

The State of Sales Development



Big Data



Different industries require different sales development strategies to be successful. Take Big Data, for example. While many industries have a defined and finite TAM, Big Data's is constantly evolving and very product specific.

In this datasheet, we're going to dive into the differences between Big Data sales development and sales dev in other industries and how it affects the strategies and outcomes of your sales development team.

We'll analyze two types of information for this datasheet, numbers from our current & former Big Data clients, and anecdotal evidence provided by our most experienced Big Data sales development managers and SDRs. We'll also compare this Big Data dataset to the average numbers we see across the rest of our client base so that we have a baseline from which to measure Big Data's statistical differences.

Universe



One of the first challenges you'll face when developing your ICP is the lack of rigidity in ideal titles across different orgs. This is mostly due to the fact that Big Data technology departments are one of the youngest units in a given business, meaning there's minimal standardized job title nomenclature across the industry. Add that to the fact that Big Data spans multiple industries each with their own unique use cases, and you've got yourself a more complicated ICP than most. The key to developing a Big Data ICP boils down to your ability to deduce and understand the responsibilities that you're looking for, and figuring out who at each account handles them.

To make matters even more challenging, referrals are more difficult to come by than most of our other clients' industries. If you're trying to be referred up the ladder to the Director or VP you want to speak with you'll most likely speak with someone who is unwilling to refer you up because they're worried about security, either of their data or their job. There's also the possibility that you're pitching them something that will create a more efficient operation (otherwise what are you even selling?), potentially putting their role in jeopardy if they ever need to downsize their department. And even if none of those roadblocks stop you and the prospect agrees to refer you, you still have to navigate a connection where the value props important to the lower-level prospect (more efficient work of some kind) don't line up with those of the higher-level prospect (ROI, for example).

"If you're not at the right person, then you're nowhere."

-Zach Yakaitis, Regional Director

Sounds complicated, right? Well then buckle up for this last part. Most enterprise companies that have a Big Data environment actually have multiple Big Data environments, and these separate environments are just as likely as not to interact with each other. We have had clients simultaneously win and lose multiple deals within the same organization at the same time.

Now, no one is saying prospecting into Big Data is impossible, it's not. But if you build lists the way you did in another industry, you're not going to find success. Instead you'll find your CRM quickly filling up with "Disqualified - Wrong Contacts" without any point in the right direction.

In Big Data, the *right* data is hard to find.

Market



The biggest challenge of the Big Data market is how big it *isn't*. While the market itself is as large as any, your total addressable market (TAM) shrinks significantly with every technical qualification required for your product or offering to work. Just take a look at the [Big Data landscape in 2019](#) and you can see just how many different potential existing products and services you'll need to be able to integrate with to successfully put a dent in the market. That's why you need to have a niche and know how to sell into that specific slice of the market.

Knowing that niche will also help your marketing efforts immensely, specifically when it comes to conferences and events (it's still unclear how this will impact virtual events). The general rule of thumb for Big Data events is to only attend when you know that your ICP is the primary event attendee and the technology focus of the event aligns with your product. If your ICP is a Director or VP, for example, going to a developers conference is a waste of time, even if your target account sends a team of their developers. The cost of a booth at these events is only worth it if you connect with your potential decision makers, not the employees below them, because referrals are unreliable in this industry (as detailed above).

This complex market significantly affects how long it will take for you to ramp up a new SDR. Due to its complexity and the type of messaging that is most effective (we'll get there in the next section), an SDR ramping up on Big Data needs to learn a lot more than one ramping up in any other industry, generally speaking. Remember all of those technical qualifications we mentioned? Well they're not usually yes or no questions. They have a variety of answers across a spectrum that most green SDRs don't even know exist. Most of these SDRs will also join your team with a significantly lower level of baseline knowledge than other industries simply because they weren't exposed to Big Data before accepting your job offer. This forces you to increase their time to ramp because you need to provide an extra level of education to their onboarding process if you want them to be successful. And even after that, you still need to take the time to dive into the technical aspects of your product and qualifications with your SDRs, otherwise they'll drown in a sea of information that goes way over their head. All in all, you shouldn't be surprised if time to ramp is nearly double the length of a standard non-Big Data SDR team.

The learning curve for Big Data SDRs is significantly steeper than it is across other industries.

-Alex Ellison, Former Big Data Sr SDR

Messaging



SDRs working with our Big Data clients will tell you, you need to know a lot more about your product and industry than any other industry when putting together messaging. The baseline knowledge required to successfully sell into Big Data is high because decision makers for Big Data environments have very technical specifications and requirements that need to be met in order to even be a qualified opportunity. On a successful discovery call the SDR and prospect will qualify *each other* because if the prospect gives the go ahead but your product doesn't actually integrate into their tech stack

for whatever reason, it looks bad on them. If the discovery call goes well your SDR will create a champion within that account and build solid rapport that will be advantageous throughout the sales cycle.

The personas you reach out to for Big Data are unique, to say the least. They don't appreciate fluff or flattery, and would much rather you be direct with your messaging. This is especially true for email. Staying relevant and personalized with your value props is the most important thing to remember.

Being concise is encouraged and appreciated by the prospect because it means you're not wasting their time, a huge concern for someone who spends their days working to make their Big Data environment run as fast and efficiently as possible.

Some of the most successful Big Data email templates used at demandDrive consist only of:



A 1-2 sentence intro
Keep it brief and engaging



3 bulleted value props
Choose the value props most relevant for the specific prospect/persona



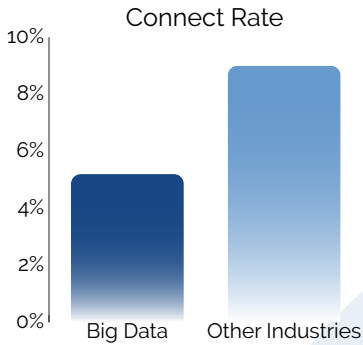
A short Call to Action
The next steps need to be easy for the prospect to act on

If you haven't figured it out by now, these prospects don't like to be bothered unnecessarily. You need to reflect that in your outreach cadence too. Our SDRs have had the most success by taking our typical outreach cadence and stretching it out over a longer period of time. Start by giving prospects at least a day between each correspondence, and then if they haven't responded, stretch it out to weekly calls and emails before putting them into your nurture bucket. Why? Because reaching out too often puts you in the same category as a fluffy email: you're a nuisance, you're wasting their time, and they don't want to hear about it. By putting more time between each attempted contact you can find a balance, staying top-of-mind without the prospect feeling inundated by your outreach.

***"Giving people time
and not being super pushy
works really well for me."***

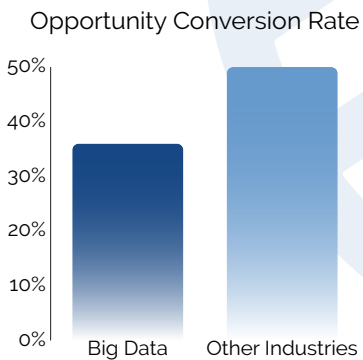
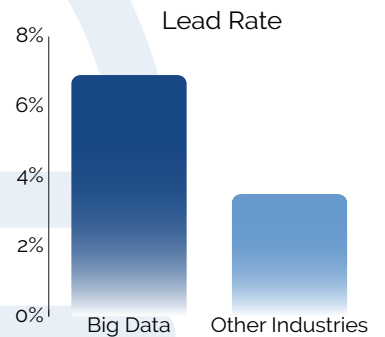
-Tori Lummus, Sr SDR

Metrics



The sales dev story we've been outlining plays out in the metrics. The lower connect rate tells you that no matter how good your SDRs are, your prospects are going to reach out when they're ready, not when you are. If it's not the right time for them, they're more likely to research you on their own and keep you in the back of their mind for the future.

The higher Lead Rate further proves this point. In short, this metric means that it takes less QCs to pass a lead. This is because when a prospect responds to you with interest, they mean it. At that point qualifying them becomes more important than convincing them to take a meeting because they've already convinced themselves to take a meeting. That's the whole reason they responded to your outreach in the first place. Your SDRs need to focus this conversation on all of those technical qualifications during their discovery calls instead of focusing on getting the meeting.



The low opportunity conversion rate is worth looking at because it helps paint the bigger picture. No matter how much qualification your SDR team does, there will always be more further down the sales funnel. Big Data environments are a complex web of software and hardware integrations, which means that sometimes - even when the SDR qualifies a prospect to the best of their abilities - some incompatibilities can slip through. The technical specifications often required for a Big Data sell can go over the head of everyone on the sales team outside of the sales engineers, so later stage disqualifications should be expected.

Big Data is definitely one of the more unique industries when it comes to sales development strategies. While the end result is obviously the same, the process to get there can confound even the most experienced sales dev expert if they don't have the right industry knowledge and ICP as a foundation.

And the same is true for SDRs. With a slower than average ramp time and the wealth of knowledge necessary to succeed, it can lead to a rough start. The fact that typical Big Data prospects aren't known for their charisma only adds to their stress as they may struggle to get as many live conversations as you want for them to level up their skillset from the beginning. Managers need to focus on the *process* and not the results, especially during the first few months.

While most of this datasheet has touched on the challenges of prospecting into Big Data, if you can avoid these pitfalls you'll be in a great position to close some massive deals and establish your brand in the industry. Good luck!