



Sales Processes, Planning and Pipeline Management

Presented by Nick Thomas
January 2023



Welcome and Thankyou

Webinar format - 60 minutes including Q&A and polls

Slides and recording provided post-session

Nick Thomas

- Background in Insurance Broking Sector. Sales and Sales Leadership specialist
- Widely qualified coach and personal development specialist
- Coaching, training and consulting – Insurance M&A

Nick Thomas & Associates

- Up to the minute training solutions addressing the challenges of the modern insurance professional
- Technical insurance; sales, business and soft skills; customer service; management and leadership; performance, resilience and wellbeing



Objectives

*‘Begin with the end
in mind’*

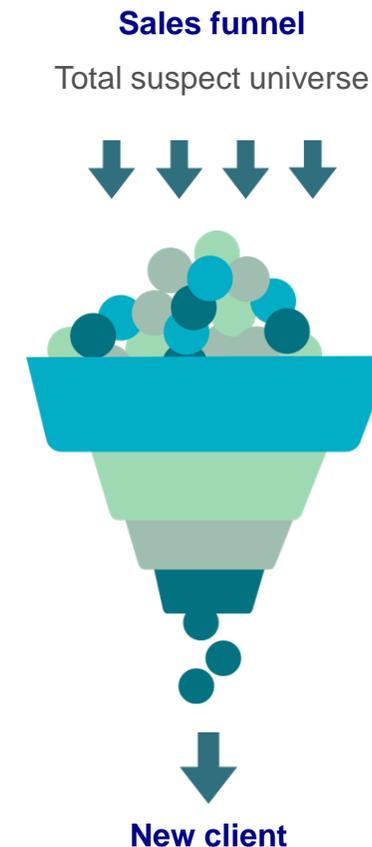
Stephen R. Covey,
The 7 Habits of
Highly Effective
People’

- Build an understanding of the importance of sales processes and planning as essential platforms for successful sales outcomes
- Understand the importance of creating and understanding an accurate Ideal Client Profile both for sales outcomes and client retention and profitability
- Understand the importance of planning and ongoing pipeline management to successful sales outcomes

The Sales Process

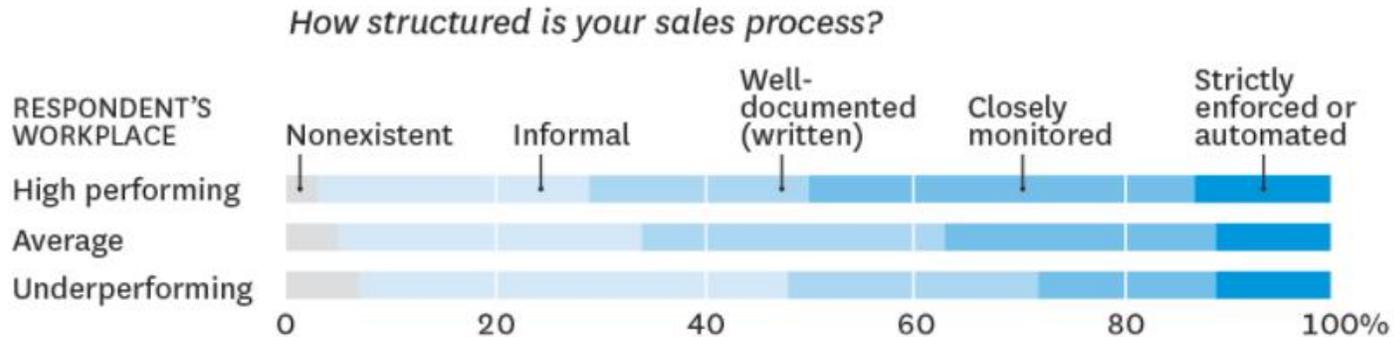
What is a Sales Process?

- Think of it as the **map or journey planner** - you would not leave on a long car journey without a map/sat nav
- Sequence of repeatable steps progressing through the Sales funnel from early-stage lead to a new client appointment.
- Usually, companies standardize transactions so that the entire team uses the same steps
- Sales Processes vary but will have common stages – individual to businesses, departments, teams



The benefits of a formalised sales process

THE IMPORTANCE OF FORMAL SALES STRUCTURES



SOURCE STEVE W. MARTIN

HBR.ORG

In the [chart](#) above, you can see that 50% of high-performing sales organizations have sales processes that are “closely monitored, strictly enforced or automated” compared to just 28% from under-performing organizations.

Similarly, 48% of under-performing organizations have non-existent or informal processes.

Research by Harvard Business Review

Time to chat: - *what are the advantages of your own sales process?*



The benefits of a formalised sales process

- Improved **MI and forecasting**
- Identify challenges in sales steps and **improve effectiveness**
- **Improved clarity** for salespeople
- **Training** - onboarding and training new salespeople can be simpler with a sales process
- **Increased sales** – salespeople understand how to support customers at each stage. Sales tools and best practice
- Customers receive **positive and consistent experiences**

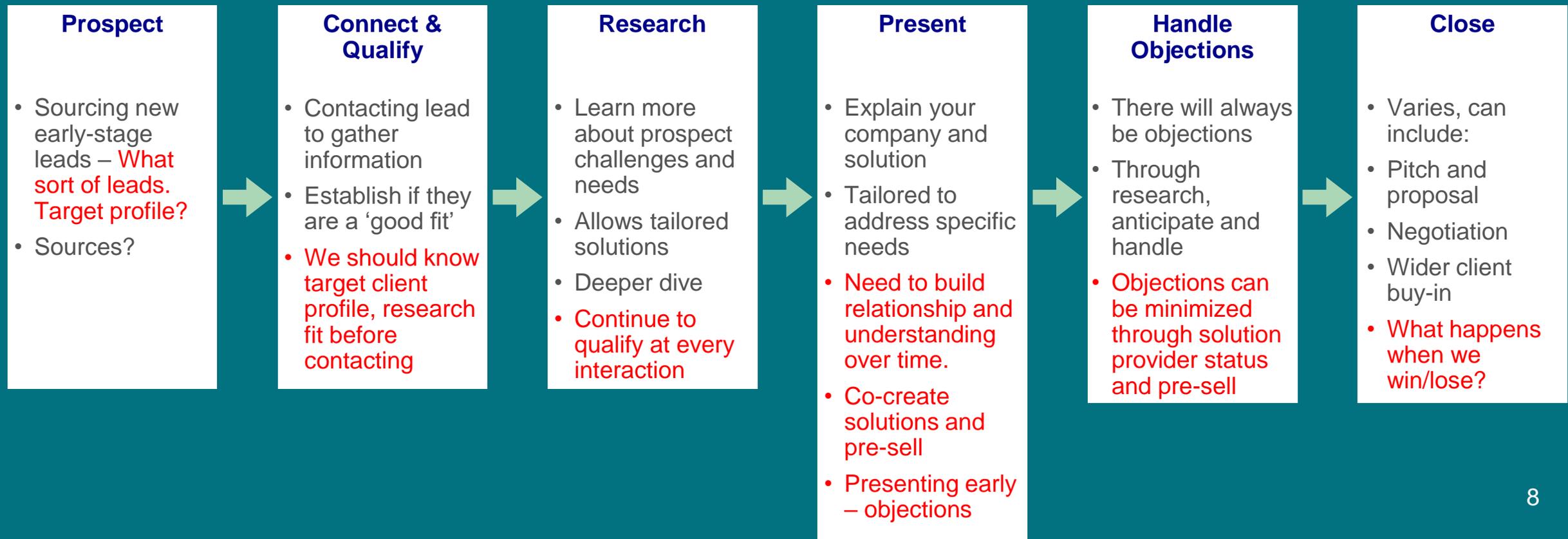


POLL

Your sales process



Typical Sales Process – and drawbacks



Sales Process – Broker?

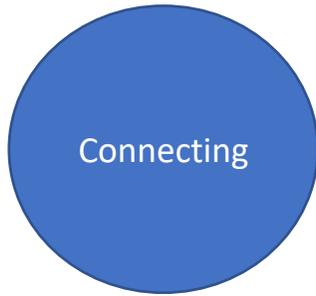
Note:

- Qualification [against ICP] = ongoing process
- Each progression is objective not subjective!
- Match to CRM milestones



Prospecting

- Your **Value Proposition**
- Your **Ideal Client Profile** [ICP] – targeting the ‘right’ leads
- The benefits of an ICP
- Research
- **Lead Identification and Generation**
- Establishing a **referral process** for ‘warm leads’
- How to become **referrable**



Connecting

- E-channel saturation/Buyer overwhelm – cutting through the noise
- **Cold contact strategy – cluster approach** using a personalized multiple channel strategy – LinkedIn, Email, Telephone, Video Email, Video Email, Letter
- Using **LinkedIn** for sales and to support prospecting
- **Motivation and taking action**

- **Sales Email** best practice
- **Cold Call** best practice



Needs Discovery and Assessment

- Building **rapport**
- Adapting rapport to virtual sales
- **Developing prospect trust** over time – addressing ‘emotional’ level buying
- **Uncovering client needs** – introduce consultative selling. The power of questions – **SPIN Sales Questions**
- **Active listening**
- Building client perception of current problems and future benefits
- Bringing **perspective and insight**



Solution/ Proposal

- Positioning ourselves for success
- The **pre-sell**
- Identifying and addressing all **buyer types**
- **Understanding modern buying influences** – status quo bias, loss aversion, no decision etc. and how to overcome them
- The **proposal** – levelling the playing field
- Compelling sales **presentations**



Objection Handling

- **Objection prevention** and minimisation
- A four step model for **objection handling**
- Dealing with **price based objections**



Closing

- An ethical and **prospect focused approach to closing** for long-term, profitable clients
- The importance of **timing and gaining commitment**
- Prospect focus and proposing the next best step

- **Account growth – cross sales, up sales and referrals**

First - who to target?

- At the end of 2019 there were just under **6 million businesses** operating in the UK ALONE
- In 2021 there were over **68 million people**

That's a lot of potential clients.

How do we decide which ones to target?



Ideal Client Profile [ICP] – target the right prospects

- **Start with ICP** - clients that would greatly benefit from your product or service and provide you with significant value in exchange
- **Know your value proposition** – the reasons clients buy from you?
- **ICP - multi-factorial**
 - **Demographics** – measurable objective factors about a ‘group’
 - **Psychographics** – values and attitudes shared by the buying influences at the organization and collectively by the organization itself

At least fifty percent of prospects are not a good fit for what you sell
Sales Insight Lab

Time to chat: can you think of examples of demographic factors and psychographic factors?



Ideal Client Profile [ICP] – target the right prospects

Time to chat: what are the benefits of understanding our Ideal Client Profile?



You'll never find the mythical 'perfect customer'. The ideal customer is a standard against which to measure your actual customers [and prospects], so that you can focus on the good ones, get rid of the truly bad ones, and anticipate problems with those who fall in the middle'
'The New Strategic Selling' Miller Heiman

Ideal Client Profile [ICP] – target the right prospects

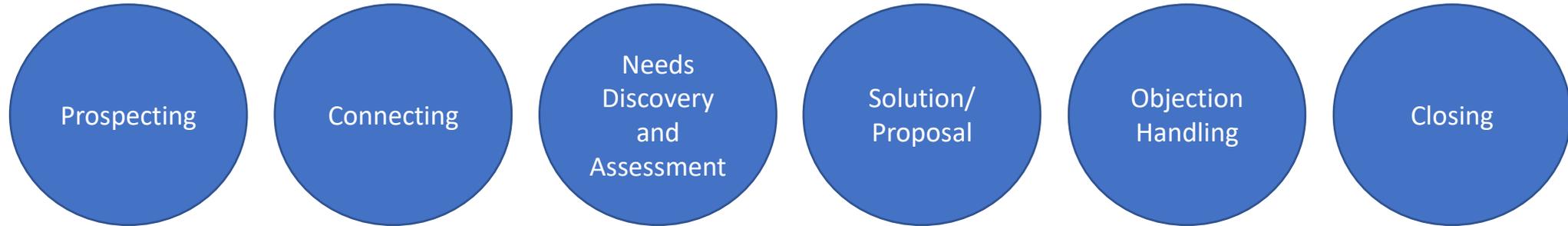
What are the benefits of understanding our ICP?

- **Focused sales efforts** – avoid wasted time. Opportunity cost
- Better response to outreach/contact – because you can bring ‘value’...**better conversion rates**
- Improved client **retention rates** – working with clients to whom you provide ‘value’
- **More profitable** business – longer term clients tend to buy more from you [cross and upsell]
- **Satisfied clients** – more likely to refer you...

How do we establish our ICP?

You'll never find the mythical 'perfect customer'. The ideal customer is a standard against which to measure your actual customers [and prospects], so that you can focus on the good ones, get rid of the truly bad ones, and anticipate problems with those who fall in the middle'
'The New Strategic Selling' Miller Heiman

Sales Process – revisit



- Your **Value Proposition**
- Your **Ideal Client Profile** [ICP] – targeting the ‘right’ leads
- The benefits of an ICP
- Research
- **Lead Identification and Generation**
- Establishing a **referral process** for ‘warm leads’
- How to become **referrable**

- E-channel saturation/Buyer overwhelm – cutting through the noise
- **Cold contact strategy – cluster approach** using a personalized multiple channel strategy – LinkedIn, Email, Telephone, Video Email, Video Email, Letter
- Using **LinkedIn** for sales and to support prospecting
- **Motivation and taking action**

- **Sales Email** best practice
- **Cold Call** best practice

- Building **rapport**
- Adapting rapport to virtual sales
- **Developing prospect trust** over time – addressing ‘emotional’ level buying
- **Uncovering client needs** – introduce consultative selling. The power of questions – **SPIN Sales Questions**
- **Active listening**
- Building client perception of current problems and future benefits
- Bringing **perspective and insight**

- Positioning ourselves for success
- The **pre-sell**
- Identifying and addressing all **buyer types**
- **Understanding modern buying influences** – status quo bias, loss aversion, no decision etc. and how to overcome them
- The **proposal** – levelling the playing field
- Compelling sales **presentations**

- **Objection prevention** and minimisation
- A four step model for **objection handling**
- Dealing with **price based objections**

- An ethical and **prospect focused approach to closing** for long-term, profitable clients
- The importance of **timing and gaining commitment**
- Prospect focus and proposing the next best step

- **Account growth** – cross sales, up sales and referrals

Progressing through the sales process?

- **Need sales methodology** - the framework for how your sales process is to be carried out and how it will help your business grow
- **Consultative, Perspective and SPIN selling**
- Supplemented by **communication and soft skills**
- **Courses available from NTA**

'Sales prospecting skills – building a quality pipeline'

Presented by Nick Thomas
November 2022

Ask – SPIN sales questions

Situation Questions

- 'Uncovering' questions
- Information gathering on current position
- From processes and pain points to plans and results e.g., "How do you currently insure that?"
- NOT positively correlated to sale success
- Why? benefits is to the seller not the buyer. Buyer gets bored.
- Essential - but successful salespeople ask fewer more focused situation questions.
- Do research first to limit situation questions. Prepare questions.

Problem Questions

- 'Uncovering' question
- Probe for problems, dissatisfaction, difficulties you may be able to solve
- Invites customer to state implied needs
- They may be unaware they have a problem!
- Do you have any cover for XYZ or "Are you happy with your current insurer?"
- Strong correlation with sales success in small sales, not larger
- Still key in larger sales – creating raw material to develop explicit needs
- **Think of a problem you may be able to solve for customer, then it's your can ask to uncover**

Implication Questions

- 'Developing' question
- Increase customer perception of seriousness of problem
- Buyer comes to new understanding - ownership
- Valuable information for customizing your message and instilling urgency in the buyer
- Positive correlation with success – most successful salespeople ask 4x as many implication questions
- E.g., "How big could the uninsured loss be? And "How might that threaten the business?"
- Possible downside – can put customer in negative mindset

Needs Pay Off Questions

- 'Developing' question
- Builds up customer perception of value and usefulness or desirability of (your) solution
- Strongly linked with successful sales outcomes
- "How would it help if there was a risk management solution to minimize that exposure?"
- Focus on positive aspect of solutions. Positive atmosphere. Good for existing customers.
- Gets customer to tell you the benefits – therefore also reduces objections
- Rehearses your contact for internal selling - at they state and remember benefits (vs product features etc)

CONFIDENTIAL

Consultative approach – process

Stage One – Research

Gathering valuable information and intelligence

- Client Specific – and people
- Industry knowledge including common problems
 - Clients with common challenges, business models, sector exposure
 - Wider market – what can the insurance market offer

'Research is creating new knowledge'
Neil Armstrong

Sources?

- Business Information systems
- Report and Accounts
- Company Website
- LinkedIn – company and individuals
- Personal experience
- Colleagues

CONFIDENTIAL

'Sales prospecting skills – contacting the prospect'

Presented by Nick Thomas
May 2022

MI for Sales

Importance

- Essential MI at individual, team (sales manager) and business level (senior management)
 - **Measurement against target/budget** - projections
 - **Gap analysis** – remedial action
 - **Key trends and lessons** e.g., where winning/losing
- **Task and Diary Management**
- **Cross and up sales** – sharing prospects with wider business
- **Hold key client/prospect data and history** – triggers, tailor content
- **Targeted marketing** – integration with campaign management tools
- **The virtual impact** – support salespeople, and data for sales coaching interventions



MI for Sales

Key Success Factors

- **Align milestones** to pipeline progression. Progression objective not subjective
- Weighted success factors by milestone/strength of opportunity produce real-time **'weighted pipeline'**
- ...based on historical performance
- **Definitions clearly communicated**, understood and consistently adhered to – meaningful MI
- **Real time update** of database by all users
- Account for **outliers** – e.g., maximum income level to avoid distortion of MI
- **Date** - target year, And month.
- Be ruthlessly **realistic/conservative** – no 'wish lists'
- Regular **Review!**

When performance is measured, performance improves. When performance is measured and reported back, the rate of improvement accelerates.

Pearson's Law

Individual Salesplans

Structured approach to achieving/exceeding target, and individual objectives. Key factors:

Sources of Business - chunking

- Cold call, introducers, client referral etc.
- Allocate evidence-based targets.

Actions and Activity Levels

- Numbers game – work back through sales funnel
- Know your conversion ratios/success rates [again – proper MI recording] through all milestone stages
- Know your average case size for appointed cases e.g., £5,000
- *ASK: what actions and activity levels do I need to establish on a weekly, daily basis to achieve the above?*

If you talk about it, it's a dream. If you envision it, it's possible. If you schedule it, it's real
Tony Robbins



Individual Salesplans

Timeframes

- Build annual salesplan well in advance of start of sales period – long tail process
- Plan your activity timing and frequency – e.g., cold calls in November unlikely to bring new income in same year
- Break annual target into quarterly/monthly targets

Constant Review – use MI/CRM

- Conservative and realistic
- Use Weighted pipeline
- Gap analysis – learn and adjust your plans



Basic Example

- Assess **current** pipeline for following 'sales year' using weighted averages e.g.
 - Reviews £50,000 @ conversion rate 30% = weighted pipeline £15,000 income
 - Next stage – 'Promised Reviews'? = £30,000 @ 15% = weighted pipeline £4,500
 - Do same for all stages in the pipeline...
 - Establish Total Weighted Pipeline. Let's say £30,000
- Pipeline Gap Analysis = £80,000 - £30,000 = **£50,000**
- £50,000 income gap @ £5,000 average case = **10 extra new Clients**
- @ 30% conversion rate = **33-34 extra new Reviews**
- = how many **meetings/calls required?**
- Allocate the income sources (see Prospect Identification slide for help)
- Establish actions, activity levels, time factors for each
- Using CRM - Review, learn and adjust regularly leading up to and during 'sales year'

Assumptions:

- Individual Target 2021 = £80,000
- Average case size = £5,000

'Hope is not a strategy'
Rick Page

Objectives - Revisited

- Build an understanding of the importance of sales processes and planning as essential platforms for successful sales outcomes
- Understand the importance of creating and understanding an accurate Ideal Client Profile both for sales outcomes and client retention and profitability
- Understand the importance of planning and ongoing pipeline management to successful sales outcomes

Thank you! Questions?

Contact:

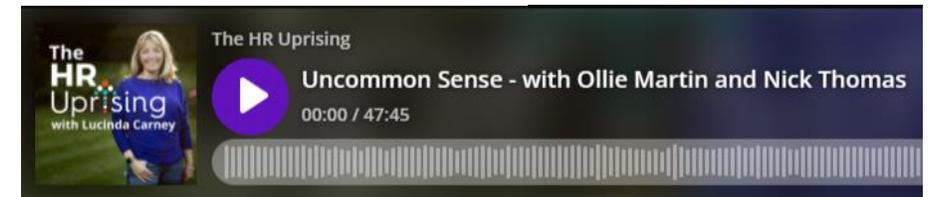
Email: nick@nickthomasassociates.co.uk

Website: www.nickthomasassociates.co.uk [coming soon]

LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/nick-thomas-64046113/>

LinkedIn Company: <https://www.linkedin.com/company/nick-thomas-associates/>

'Up to the minute training solutions addressing the challenges of the modern insurance professional'

The logo for HRUprising, with 'HR' in purple and 'Uprising' in a lighter purple, where the 'i' is replaced by a colorful crosshair icon.

[Click here](#) to listen to Nick's latest podcast appearance on 'HR Uprising' talking about workplace performance, resilience and health