

Performance Support Tools (PSTs) vs Workflow vs Simulation:

How to differentiate PSTs to Workflow and Simulations.

A CUDA 'white paper'

Omri Yaari

“ Why Read This?

The Features and functionality of the tools used to build PSTs, Workflow and Simulations (and even online help) are very similar.

When the tools are demonstrated, the similarity between the features of the tools **makes it difficult to visualise** a different output from each.

This document provides the conceptual difference between them...

”

Overview

This document will help to differentiate PSTs to Workflow and Simulation tools. It focuses on the need and relevance of each concept for the same process.

The Features and functionality of the tools used to build PSTs, Workflow and Simulations (and even online help) are very similar. When the tools are demonstrated, the similarity between the features of the tools makes it difficult to visualise a different output from each.

In an ideal world, the 3 tools should be used together (not instead of each other) for maximum effect:

- A PST to guide a user performing their Job
- Workflow used to manage deliverables between PSTs (or Individuals)
- Simulations called on by PSTs to delve in the system steps needed at points in the process

With budget constraints, this is not always possible, so if you have to choose between the tools, then hopefully this document shows the difference and can help make an informed decision as to which is most important in a particular environment.

The comparison offered here uses the same process to highlight the parts of the process that each tool is used to assist with.

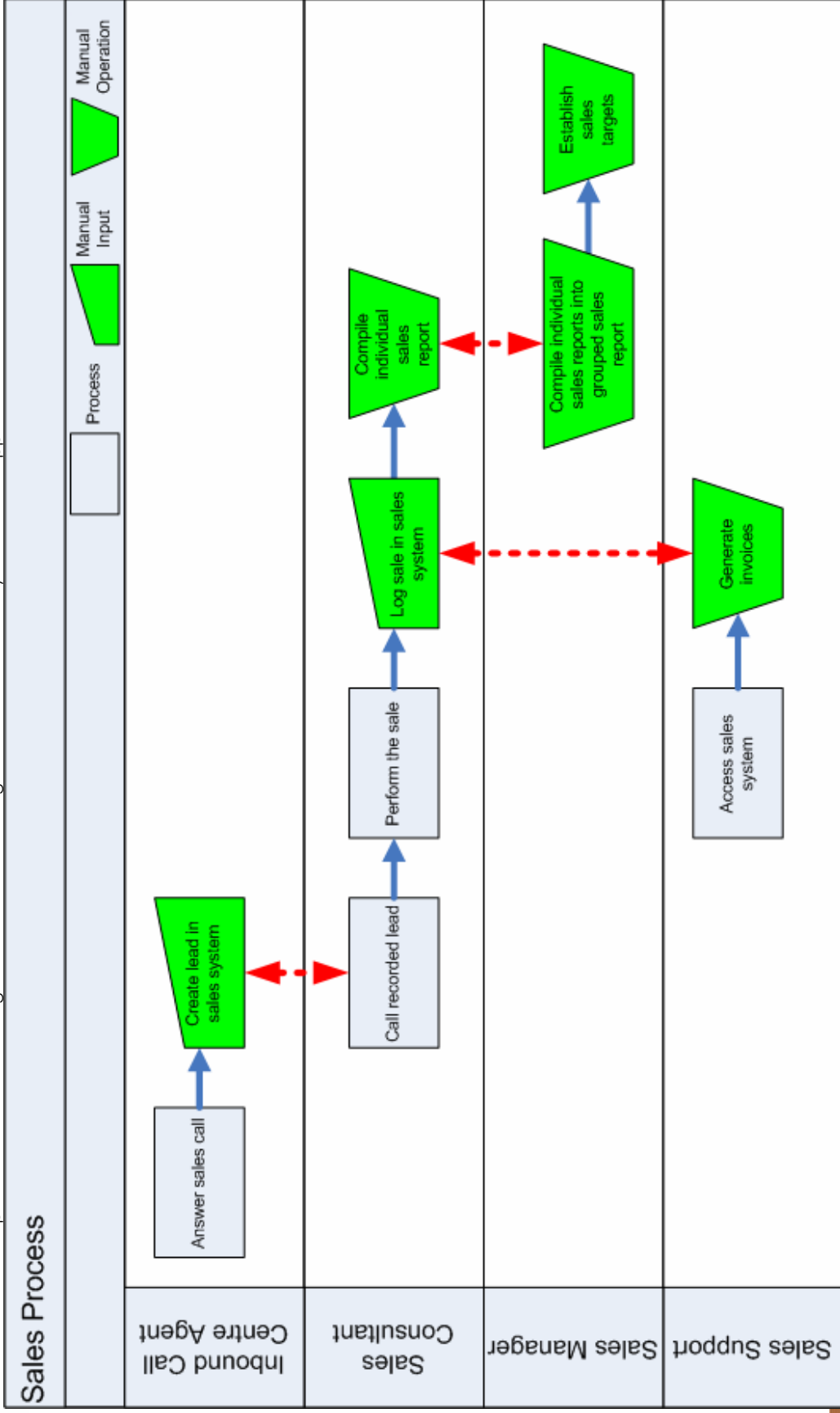
For more information, please contact omri@cuda.co.za

The Process

The process below shows an extract of a generic sales process.

This process illustrates 4 role players performing their jobs. The quality and accuracy of their deliverables or outputs will impact other role players in the business who require their input to perform their jobs.

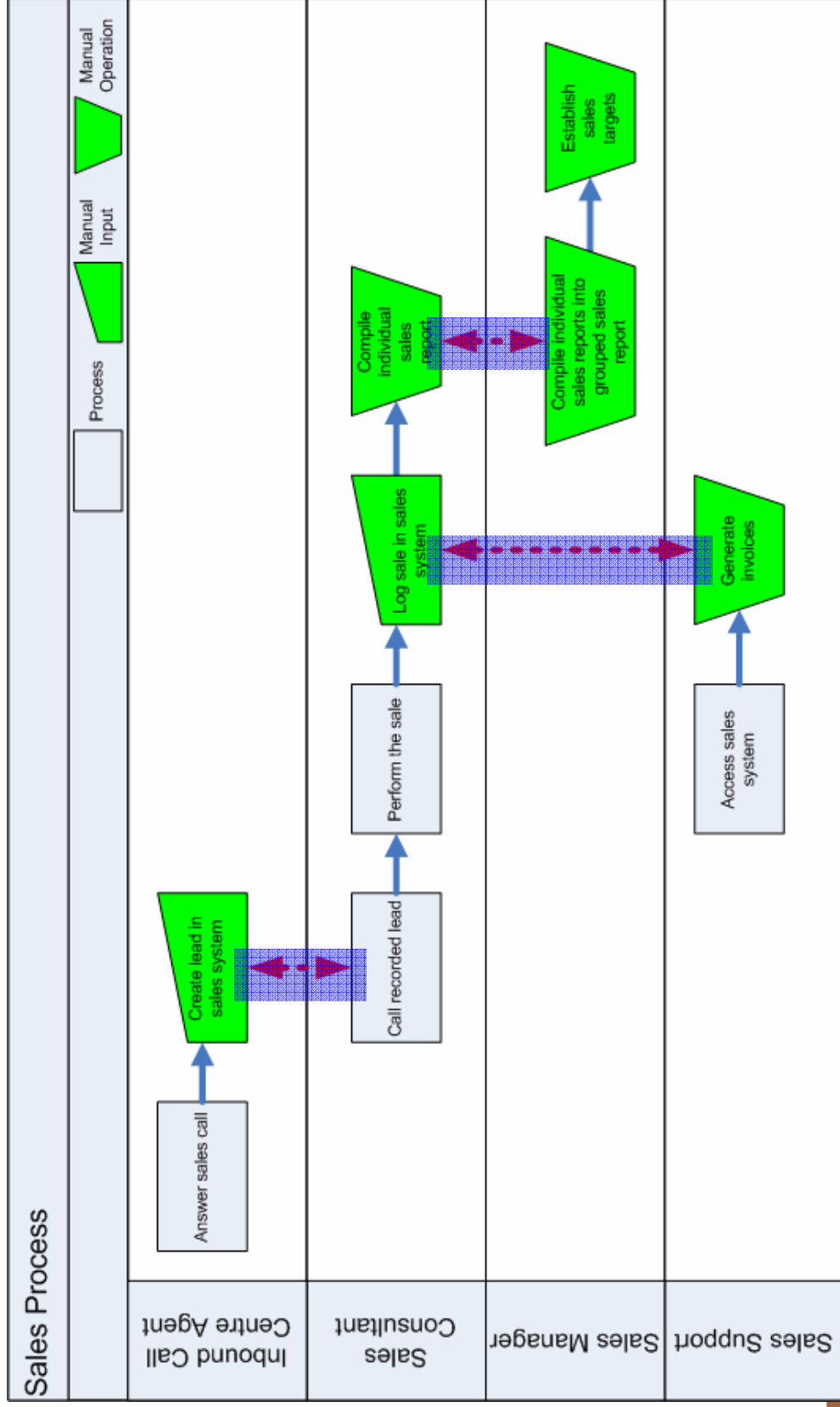
- The **deliverables** for each role are colour-coded in **green**.
- The **dependency between deliverables** is marked with a dotted **red double sided arrow**.
- This business process needs to occur regardless of the tools being used and the efficiency at which it happens.



Workflow

Common workflow systems will govern and control the flow of deliverables between role players to ensure that the correct deliverable reaches the correct role player and that the chain of operations is not broken. The workflow engine does not help role players to do their job nor does it verify the quality of their outputs. Workflow will not prevent mistakes caused by incorrect information being supplied or recorded, it merely prompts individuals when an item has reached their queue and delivers their outputs to the next link in the chain.

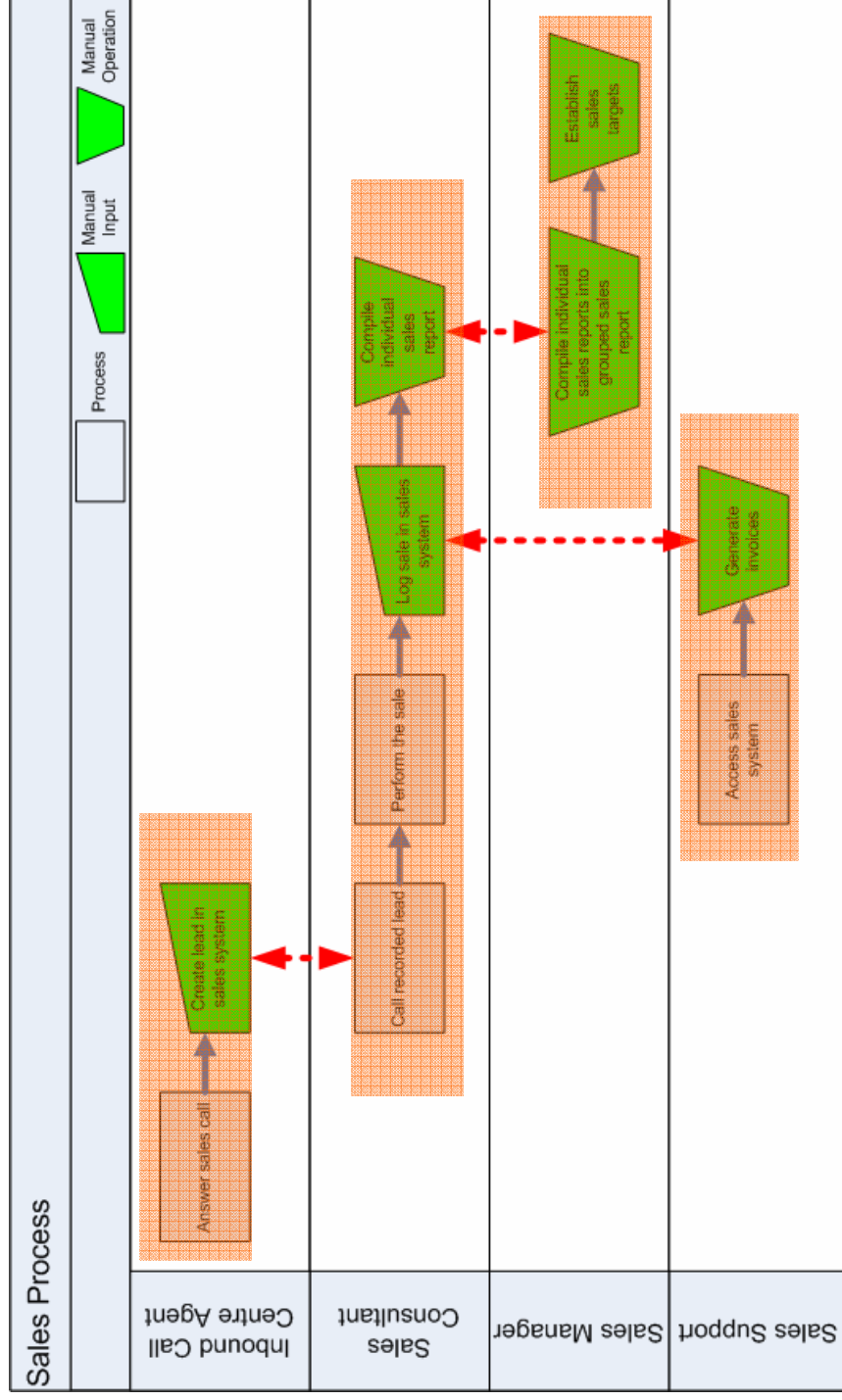
- [Transparent blue blocks represent workflow's responsibility](#) in the picture below.



Performance Support Tool (PST)

A Performance Support Tool (PST) focuses on the individual and their entire role and guides the individual to ensure that he / she knows what is required of them and is able to perform the required tasks accurately and produce a high level of quality. Touch points can be built into the PST which will ensure that the individual delivers his / her outputs to the correct individuals and ensure that the work flows correctly. Following a PST ensures consistent work quality and accuracy which creates efficiency in the organisation. Individuals know what to expect from deliverables because everyone is following a governed, guided process of work using the PST.

- Transparent orange blocks represent a PST's impact areas in the picture below.



Simulations

Simulations (or context sensitive help) focus on a particular part of a process (not the process as a whole), and are used to assist users perform a system task correctly or efficiently.

System Simulations generally use screenshots or step-recordings to visually demonstrate a system function or task to a user.

In training, these are used to prepare a learner for a system and how to navigate it. In the workplace, they are used to show a user how to do something in the system.



= Simulation

