

Get More from your Sales Team

Are you frustrated with your sales team? Perhaps you had no sales experience prior to starting your business, yet you remain the company's top salesperson. How do you get more from your sales team? Here are some tips that will help you better lead and manage your sales team.

Start with an assessment of your sales organization. You may organize it yourself or you might choose to bring in someone from the outside to help guide this effort. (We offer an Annual Sales Organization Check-up document that you can use as a starting point.) Do you outline company financial goals, market-share goals and/or goals for customer/employee satisfaction? Are they connected to your selling objectives? The first priority is to assure that the sales team is pointed in the right direction and conducting the right activities. You must have the right strategy and culture for your sales organization.

Once your company goals and selling objectives are in lockstep, the next key task is to review your sales strategy and the related sales-activity metrics. The bottom line is that you only can manage what you measure. It is important to remember that sales people can control their sales activities, but not their selling objectives or revenue goals. Proper execution of the right sales activities lead to the completion of the selling objectives and revenue goals. When revenue goals are missing, one must determine what activities need to change and update the relevant metrics.

Complete the assessment of your sales organization by evaluating the people in the organization—if you have not yet done so. Much like a doctor uses CT scans and X-rays to assess the inner workings of the human body, sales assessments can look inside an organization to evaluate behaviors, motives and critical competencies of its sales professionals. Not everyone is capable of creating demand amongst new clients or expanding business with existing clients. Often, these assessments provide you with data that confirms your gut feelings. This information will help you decide what actions to take regarding reorganization, workforce enhancement, or training and development. Having the right sales people in the right sales slot is just as important as having the right strategy and culture.

Now it's time to help your sales team grow professionally. We all wish that we had nothing but star salespersons, but the fact is that the stars represent the minority. To be successful, we need to get more out of our middle-ground sales people. Sometimes sales people can get stuck—in the middle of a deal or in their prospecting activities—and progress grinds to a halt. Experienced sales managers can use creative thinking to help get our sales people "unstuck."

Good sales coaching may not improve bottom performers, but it certainly improves productivity for most of the sales people under that “bell-shaped curve.” As for your top performers, good coaching may only provide a very small improvement. However, retention increases with good sales coaching and you want to keep those stars. And while you may not be able to reproduce such stars through coaching, you do want to help the remaining sales people replicate—to the best of their abilities—the positive attitudes and proper behaviors that are exhibited by these top performers. It can be easy for sales people to let their emotions get tied to the frequent roller-coaster events that occur in the world of selling. As their leader and sales manager, you want to guide them to maintain the proper attitude and behaviors. Also, much like coaches help professional athletes constantly hone their craft, you want to do the same. You want to continually develop the proven techniques that support your company’s sales processes. Good coaching is needed to get the most out of your sales people.

Now let’s look at some of those systems and processes at which you want them to excel. How well is your company’s account-management or territory-management processes working? Are the sales people getting in front of the right prospects? What about your opportunity-management process? Are they working the sales funnel in the right priorities to reduce the roller coaster effect of sales? When they do get in front of the prospect, how well is your call-management process working? If things aren’t working, is it because the process is broken or is it because the sales people aren’t following the processes?

Your sales strategy and culture is lined up with your sales-activity metrics. You have the right sales people in the right slots. You are providing good sales coaching on a regular basis to support each sales person’s required attitude, behavior and techniques. Your sales people are following sound sales processes. Revenues are increasing and life is getting better. What else can you do? It is time to take a look at your tools and see what can be done to enable more sales-force capabilities. Many small businesses are now deploying Customer Relation Management (CRM) systems to assist in this area.

Sales improvement does not happen overnight. Similar to operations activities, the key is ongoing incremental improvement. One-day or one-week seminars can provide a jolt, but they are not the answer to lasting, sales improvement. No one said it was easy. You know the adage: How do you eat an elephant? One bite at a time.

Contact David at David@EPOCHSalesManagement.com or at 214-470-5599 for further insights you can use to improve the effectiveness of your sales team.