



Getting The Most Out Of Sales Managers

Better coaches will lead to higher sales

By Jim Peduto

It is early in the year and sales teams everywhere have visions of grandeur. Being optimistic is great. Having a plan is better.

Are your salespeople hoping for success or do they have a plan? Are your sales managers able to help? The data tells us ... probably not. That is a shame because sales management plays a far more important role than distributors realize. Effective sales management is the key to success.

Coaching Skills

Coaching is the single most important activity that sales managers can do to increase sales. There is a direct correlation between the strength of a sales manager's coaching skills and sales effectiveness. Salespeople reporting to sales managers with strong coaching skills have significantly stronger selling skills than those reporting to sales managers with weak coaching skills.

Everyone agrees that strong sales management is essential. However, very few companies have invested the resources to ensure success. We know that because our research shows that fewer than 15 percent of sales managers have the sales coaching skills to be effective.

Great sales managers effectively use these skills and competencies to achieve superior performance:

- Debriefs efficiently
- Handles joint sales calls effectively
- Asks questions
- No need for approval from salespeople
- Controls emotions
- Doesn't rescue the salespeople
- Has a sales process
- Knows why customers buy

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If you haven't measured your sales manager's skills, make it a priority. Then train to close the gaps.

Time Spent Coaching

Most sales managers play numerous roles and get asked to do a lot. The four activities that build elite sales capabilities are coaching, motivating, recruiting, and holding salespeople accountable for performing at the highest possible levels.

The best practice is for sales managers to spend

50 percent or more of their time coaching. The reality is that nearly 90 percent of sales managers spend less than 20 percent of their time coaching. Is it any wonder that most sales managers have little impact on improving performance?

When managers do devote at least 50 percent of their time to coaching, lots of great things happen. Their sales force:

- Is 28 percent more effective
- Has stronger "Sales DNA"
- Hunts effectively
- Sells consultatively
- Qualifies prospects accurately
- Closes more successfully



The 'Double Whammy'

Now let's take a look at what happens when we combine the two points — the results are astounding.

Sales managers with great coaching skills who also spend more than half of their time coaching have salespeople who are 49 percent more effective than reps reporting to managers with weak coaching skills who spend very little time coaching.

Hope is not a strategy. Equipping your sales leadership with the skills (yes, they are measurable) and ensuring that they spend at least half of their time coaching will have a transformative impact on your sales team and make this a year to remember. 