THE BUS NETWORK · POINT OF VIEW

What to Measure in a Sales Operation

The complete case against activity tracking — and the operating model that replaces it. Why we built TBN to measure outcomes and adherence instead of motion, and how that model fits the way a motorcoach company actually runs.

A companion to the one-page summary · For operators evaluating how to manage and measure a sales team

PART 1 · THE INSTINCT

Why every operator eventually asks for activity tracking

Almost every company we work with arrives at the same question: *can we track what our salespeople are doing?* Calls made, emails sent, quotes built, bookings touched. The instinct is reasonable, and the goal behind it is the right one — you want to know whether your people are producing, and you want a way to hold them accountable when they aren't.

We take that goal seriously. This document is not an argument against accountability. It's an argument that **counting activity is the wrong instrument for the job** — that it measures the thing that is easiest to see rather than the thing that actually matters, and that in our industry specifically it tends to reward the exact behavior you are trying to eliminate.

We've intentionally built TBN around a different model. What follows is the full reasoning: what activity tracking actually measures, why it backfires, what to measure instead, and how that model fits inside the way your company runs day to day.

PART 2 · THE CORE PROBLEM

Activity tracking measures motion, not results

The first problem is simple. Activity is what people *do.* Outcomes are what the business *gets.* These are not the same thing, and the gap between them is where the trouble lives.

When you measure activity, you reward the rep who looks busiest — not the one who delivers. The person making a hundred dials a day and the person who quietly lands the largest contract of the quarter show up very differently on an activity dashboard, and very often the dashboard flatters the wrong one. Any metric you reward becomes a target, and any target gets optimized — so people optimize for *looking* productive, because that is what you chose to count.

> **A salesperson who logs the most activity is not the same as a salesperson who produces the most value. A tracking system can't tell the difference — so it pays for the wrong one.**

This is the well-worn critique of activity metrics, and on its own it would be reason enough for caution. But in the motorcoach industry there is a second, sharper problem that most operators never see coming — and it is the reason we feel strongly enough to build the platform the way we have.

PART 3 · THE INDUSTRY-SPECIFIC TRAP

In motorcoach, the activity is usually a symptom of a broken system

Here is the part that matters most. In most motorcoach companies, the people in "sales" are not salespeople in the classic sense — they are **doers.** They field an inbound inquiry, chase down the itinerary details, work out the equipment, build the quote by hand, and patch over whatever the system didn't capture cleanly. The calls and the emails they generate exist *because the process forced them to exist.*

That changes everything about what an activity count means. In a normal sales org, activity is at worst a distraction. In a motorcoach operation, the activity is frequently a **signal of friction** — evidence that the gathering, quoting, or booking process failed and a human had to step in to rescue it. When you count that activity and reward it, you are paying people for the friction. You are building an incentive to keep the broken parts of the system broken, because the breakage is what generates the activity that scores well.

The five-call booking

Picture a rep who logs five calls in a day about a single booking — questions about the itinerary, the equipment, a change to the pickup, a follow-up on the deposit. On an activity report, that's a productive, engaged day. Five touches, lots of motion, clearly working hard.

But look at what actually happened. **Five calls to close one booking is not a good day — it's a failure that repeated five times.** The intake didn't capture what it needed, so the customer had to be called back. Again. And again. The "activity" is the cost of a process that didn't work the first time. It is also, incidentally, a worse experience for the customer than a single clean confirmation would have been.

> **THE PERVERSE INCENTIVE**
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> An activity log cannot tell the difference between a rep heroically working a hard deal and a rep thrashing because the system made them. It records both as "five calls." So it rewards thrashing — and quietly teaches your team that the path to good numbers is to generate more touches, not fewer. That is the opposite of what you want.

PART 4 · THE PLATFORM CONTRADICTION

Activity tracking fights everything TBN is built to do

This is where the contradiction becomes concrete, because it runs straight into the core principle the entire platform is organized around: **take the friction out of quoting and booking.** That isn't a feature — it's the thesis. It's also exactly what the market overwhelmingly wants today. Customers don't want to wait for a callback and a hand-typed quote. They want frictionless, automated, instant: get a number, accept it, sign it, pay it — now.

That isn't aspiration. It's what the platform already does, and every piece of it exists to remove a human touch from the path between inquiry and booked, paid business:

— **Self-serve quote portals** — the customer builds their own quote without a rep ever touching it.

— **Automated email follow-ups** — the system stays on the lead so a person doesn't have to.

— **Click-to-accept-and-sign contracts** — the booking is confirmed and the agreement is executed without a phone call.

— **Click-to-pay** — payment collected on the spot, with no invoice to chase.

And the trajectory only accelerates from here. The next wave is agentic AI: tools that take a raw data source — a spreadsheet, an inbound email — and turn it into a quote or a booking with *no one keying in data at all.* Data entry, re-keying, contract administration — the manual work that used to define a "sales" desk in this industry is being automated out of existence, deliberately, and that work will only shrink from here.

> **Every metric an activity tracker counts — calls, emails, quotes built — is work TBN is engineered to delete. Reward it and you're paying bonuses for the labor your software exists to eliminate.**

So consider what an activity dashboard does on top of all that. You'd be running two systems pulling in opposite directions: one engineered to remove the manual work, and one that pays people to keep doing it. The better the platform performs — and the harder the AI tools push toward zero-touch — the fewer of those activities a healthy operation should generate, and the worse your people look on a dashboard that rewards motion. You wouldn't just be measuring the wrong thing. You'd be building a compensation system that actively penalizes the trajectory you bought into, paying your team to work *around* the automation instead of leaning into it.

This is not a philosophical objection. It is a direct, mechanical conflict between an activity-based incentive and the entire direction of the product — the frictionless tools you run today, and the agentic ones coming next.

PART 5 · THE REFRAME

Activity is what you measure before you have a system

Step back and ask why anyone counts activity in the first place. The honest answer is: **you count activity when you don't yet know what drives success.** You don't know which behaviors produce results, so you instrument everything and look for the correlation. You're hunting for a signal.

That's a legitimate phase — briefly. Early on, watching activity can genuinely help you discover what your best people actually do. But it has a shelf life. The moment you've found what works, continuing to count activity stops being discovery and becomes **surveillance theater** — measuring motion for its own sake, long after it has stopped telling you anything new. Most companies never notice the moment that shelf life expired.

Once you know what works, you stop counting motion and start measuring two things, together:

— **Are they working the plan?** A near-binary yes or no. Did they follow the process you established as the right way to win?

— **Did the outcome match expectation?** Did the business actually get what the plan was supposed to produce?

Those two questions, read *against each other*, are self-correcting in a way a single activity number can never be. They produce four distinct situations — and each one points to a different, useful action.

THE ADHERENCE × OUTCOME MODEL

Worked the plan · Good outcome The plan works. Scale it, and use this person as the template for everyone else.	**Worked the plan · Bad outcome** The *plan* is wrong, not the person. Change the plan. Activity tracking never surfaces this — it blames the rep.
Ignored the plan · Good outcome Luck, or your plan is incomplete. Investigate — there may be something here worth folding into the plan.	**Ignored the plan · Bad outcome** Now it's a people conversation — and you have clean evidence to have it.

Activity tracking collapses all four of these into one undifferentiated number. This model keeps them separate — which is the entire point.

The single most valuable cell is the top right: **worked the plan, bad outcome.** This is the case an activity dashboard structurally cannot see, because it has no concept of "the plan." It can only count what the person did and conclude they didn't do enough. The two-axis model tells you something an activity count never will — that sometimes the person is fine and the *system* is the problem.

PART 6 · THE REPLACEMENT

What to measure instead

If you're going to stop counting activity, you need something real to count in its place. These are outcome measures — they describe what the business got, and they are difficult to fake by grinding.

1. **New business vs. repeat / contract business.** Split your volume by where it came from. This tells you who is genuinely hunting and winning new accounts versus who is comfortably farming the existing book. Both

have value, but they are different jobs and they should be visible as different numbers — not blended into one revenue figure that hides which is which.

2. **Sale price vs. suggested price.** This may be the single most honest measure of a salesperson you have. It tells you whether a rep is selling value — holding the number — or buying the deal with discounts. A rep who hits volume entirely by giving away price is not selling; they're processing orders at a markdown, and they're doing it with your margin.

3. **Customer-experience adherence — read against repeat business.** Whether the rep delivered the experience you've defined as your standard. The critical caveat: measure this against an *outcome* like repeat-booking rate, not as a raw count of completed tasks. Count tasks for their own sake and you've quietly rebuilt activity tracking under a new name — people will check the boxes whether or not it served the customer.

> **A WARNING ON YOUR OWN METRICS**
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> Any measure can rot into activity tracking if you sever it from outcome. "Task completion" is the easiest one to corrupt. The discipline is constant: every behavioral measure must be read against a business result, or it becomes another box people learn to check.

PART 7 · THE INCENTIVE

Make price discipline automatic — not a rule on a poster

Telling a salesperson "sell value, not price" is a poster on the wall. People nod at it and then discount anyway, because the discount closes the deal today and the margin is someone else's problem. The fix is not exhortation. It's structure — designing the incentive so that holding price is the obviously rational choice for the rep, not an act of discipline.

First, scope it. This is a **retail conversation, not a contract one.** Contract business is set, and should be — once the agreement is signed, the selling is over and the job becomes *delivery*, not negotiation. Managing that relationship is about delivering the value you already sold, not re-selling it at a new number. Price flexibility lives on retail work, and that's where this mechanism belongs.

How it works

On retail business, give each rep a discount band they can use without asking — say five percent, for round numbers. Within that band, they have full authority; no approvals, no friction. But here is the part that matters: **every dollar of discount comes out of their bonus first.** When they cut price, they are giving away their own money before they touch the company's.

That single change moves price discipline from a behavior you have to police into a piece of physics the rep manages on their own. Holding the number stops being a rule they're tempted to break and becomes the choice that obviously serves them. You've aligned the rep's self-interest with your margin so tightly that the two stop competing.

WHAT THIS REALLY DOES: SURFACE A SILENT BLEED

Here is the part most operators miss. This price variation *already happens in your shop today* — every time a rep shaves a number to land a job. You've likely even built a margin cushion to absorb it. But it happens quietly, in a way that's effectively invisible to the business. Most booking software only records the price that was *charged* — never the price that *should have been.* Unless you recalculate the quote from scratch, you have no way to know a sale came in under target; the erosion never shows up until someone does forensic accounting on your margins. This mechanism doesn't create the discount conversation. It **surfaces** one that's already happening in the dark — turning a silent bleed into a clean, visible, deliberate business process.

PART 8 · THE ORG-DESIGN PAYOFF

This clarifies the two different jobs in your shop

There is a deeper reason this matters, and it's the one most operators feel but can't quite name. In your business there are really two jobs hiding inside the title "sales," and they are genuinely different work.

THE SALESPERSON	THE DATA MANAGER
Wins new business. Communicates and sells value. Holds price. Moves outcomes the business cares about.	Gathers, quotes, builds, and keeps the system clean. Manages the data and the process accurately and quickly.
Measured by new vs. repeat volume, price held vs. suggested, and the experience delivered.	Measured by accuracy, speed, and cleanliness of the data — not by sales outcomes they don't control.
Generates few touches per win. A clean close looks quiet.	Generates lots of touches by nature of the role. Activity is the job, not a virtue.

The mistake almost every operation makes is not *having* both of these jobs — it's refusing to name them, and then measuring each one with the wrong instrument. Run an activity dashboard across both and the data manager looks like a hardworking star while the real closer looks lazy because they didn't generate enough touches. You will reward the wrong person and frustrate the right one, and you won't understand why your best seller keeps eyeing the door.

> **The error isn't having doers. It's paying doers like sellers and measuring sellers like doers. Activity tracking is the thing that keeps the two blurred together.**

Separate the jobs, measure each against what it is actually for, and both become legible. The data manager gets credit for clean, fast, accurate work. The salesperson gets credit for value won and price held. And you finally get an honest view of who is doing which job well — which is the visibility you wanted from activity tracking in the first place, delivered by a model that actually works.

PART 9 · IN PRACTICE

How this runs day to day

The model is not heavier than activity tracking — it's lighter, because it asks fewer and better questions. In practice it comes down to a short loop you run continuously:

— **Define the plan.** Write down the process you believe wins — how leads are gathered, how quotes are built, how the customer experience should feel. This is the thing reps either follow or don't.

— **Measure two axes, together.** Adherence (did they work the plan?) and outcome (did the business get the result?). Never read one without the other.

— **Act by quadrant.** Good plan + good result, scale it. Good plan + bad result, fix the plan. Plan ignored + bad result, have the people conversation. Let the model tell you which problem you actually have.

— **Compensate on outcomes.** New vs. repeat volume, price held, experience delivered — with the discount-from-their-own-pocket mechanism doing the heavy lifting on margin.

— **Separate the two jobs.** Make sure the people managing data and the people selling are measured and paid for the work they actually do.

THE BOTTOM LINE

Measure whether the *system* is working and whether the *business* is winning — not whether people look busy. Activity tracking optimizes for the job your best people should be moving away from. The model in this document is the one TBN is built to run, and we're glad to help you shape it to fit your company.