople to respond on the spot to customers who have specific needs. From large restaurants to small bakeries, product opportunities and channels vary greatly. Sales IQ™ was selected to empower salespeople to recommend the best item to the right customer.

Spandex

Spandex, Europe's leading B2B provider of signs, displays, digital prints and specialty graphics, operates in 20 countries and serves more than 40,000 customers. The company wanted to offer its sales reps top-class insights in order to make their job easier, and perform this comprehensively across every country it does business in.

As a result of deploying Sales IQ™, Spandex has been able to achieve widespread adoption of new customer insights and translate those into better solutions for customers while growing revenue.

WHAT ARE THE LONG-TERM BENEFITS OF A REVENUE INTELLIGENCE PLATFORM?

B2B companies that adopt a revenue intelligence and revenue operations platform realize a number of benefits quickly. There are also long-term business benefits that follow an investment in revenue intelligence solutions.

These include:

- **A competitive edge in the digital economy:** B2B companies have made, and must continue to make, significant advances in their eCommerce strategy. Most can now recommend products and generally personalize the digital shopping experience for customers. The next generation of B2B leaders need eCommerce to be more than a channel, or a convenient means of selling products online. It must be a selling tool itself. The combination of Zilliant Sales IQ™ and Campaign Manager™ power that intelligent eCommerce vision. Deep insights culled from Sales IQ™ are turned into actionable guidance in Campaign Manager™ that can be integrated into any digital commerce system. The same actions that are fed directly to your sales team's CRM and your email marketing program will be presented to eCommerce customers. You can easily measure conversions on the personalized recommendations and create a consistent experience across customer touchpoints. Campaigns driven from a single, connected source create a cohesive and united sales front across all channels. This is a true competitive differentiator in the hyper-digitized economy.
- **Increased employee productivity:** In an era that's seen a wealth of institutional knowledge age out of B2B sales teams, it's a constant challenge for managers to onboard new sales reps. **By 2025, millennials will make up three quarters of the global workforce**, and those that enter B2B sales are finding themselves facing a heavy learning curve. A proliferation of products, channels, changing market dynamics and competitive complexity call for a programmatic, data-driven onboarding process. Revenue operations and intelligence solutions put all relevant insights, derived from customer and transaction history, at the fingertips of new reps and help managers deliver the right coaching backed by trusted data. Additionally, for sales operations and marketing teams, the alleviation of spreadsheet-based processes opens up more time for strategic work and eliminates the false positives that waste everybody's time.
- **Increased share of wallet:** Companies report a steady increase in same-customer sales of 5% to 15% and the AI-based sales models continually improve as they learn over time with more data input. A consistent feed of new actionable opportunities nurtures your accounts and keeps competitors out.
- **More organizational trust:** As relevant opportunities are delivered to sales reps at the right time, bigger commission checks often follow. At Zilliant, we see more than 90% of the insights generated Sales IQ™ accepted by our customers' sales teams. The speed and accuracy of the insights delivered by these solutions allow inter-departmental teams to create a more collaborative working environment over the long haul.

Both quick wins and long-term goals can be accomplished with a data science-based revenue operations and intelligence approach because it removes day-to-day manual impediments, and the system gets sharper over time.

CONCLUSION

The imperative for the contemporary B2B sales leader is clear – equipping sales teams with revenue operations and intelligence software is essential to succeed in an increasingly complex, competitive and digital landscape. The most informed and guided sales team will win. A solution that operationalizes insights in a systematic closed-loop process, learning and consistently generating better guidance, delivered directly to sellers for every one of their customers is the new differentiator in B2B selling.

To take advantage of a data science-driven approach to sales, **contact a Zilliant expert today.**