Revenue System Self-Assessment

Find the weakest link in your revenue system

Most firms don't have a revenue problem. They have one weak capability that quietly caps everything the other seven produce. In twenty minutes you'll know which one is yours.

Eight capabilities, six questions each. A revenue system is a chain, and chains fail at their weakest link, which is why your lowest score matters far more than your total.

This is the paper version of the online self-assessment. It asks the same forty-eight questions and scores them the same way. The online version totals the scores for you and names your weakest link at the end: smarterentrepreneurs.co.uk/revenue-system-self-assessment

How to score

For each statement, score how accurate it is for your firm today. One means not accurate at all. Three means partly, or only sometimes. Five means completely accurate.

Accurate means it actually happens, not that you intend it to, so score a five only where it would still be true if you were away for a month.

Circle one number for each statement, then add up the six scores for a total out of thirty.

Capability 1 of 8: Targeting

Whether you have chosen your clients or simply accumulated them, and what that is costing every marketing hour that follows.

Every capability downstream inherits this decision. Vague targeting means marketing that speaks to no one in particular, and clients who were never a good fit.

1 = not accurate at all · 3 = partly, or only sometimes · 5 = completely accurate

1. We have a written description of the client we want, specific enough that two people in the firm would apply it the same way.	1	2	3	4	5
2. Our last ten clients would mostly meet that description if we applied it strictly.	1	2	3	4	5
3. We can say clearly what problem we solve better than the firms we compete against, in language a client would use.	1	2	3	4	5
4. We know which types of client are most profitable for us, from actual figures rather than impression.	1	2	3	4	5
5. We turn away or refer on work that falls outside the description, and did so at least once in the last six months.	1	2	3	4	5
6. Our marketing effort is aimed at that description rather than at whoever happens to be in front of us.	1	2	3	4	5
Targeting total, out of 30					

Notes on targeting

Anything this capability brought to mind: an example, a name, something you already know needs doing.

Capability 2 of 8: Visibility

Whether the right people encounter your thinking often enough to know you exist before they need you.

Buyers decide who to call long before they need anyone. Firms that stay visible get the call; firms that market in bursts start every pursuit as a stranger.

1 = not accurate at all · 3 = partly, or only sometimes · 5 = completely accurate

1. We publish or speak often enough that our chosen clients come across us without being contacted directly.	1	2	3	4	5
2. What we put out demonstrates how we think about their problem rather than describing our services.	1	2	3	4	5
3. We know which activities actually bring us enquiries, rather than assuming.	1	2	3	4	5
4. Marketing continues at a steady level when delivery is busy.	1	2	3	4	5
5. One person owns this and it appears in their week as a commitment rather than an intention.	1	2	3	4	5
6. Someone who has never met us could understand from our website who we are for and what we do.	1	2	3	4	5
Visibility total, out of 30					

Notes on visibility

Anything this capability brought to mind: an example, a name, something you already know needs doing.

Capability 3 of 8: Qualification

How much time goes into work you were never going to win, and the three tests that separate an opportunity from a conversation.

Most firms lose more margin here than anywhere else. Not in lost deals, but in proposals written for buyers who were never going to say yes. Score this one honestly.

1 = not accurate at all · 3 = partly, or only sometimes · 5 = completely accurate

1. We have questions we ask every prospect before committing significant time, and we ask them consistently.	1	2	3	4	5
2. We establish whether a budget exists, and roughly what it is, before writing a proposal.	1	2	3	4	5
3. We know how the decision will be made and who will make it before we invest in the pursuit.	1	2	3	4	5
4. We can name someone inside the organisation who wants us to win, and we know why.	1	2	3	4	5
5. We have withdrawn from a pursuit in the last six months because it did not qualify.	1	2	3	4	5
6. We know, at least approximately, what proportion of our proposals convert and what a proposal costs us to produce.	1	2	3	4	5
Qualification total, out of 30					

Notes on qualification

Anything this capability brought to mind: an example, a name, something you already know needs doing.

Capability 4 of 8: Nurturing

What happens to the buyers who are interested but not ready, and why most firms lose them to a competitor who simply stayed in view.

The buyers who are interested but not ready usually outnumber the ones ready today. A firm with no way of staying in view hands them to whoever turns up when the timing changes.

1 = not accurate at all · 3 = partly, or only sometimes · 5 = completely accurate

1. We have a list of buyers who are interested but not currently ready, and it exists somewhere other than in one person\u2019s head.	1	2	3	4	5
2. Everyone on that list hears from us at a predictable interval rather than when someone remembers.	1	2	3	4	5
3. What we send is useful in its own right, rather than a request for a meeting or an update about us.	1	2	3	4	5
4. We know roughly how long our typical buyer takes between first contact and being ready to buy.	1	2	3	4	5
5. Someone is responsible for the list, and it is reviewed and cleaned at least quarterly.	1	2	3	4	5
6. In the last year we have won work from someone who first made contact more than six months earlier.	1	2	3	4	5
Nurturing total, out of 30					

Notes on nurturing

Anything this capability brought to mind: an example, a name, something you already know needs doing.

Capability 5 of 8: Conversion

What happens between a qualified opportunity and a signed piece of work, and how much of it depends on the founder being in the room.

This is where the year\u2019s marketing becomes revenue or evaporates. A firm that converts one proposal in three needs half the pipeline of one converting one in six.

1 = not accurate at all · 3 = partly, or only sometimes · 5 = completely accurate

1. Our proposals are built around the client\u2019s problem and desired outcome rather than our method and credentials.	1	2	3	4	5
2. We agree the shape and the price of the work in conversation before anything is written down.	1	2	3	4	5
3. We have a consistent way of handling the objections we hear most often.	1	2	3	4	5
4. More than one person in the firm can run a sales conversation to a decision.	1	2	3	4	5
5. We follow up proposals at an agreed point rather than leaving it to whoever remembers.	1	2	3	4	5
6. We ask why we lost, and we act on the answers.	1	2	3	4	5
Conversion total, out of 30					

Notes on conversion

Anything this capability brought to mind: an example, a name, something you already know needs doing.

Capability 6 of 8: Retention

Whether clients stay because the relationship is managed, or leave quietly once the first piece of work ends.

Winning a new client costs several times what keeping one does, yet most firms manage the winning and leave the keeping to chance.

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1. We know, for each client, who is responsible for the relationship as distinct from the delivery.	1	2	3	4	5
2. We have a conversation with each significant client about what happens next before the current work ends.	1	2	3	4	5
3. We ask clients how the work is going in a way that invites an honest answer.	1	2	3	4	5
4. We can see which clients are at risk before they tell us.	1	2	3	4	5
5. Our clients understand the full range of what we do, not only the piece they bought.	1	2	3	4	5
6. Repeat work makes up a meaningful and reasonably stable share of our revenue.	1	2	3	4	5
Retention total, out of 30					

Notes on retention

Anything this capability brought to mind: an example, a name, something you already know needs doing.

Capability 7 of 8: Expansion

Whether existing clients grow in value over time, or stay at the size they arrived at.

Your easiest new revenue is sitting inside accounts you already have. Firms that never ask simply leave it for a competitor who does.

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1. We know which clients could reasonably buy more from us, and what that would be.	1	2	3	4	5
2. We have a deliberate conversation about wider needs rather than waiting for the client to raise them.	1	2	3	4	5
3. We are introduced to other parts of the client organisation rather than dealing with one contact only.	1	2	3	4	5
4. Our prices reflect the value of the work and have been reviewed in the last twelve months.	1	2	3	4	5
5. We can see how account value has changed over the last two years.	1	2	3	4	5
6. Someone owns growth in existing accounts as an explicit responsibility.	1	2	3	4	5
Expansion total, out of 30					

Notes on expansion

Anything this capability brought to mind: an example, a name, something you already know needs doing.

Capability 8 of 8: Referrals

Why happy clients refer less often than they could, and what makes an introduction easy rather than awkward.

A referred buyer arrives half-sold, at no acquisition cost. Referrals feel like luck, but the firms that receive them steadily have made themselves easy to introduce.

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1. We can state in two sentences exactly who we want introducing to, in words a client could repeat.	1	2	3	4	5
2. We have told our best clients that, plainly, in the last twelve months.	1	2	3	4	5
3. We ask for introductions at a deliberate point in the relationship rather than when work is thin.	1	2	3	4	5
4. We know which clients have referred us, and we thank them in a way they notice.	1	2	3	4	5
5. We make it easy: the client has something they can forward rather than having to explain us themselves.	1	2	3	4	5
6. More than a quarter of our new work in the last two years came from an introduction.	1	2	3	4	5
Referrals total, out of 30					

Notes on referrals

Anything this capability brought to mind: an example, a name, something you already know needs doing.

Your revenue system, capability by capability

Transfer your eight totals here. Read the spread rather than the average: a firm can be strong almost everywhere and still be held back by one capability.

Capability	Score out of 30	What that score means
1. Targeting		
2. Visibility		
3. Qualification		
4. Nurturing		
5. Conversion		
6. Retention		
7. Expansion		
8. Referrals		

What the scores mean

6 to 12	Largely unmanaged. This happens when it happens.
13 to 18	Present but informal, and it stops when the week gets busy.
19 to 24	A working capability with gaps.
25 to 30	Reliable. Note it and put your effort elsewhere.

Your weakest link

The capability with the lowest score is the lowest link in your chain. Everything upstream of it is producing work that leaks out here, which is why improving a stronger capability would show very little return.

My weakest capability is

What to do with it

Take that capability and pick the smallest practice you could put in place this month. Not a project. One practice, done consistently, in the capability the rest of the chain depends on.

The practice I will put in place this month:

A second pair of eyes

If you would like a second pair of eyes on this, a discovery call is a conversation about what your results mean for your firm specifically. No charge, and no obligation to do anything afterwards.

Book a discovery call: www.smarterentrepreneurs.co.uk/book-online

The online version of this assessment totals your scores, names your weakest link and gives you the result on screen: smarterentrepreneurs.co.uk/revenue-system-self-assessment