

Advanced Strategy For Building Effective

# Sales Battle Cards

 [+5 Examples]

# W

**WHEN SALES TEAMS FIRST** started using battle cards, they were usually single-sided pieces of paper that they would display at their desk or cubicle for quick reference when making sales calls.

It was a simple but extremely helpful tool. So, what do most people want to do when they discover powerful tools? They want to make it stronger and more effective. Ultimately, they want to make it better.

Improvements usually started with designing a template that is easier to scan or visually helpful in some way. Unfortunately, for many companies, quantity correlated with quality, so “making it better” meant to make it longer.

The reports with thousands of words and 100-slide presentations aren’t the simple and helpful tools that sales teams can easily use, so the information gets stored in dusty digital files and rarely referenced.

But the original, yet simple, single-sided piece of paper solved a real problem. Sales teams need to know how to engage in persuasive conversations about the products and services they’re responsible for selling. To do that, they need the most accurate information available both about the company and its competitors.

If we know battle cards are a helpful tool to any customer-facing employee, let’s ask the question again, “how do we make it better?”

What we recommend is going back to creating those simple one-page battle cards. You’ll waste everyone’s time if you work on creating a tool the sales team finds useless.



# Your card must be



## 1 Easy to read and written in natural language.

Meaning, a person can read a sentence verbatim to a prospect without it sounding rigid and scripted.

## 2 Simple to find.

Store the information in a format the end user is familiar with, which might mean in a CRM or maybe a simple word doc, excel sheet or PDF.

## 3 Quick to update.

Bad information will erode trust between the sales team and the prospect. One experience with false information and the salesperson may never use the resource again. Make sure that these are living breathing documents designed for change.

## 4 Consistently formatted.

Make it easy for your team to jump from card to card by using a similar format for the information. If the testimonials are at the top of one battle card and the bottom of the next, they'll waste valuable time working to understand the information instead of prepping for their call or responding to the customer.

The ideal battle card is simple, but creating it isn't easy. It's challenging to identify the most important information that will help sales teams win the deal at the end of the day.

Your card can also link to more information for the sales team members who want to dive deep into the data or learn more about a particular product on a competitor's website. In fact, linking to proof will help your sales team build confidence and trust in the information and increase the likelihood of them putting the battle cards to use.

This ebook covers the common types of battle cards, and the most effective content to include on each one. But first, we'll dive into how to stack your battle card deck.

# What's in Your Deck?

A small and effective battle card deck will guide your sales team to success. This solution works well for both veteran team members and your newest hires.

Here's how you'll stack the deck:

- Card 1: Competitor Overview
- Card 2: Win/Loss
- Card 3: Objection Handling
- Card 4: Product Battle Cards
- Card 5: Pricing Battle Cards

This simple deck can be consistent for each competitor your team is likely to encounter while conducting sales calls.

## **A note on design:**

Battle cards are internal documents, so the design should be functional not aesthetic. If graphs and charts help you digest information more efficiently, then use them. However, easy-to-edit information trumps pretty design every time.

You can't say, "oh, well this thing has changed about our competitors, so we'll need to assign a task and update in a few weeks." The information needs to always be accurate or the tool won't work and your team won't use them.

Where design is important is making sure that each deck of battle cards is consistent. Regardless if you're in "Folder A" or "Folder B," or if you're looking at "Competitor A" or "Competitor B," you'll find similar information in similar locations and they'll be designed in a similar format. This consistency makes finding and using battle cards easy.

Now, you want your sales team to be able to comment on the information, so updates can happen and everyone will know the information they have is the latest and best information available.

Additionally, you'll want the battle cards in some type of digital format in a shared file so everyone has access to the latest version of each deck. This might be a shared Google drive with a folder for each competitor. It might be stored in CRM software. It might be stored in a knowledge base or intranet.

# Competitor Battle Cards

The purpose of the competitor battle card is to help the salesperson quickly identify the strengths and weaknesses of a competitor and how those elements compare to your organization. These cards should first focus on your toughest competitors, the ones consistently coming up in conversations or your prospects' searches.

Not every customer will say, "I am also considering going with company X for this product or service." That would just make our job too easy. Instead, customers will likely ask questions or say key phrases that might identify which competitors they have spoken to or researched.

The sales team always needs to be vigilantly listening for cues from the customers so they know which pitch would win their business based on what information they find most relevant. The earlier your sales team can identify there is a competitor in a deal, the better position they are in to respond to common customer questions and considerations.

Here is an example involving a fictitious company whose main product is a learning management system. TeachIt connects teachers with a learning management system that makes it easy to create and sell courses.

## Recommended Elements:

- A quick synopsis about the competitor. What does the company provide and to whom?
- A list of strengths that your prospects find appealing
- A list of weaknesses that your prospects find concerning
- Key products and services

**COMPETITOR**

**Company Overview**  
TeachIt is an online learning platform where teachers can monetize their knowledge and students can come to learn anything from cooking to coding. The platform is an easy-to-use LMS for professionals and hobbyists. One component of their business model is their safe and simple payment system between the teachers and students. But their main product is the LMS they provide to the teachers.

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>✓ Subscription pricing model</li><li>✓ Payment tiers including a freemium</li><li>✓ Quality website design</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>✗ No search feature for students to find teachers, which means instructors have to have a strong marketing strategy</li><li>✗ Instructors are not vetted so students are sure about their level of expertise</li></ul>

**Key Products or Services**

- LMS
- Payment Processing
- Community Engagement feature

**Customer Profile**  
Customers who use this platform may not have any formal education or advanced skills. However, they do have an interesting background or engaging teaching style that can help beginners start developing new skills. Anyone who has a skill and who can teach can utilize this platform. However, the most common customer is someone who might already teach their skills through in-person workshops. They want to reach a broader audience by using the platform.  
The teachers pay the subscription fee and decide how much to charge their students for the knowledge they're uploading. The teacher doesn't know how to launch an LMS or even a website that has a learning structure, therefore, this platform removes the barrier by giving them a "what you see is what you get" course-building experience.

# Win/Loss Battle Cards

The purpose of these types of battle cards is to quickly and clearly identify why your company will beat the competition or lose.

To start building this card, use the strengths and weaknesses that you listed for the competitor on the first battle card in the deck.

After each of your competitor's weaknesses, include a brief story that highlights the weakness to your prospect.

After each of your competitor's strengths, including a brief story that emphasizes why it isn't going to solve your prospect's main pain point.

The following is an example of a battle card for a company that is competing against TeachIt. For this example, the company using this card also has an LMS but it isn't subscription-based and doesn't have a freemium, but is a higher-quality platform for students and teachers alike because of the marketing features it offers and how they vet instructors before courses are built.

## Recommended Elements:

- Competitor's strengths
- Competitor's weaknesses
- Stories to either highlight weaknesses or devalue strengths

The image shows a vertical stack of three battle cards. The top card is white with a blue border and contains the following text: **Competitor Strength 1: Subscription Pricing Model**, Counterpoint: Sure, the subscription model is nice when you're starting out, but advanced instructors like yourself usually plan to have their course live for more than a year. Once you make it beyond 18 months of selling courses, our model is actually priced more competitively. The middle card is white with a blue border and contains: **Competitor Strength 2: Payment Tiers including a Freemium**, Counterpoint: The problem with freemium is that while you aren't paying that monthly or annual subscription fee, you'll pay a significant amount in payment processing fees. Generally 8-12% of your sales, which over time is actually pricier than just paying to use the platform. The bottom card is white with a blue border and contains: **Competitor Weakness:** There isn't a search feature for students to find teachers, which means instructors have to have a strong marketing strategy. Response to Weakness: You're an expert in your field, but how much time do you want to spend learning and executing marketing tasks? The benefit of our platform is that you have the ability to reach students who are actively looking for the types of skills you are teaching. They can search for relevant keywords on our site and discover your course. On the right side of the cards is a vertical label 'WIN/LOSS' in white text on a blue background, with a teal bar below it and an orange bar at the bottom.

**WIN/LOSS**

**Competitor Strength 1:** Subscription Pricing Model

Counterpoint  
Sure, the subscription model is nice when you're starting out, but advanced instructors like yourself usually plan to have their course live for more than a year. Once you make it beyond 18 months of selling courses, our model is actually priced more competitively.

**Competitor Strength 2:** Payment Tiers including a Freemium

Counterpoint  
The problem with freemium is that while you aren't paying that monthly or annual subscription fee, you'll pay a significant amount in payment processing fees. Generally 8-12% of your sales, which over time is actually pricier than just paying to use the platform.

**Competitor Weakness:** There isn't a search feature for students to find teachers, which means instructors have to have a strong marketing strategy.

Response to Weakness  
You're an expert in your field, but how much time do you want to spend learning and executing marketing tasks? The benefit of our platform is that you have the ability to reach students who are actively looking for the types of skills you are teaching. They can search for relevant keywords on our site and discover your course.

# Objection-Handling Battle Cards

The purpose of objection battle cards is to have precise and consistent responses to specific objections customers consistently have to your product. Your sales team likely encounters a handful of these objections regularly.

To begin building these types of cards you have to gather intel from your sales team.

For one week, have them track every objection they encounter while on sales calls. List that objection in an excel sheet or some other document where it is easy to categorize and organize the results. Highlight any time there is a specific objection listed multiple times.

Next, ask your sales team how they responded to those objections. What type of responses resulted in a new customer and what type of response resulted in a lost opportunity?

For some companies, it might be useful to record sales conversations to capture this data, and then working with the product teams to craft an ideal response based on the understanding of the market and the competitors.

This card should include simple and conversational responses to common themes.

This is a continued example of a company that is competing against the fictitious company “Teacht”

## Recommended Elements:

- Objections
- List of counterclaims

**Objection 1:** Your platform is more expensive than I've encountered at other similar companies.

Response

A price objection is always best addressed with a value conversation.

One of our best features is that students know that our platform is for experts in their field. Students are willing to pay more when they know they are getting a quality educational experience.

Our platform also offers a dual experience. One it's an easy-to-use LMS, like many companies. What sets us apart is the search functionality. We have students who want to learn but might not know what courses are available. Marketing your course on our platform is a seamless experience you won't find anywhere else.

**Objection 2:** I'm not sure your LMS can drive community engagement in the same ways the other company platforms can.

Response

We have a beta community platform that will launch to all users later this year.

Our community engagement platform will be a private space for you to engage with your students and students to engage with their peers.

We will also have a community for instructors to engage with other instructors to share ideas and helpful tips.

# Product Battle Cards

The purpose of product battle cards is to provide your sales team with all the information they need about a particular product they are selling. Your prospects might be comparing prices, features and user experience.

The best product battle cards focus not on the competitor but on the customer. When you focus on the pain points your target audience experiences, you equip them with information that will help them weigh what options will resolve their biggest problems.

These types of cards can also be highly educational for new sales team members who might not be as familiar with your company's products and the competitors who are offering similar options.

## Recommended Elements:

- A quick features comparison
- A list of customer pain points and the response to why your company's product is best suited to solve their problem
- Product strengths
- Product weaknesses

	TeachIt LMS	Our Product
Payment Processing	✓	✓
Subscription Payment	✓	✗
One-time course set-up fee	✗	✓
Community Engagement Platform	✓	✓

**Customer Pain Points**

1. Customers lack the skills to design a website that is gated in a way that students have to purchase a course before accessing the materials.
2. Marketing strategies to help prospective students find their course.
3. Teachers want to build ongoing and engaging communities with their students and potentially have it as an add-on to their courses.

**Our Product**

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. The ability to connect students to teachers and teachers to students</li><li>2. One-time set up fee without ongoing subscription costs</li><li>3. Payment processing capabilities</li><li>4. Ongoing customer support</li><li>5. Students know that instructors are vetted and have the experience to teach the subject</li><li>6. Community engagement features</li></ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. The website doesn't look as new as some recently launched LMS systems.</li><li>2. There are no freemium options or trial periods longer than a week</li><li>3. Instructors find the course start-up expenses to be intimidating</li></ol>

**PRODUCT**



# Pricing Battle Cards

The purpose of this battle card is to equip your sales team with insights into your competitors' pricing strategies. You can also compare prices, but each price point should include context about the product to prevent a race to the bottom in your pricing strategy. This card should also highlight opportunities to create values-based conversations.

It might help to link back to the product card to prevent having to repeat information in your pricing card about the product. You could also link back to the objections-handling battle card.

Obtaining this information can be challenging at times because competitors aren't always forthcoming with the pricing structures of their products. You'll depend on research and intel from the sales team to craft this battle card.

## Recommended Elements:

- A brief description of the product's pricing strategy
- The price comparison including any tier-pricing

<b>Pricing Narrative:</b> While it can seem like competitor pricing is cheaper at first, we can quickly see that successful and serious instructors like yourself will find our platform much more affordable.	
<b>Learning Management System</b>	
Us	Them
\$3,000 (one-time setup fee)	\$0 Per Month \$39 Per Month \$99 Per Month \$249 Per Month
<b>Ongoing Hosting Fee</b>	
Us	Them
\$15 per month	\$0
<b>Transaction Fees</b>	
Us	Them
1%	5%-15%
** The average course for our ideal customer sells between \$500 - \$1,200, which means they will have to pay the competitor between \$25 - \$180 per sale.	
<b>Cost per 150 students in 18 months</b>	
Us	Them
Course Sales: \$105,000 One-time setup fee: \$3,000 Payment Processing Fees: \$1,050 Hosting Fees: \$270 Total Expense: \$4,120	Course Sales: \$105,000 Subscription: \$702 Payment Processing Fees: \$5250 Total Expense: \$5,952
** This calculation is using the basic plan at \$700 a course for Teachlt compared to a similarly priced course through our program.	

# How Many Battle Card Decks Do I Need?

Before we wrap up, you might be thinking the example helped me understand what will work for one competitor, but how many battle card decks do I need?

The answer is simple: As many as you absolutely need but no more.


If you're trying to keep up with dozens and dozens of competitors and the battle card decks that go with them, they'll quickly become an unhelpful and cumbersome tool to manage. You'll create a new problem while not solving the original problem if you fall into this trap.

It also helps to think about the day you have ahead. What conversations might you have? What competitors are most likely to come up in those conversations?

Find the most relevant battle card decks and review them. Does the information look accurate? If so, have them at hand and ready to reference.

You can't predict the direction of every conversation, but you can set yourself up for success with a little bit of planning.

The important thing to remember is that these documents are tools, not tasks. If you're spending more time creating and editing battle cards than using them on sales calls, then you'll have to retrace your steps and discover where the process went wrong. Is there too much information or not enough? Is the information accurate? Are there battle cards for the right competitors? Is the content simple to edit?

Build your battle card deck and think of it as a prototype. Ask your teams for honest input about how they are helpful and when they aren't useful. Refine and then refine again. Over time, with the right amount of editing, you'll have a sharp tool ready to help you and your sales team win. 

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