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# How To Set Sales Incentives That Drive Real Business Growth

By **Expert Panel**®, Forbes Councils Member.

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When companies push into new markets or expand their product lines, growth targets can rise quickly. But if sales incentives are still built around outdated priorities, teams may chase deals that look good on paper yet don't actually move the business forward.

True alignment starts with clarity about what the business is trying to achieve and how sales performance will be measured against those goals. Below, members of [Forbes Business Council](#) share practical ways leaders can better align sales strategy and incentives with broader business objectives, particularly in companies growing across multiple markets or products.

## 1. Reward Deals That Advance Strategy

We start with gratitude for what's aligned and working, then apply radical candor where it's not. Sales deserves clarity, not mixed signals. We align incentives to outcomes the business will still be proud of six months later because it's all about cultivating the right customers, the right markets and the right products. If a deal advances the strategy, it's rewarded. If it doesn't, we say so plainly and pay accordingly. - [Lindsay O'Neill, Wellness Eternal](#)

## 2. Use A Balanced Incentive Scorecard

Alignment improves when incentives go beyond revenue alone. Tying compensation to top-line growth only ignores profitability, retention and deal quality. A simple, balanced scorecard that includes margin and customer outcomes keeps priorities clear for sales teams and reduces the risk of short-term wins driving long-term problems for the business. - [Avy Punwasee, Revenue Management Labs](#)

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## 3. Tie Incentives To Priority Outcomes

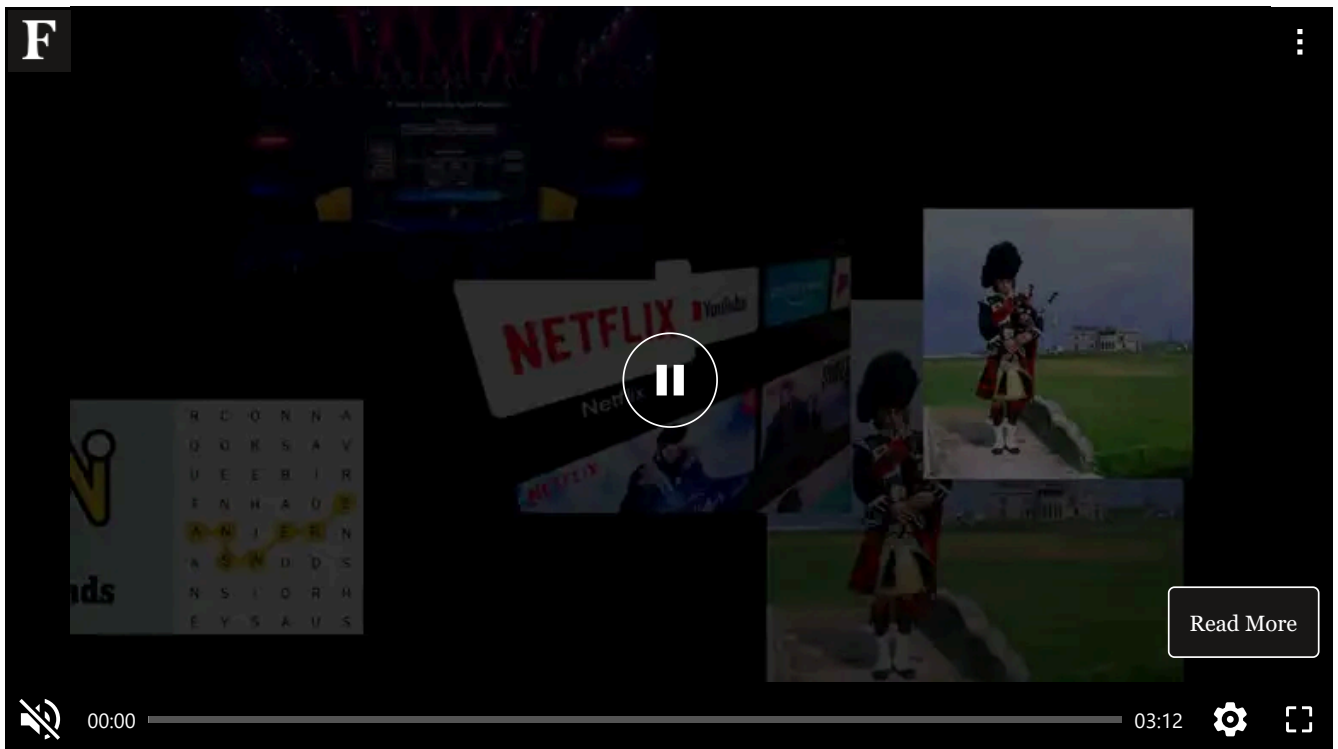
The most effective way is to tie sales incentives directly to outcomes that reflect company priorities, not just revenue. At Health Helper, we align compensation with customer success, product adoption and long-term value across markets. This keeps sales focused on sustainable growth while supporting the broader business strategy. - [Eugene Zabolotsky, Health Helper](#)

## 4. Pay For Impact, Not Activity

Strategy fails when incentives reward the wrong behavior. I've seen global teams chase local wins that hurt the enterprise. Align compensation to shared outcomes. If you focus on customer value, margin, multisolution growth and more, behavior snaps into line fast. - [Andy Springer, RAIN Group](#)

## 5. Incentivize Search-Visibility Behaviors

Alignment starts with search visibility. Incentivize sales teams to focus not only on closed deals but also on how well they represent the brand online. This includes profiles, content, reviews and authority. When sales team members are trained to support the company's search narrative across markets and products, every conversation reinforces trust, consistency and growth at scale. - [Tonia Ryan, Techvoya](#)



## 6. Reinforce Goals With Ongoing Communication

Make sure you are communicating company goals clearly and constantly. Personally audit the incentives and adjust them accordingly. The sales team should be rewarded for the same goals the company cares about, not just for selling the most. Pick a few, like growing a new market or keeping customers longer, and tie bonuses and targets to those. Align quarterly. - [Raquel Gomes, Staffi](#)

## 7. Make Strategy A Payout Gate

We align sales by making strategy a gate, not a slogan. Every deal must declare which business objective it advances, the priority market, the product focus and the margin. If it doesn't move the company forward, it doesn't earn a full payout. Alignment happens when incentives remove wrong choices. - [Beth Worthy, GMR Transcription Services, Inc.](#)

## 8. Set Goals At Multiple Levels

Depending on the structure of the organization, the incentive system should be based on goals at multiple levels, from individual and team to the larger company. KPIs should be measurable and tailored to each level, and employees should participate in their determination. As a result, each employee cares not only about their own effectiveness but also about the good of their team and the overall interests of the company. - [Dorota Sedek, Alterland SA](#)

## 9. Build A Commission Plan Around Strategic Targets

Money talks loudest. Provide your salespeople with a lucrative commission plan where pay is tied to meeting specific strategic objectives. This strategy not only helps the sales team focus on what counts but also sends a message about what is most important now to the whole company. Once the culture adopts the values, the actual effectiveness and efficiency of other departments will fall in line. It's a win-win! - [Jerry Cahn, Age Brilliantly](#)

## 10. Incentivize Outcomes Over Bookings

Incentivize outcomes instead of bookings, as your sales team follows incentives with precision. When pay reflects the company's actual growth priorities, whether that's expansion, retention or multi-product adoption, alignment starts becoming standard behavior. - [Nitin Gupta, QRCodeChimp](#)

## 11. Use Multidimensional KPIs Across Markets

Tie sales incentives directly to multidimensional KPIs that reflect both revenue and strategic goals. For example, incentivize not only sales volume but also cross-market penetration, customer retention and product mix. Align these metrics with long-term business goals, such as market share or customer lifetime value, to ensure sales efforts reinforce the overall growth strategy. - [Egor Karpovich, Travel Code Inc.](#)

## 12. Tie Compensation To Long-Term Value

You get what you pay for, especially in sales. If incentives reward short-term wins, that's exactly what you'll get. Instead, align compensation to long-term value like customer lifetime value, and review it often. Incentives drive behavior, and if left unchecked, they can quietly work against your broader goals. - [Natalie Ruiz, AnswerConnect](#)

## 13. Create Shared Ownership In The Outcome

The most effective way to align a team is to give them a real stake in the outcome. We are 100% employee-owned. That means every person in the business, including the sales team, has a personal interest in our future. When your team shares in the wider success of the business, they focus on sustainable growth rather than quick wins. This ensures we all pull in the same direction by design. - [Ben Foster, The SEO Works](#)

## 14. Connect Incentives To Individual Goals And Values

Taking the time to understand the goals and personal interests of individuals on your sales team can be a meaningful and fruitful endeavor for both the organization and the individual. Tailoring incentives or strategies to individual goals and relating them to personal values reframes the scenario, turning regular sales goals into a mission, which is infinitely more powerful. - [Sara Abbas, Evolver, Inc.](#)

## 15. Bring Sales Leaders Into Strategy Planning

Give sales leaders a role in strategic planning during decision-making processes, not after decisions are made. When sales understands why the business is prioritizing certain markets or products, they design incentive structures that reflect real goals, not just revenue targets. Alignment happens when sales helps set the strategy. Incentives follow naturally because they're built on shared priorities. - [Sabeer Nelliparamban, Tyler Petroleum Inc.](#)

## 16. Shift Commissions From Quotas To Lifetime Value

Move from quota-only incentives to lifetime-value incentives. In a multimarket setup, the sales strategy must reward retention and expansion, not just the initial “land.” By aligning commissions with the long-term health of the account, we ensure that the sales team isn't just chasing growth but also seeking the right kind of sustainable, high-quality growth. - [Maneesh Sharma, TestMu AI \(Formerly LambdaTest\)](#)

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