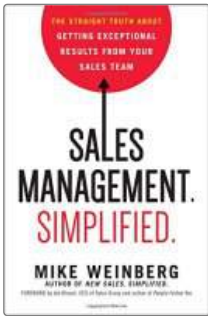


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Book

Sales Management. Simplified.

The Straight Truth About Getting Exceptional Results from Your Sales Team

Mike Weinberg
AMACOM, 2015
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The deck is stacked against sales managers. Indeed, some firms unwittingly prevent their sales managers from reaching sales success.

Recommendation

In most companies, sales managers have virtually no control over their time or calendars and often must waste time handling petty tasks and attending meetings that have nothing to do with sales. The time sales managers devote to unrelated activities and other distractions often prevents them from leading their sales teams more effectively and generating new business. Corporate duties force many sales managers to abandon sales management basics – coaching and mentoring salespeople, running sales meetings, working with salespeople in the field, and so on. Sales consultant Mike Weinberg details how sales managers can regain control and propel their teams to better sales. He also shows CEOs how to develop and sustain sales-friendly corporate cultures. *getAbstract* recommends Weinberg’s masterful, clearly written advice to executives, sales managers and salespeople across a wide variety of industries.

In this summary, you will learn

- What common problems burden sales managers
- How to solve these problems
- What an annual sales plan should accomplish
- How to create an ideal sales culture
- How to manage sales talent

Take-Aways

- Sales managers face myriad problems that stem from their companies, bosses and corporate culture. Sales managers also inflict some problems on themselves.
- Sales managers can’t do their jobs if they spend their time meeting, reporting, emailing and obsessing over customer relationship management programs on their computers
- Many sales managers search for nonexistent “magic bullets” to fix these problems.
- Sales managers should stick to the basics: coaching and mentoring salespeople, running sales meetings, equipping salespeople for success, and monitoring their efforts.

- Leadership and corporate culture matter more for sales success than salespeople's skills.
- The "sales story" – or, elevator pitch – is the best way to get a prospect's attention.
- Although sales reports are vital to selling, many companies no longer rely on them.
- Salespeople need clear goals to be successful.
- Salespeople must push for new business and concentrate on customer issues and concerns, not on products and features.
- Create a sales plan that identifies each salesperson's goals, strategies and actions; discusses obstacles to the plan; and accommodates his or her professional development.

Summary

"The sales world works a lot better when sales leaders focus on their primary job: leading the sales team and helping to drive revenue."

"As the sales leader...it's your job to point to the sales goal and tell the troops that we are going to hit it; we are going to win!"

"To create sustainable sales performance... improve the company's sales culture and how the team is led, the way sales talent is managed and the sales process."

Sales Challenges

Sales managers face many problems, some of which they create for themselves. Others result from senior executives who impose unrealistic demands or from corporate cultures that work against salespeople and their leaders. If a sales manager performs poorly, so will the salespeople on his or her team. Salespeople create problems for their managers and their departments when they concentrate on products and features rather than on their customers' concerns, and when they fail to push for new business.

Common sales-management problems include managing sales staffers, leading direct sales, coping with sales compensation plans, working in an unsupportive corporate culture, and coping with leaders who judge salespeople by how busy they seem to be and not by how much new business they create.

In some organizations, sales managers must manage multiple tasks unrelated to selling while also responding to hundreds of daily emails. Customer relationship management (CRM) – which, ironically, should improve the overall sales function – is often a bothersome distraction. Many companies demand that sales managers spend more time dealing with their CRM systems than helping salespeople generate new sales and revenues.

Some sales managers get promoted into their jobs from positions outside of sales. Those who enter sales with management experience but no sales chops can contribute little practical knowledge about selling. Or a firm may take excellent salespeople with no known leadership abilities and promote them into sales management. Their sales teams suffer as a result.

Sales Managers Who Don't Manage

When an organization's revenue falls below par and salespeople fail to meet their quotas, the fault usually resides with sales directors who manage ineffectively. For example, they may fail to coach their people, to differentiate the specific talents that different sales jobs require, or to monitor their sales calls and go over their performance with them later.

Some sales managers don't give sufficient attention to achieving their sales objectives. They don't effectively communicate sales goals or clarify how they will evaluate salespeople's performance. They don't institute processes to monitor sellers' work against set goals. Some sales managers want to be the department's selling "hero," so they deflate salespeople's confidence.

The Plusses and Minuses of Sales Reports

Companies rely on sales reports to track performance. These reports compare sales year-to-year, measure achievement toward monthly and annual quotas, rank salespeople based on how much they increased their sales over earlier previous periods, tally new accounts and lost accounts, and calculate what percentage of their yearly targets the sales staff hit.

“There is almost nothing similar about being a sales manager and being an individual producer in a sales role.”

Sales reports are essential, but many companies stopped publishing or distributing them after the 2008 financial crisis. With sales plummeting, corporate leaders took a “paternalistic approach” and decided not to embarrass their salespeople with reports of plummeting sales. They also pragmatically downplayed sales reports for public consumption and reconfigured compensation plans in order to retain their best people during the harsh economic times.

Sales Management Challenges and Solutions

Sales management encompasses more than selling. A sales leader deals with a big to-do list that encompasses building a sales-oriented corporate culture, conducting strategic planning, setting sales targets and making the team accountable for its results.

“You cannot manage salespeople, whose primary job is to interact with other people, by staring into your CRM screen.”

Sales managers also handle a myriad of HR-related concerns, including recruiting, hiring, training, setting compensation and reward levels, maintain good internal relationships, mentoring, coaching, retaining good people, and redirecting or dismissing people who fail to sell.

To establish your “sales management framework” and to increase your team’s sales in dollar value and volume, focus on these three areas:

1. “Sales Leadership and Culture”

To create a positive sales culture, identify the “attitudes, values, goals and practices” that the professionals in your sales organization share with each other. Companies that revere the sales function carefully monitor superior sales performance and hold it out as a common goal. Salespeople hold themselves accountable. Sales meetings are positive experiences for everyone. And the sales compensation program rewards the right factors.

“If you’re not teaching selling skills in sales team meetings...and working in the field rotating through members of the sales team, then who is helping your salespeople become more proficient?”

A positive sales culture energizes an organization. Executives are in active and regular touch with sales personnel. Salespeople are members of an “elite” crew. They love to compete. They have great attitudes. They pay attention to the sales board and strive to be on top. They push each other to do well. They celebrate each other’s successes and feel proud of their pivotal role in the firm.

2. “Talent Management”

Recruit, deploy and retain the most talented professionals you can find and do all you can to maximize their potential.

Expert talent management involves “four R’s”:

- **“Right people in the right roles”** – According to the traditional “hunter-farmer” sales paradigm, hunters excel at prospecting and securing new business. Farmers – or, for a better name, “zookeepers” – excel at managing and nurturing established accounts. Don’t assign hunters to farmer-zookeeper jobs, or vice-versa.
- **“Retain top producers”** – These high-maintenance salespeople will quickly jump ship if they aren’t happy. Give them what they need to produce at their best.
- **“Remediate or replace underperformers”** – Many sales managers tolerate lackluster results, but salespeople who constantly underperform send a negative message to everyone else. However, don’t cut new poorly performing salespeople too quickly. Give them time to prove themselves. Train and work with them. If their performance doesn’t improve over time,

“A salesperson is not a salesperson is not a salesperson. There are as many types of sales roles as there are colors of crayons.”

then let them. This shows that you believe in and nurture your team and that you insist upon results.

- **“Recruit”** – Bringing in top sales talent isn't enough. You must maintain a strong bench; that is, have numerous excellent candidates ready to join your team if you need them. Effective sales managers always make time for recruiting.

“True sales hunters are a unique...breed. The majority of sales teams are composed mostly of farmers (account managers) and engineers (product/service experts).”

3. The “Sales Process”

Successful sales managers help their team members target the most promising prospects. This includes potential new customers as well as current customers who are ready for upgrades or expansion. However, too many sales managers don't take this essential step. They mistakenly believe their salespeople all are already operating with well-developed marketing lists, but many salespeople don't prepare strategic plans for reaching the best prospects.

Salespeople don't get paid based on how many prospects they contact. Results are what counts, based on how many prospects they close. This is why sales managers must make sure that their salespeople plan and prospect strategically.

Managers should coach their team members to examine whether the accounts they are pursuing offer the best opportunity to close new business; whether they are in a rut, just contacting the same old customers and prospects, and nobody new; whether they should manage their accounts or territory differently to be more strategic; and whether their customer relationship management work is up-to-date.

“A flat compensation plan accomplishes the opposite of what a smart plan should. It provides underperformers comfort to stick around while simultaneously discouraging the over-achievers.”

The “Sales Story”

Sales managers must make sure their salespeople have the resources they need to do their jobs and that they become expert in the use of social media and the best professional tools, tactics and strategies. This includes the training and ability to ask “probing questions,” make good presentations, and offer “facility tours and references.”

Make sure your salespeople are prepared, ready for sales calls and properly equipped. Have they researched their prospects sufficiently in advance of a sales meeting? Do they know how to solicit the prospect's “input and buy-in”? Do they have the right set of questions to get the conversation going?

“Customers are not looking for subservient order takers; they are seeking help and value.”

Sales managers need to teach salespeople the importance of their sales story, elevator pitch or value proposition. A seller's sales story should be a well-organized compendium of all the relevant product or service talking points. A sales story that is simple to communicate and understand is valuable across of all your marketing efforts.

Good sales stories secure your clients' attention, demonstrate why and how your offering solves their problems, validates your pricing, differentiates your offering, and positions your salespeople as experts.

The Annual Sales Plan

Sales managers must monitor their salespeople to ensure they stick to their sales plans. This presumes your salespeople prepare annual sales plans for themselves. People are more likely to succeed if they write their goals in advance. Sales plans should include these components:

“When results are poor and the pipeline is weak, asking a salesperson about activity is simply good management, not micromanagement.”

- **“Goals”** – Set defined objectives. Some possible metrics are “total revenue or gross margin goals for the year, number of new accounts or new pieces of business acquired, dollars sold to both existing and new accounts, and specific product-mix goals.”
- **“Strategies”** – Salespeople need a blueprint and a set of tactics for achieving their goals.

“The perpetual barrage of new sales ideas, theories, processes and tools, combined with the loud voices of the hucksters marketing them, can overwhelm sales leaders.”

“If you fail at sales, then there’s no quality to control, no product to ship, no customer to service, no revenue to count. Period.”

- **“Actions”** – Positive steps include “calls, initial face-to-face meetings, presentations,” and so on.
- **“Obstacles”** – Sales managers and their teams often must overcome poor training, a learning curve about their customers, restrictive corporate policies, insufficient travel funds, outdated technology, and so on.
- **“Personal development, growth and motivation”** – Your salespeople need specific motivation, tools and techniques for continual learning and improvement.

Besides creating sales plans, salespeople must report their sales activities and results, and identify the prospects in their pipelines. Sales managers must monitor these reports to gather the information they need about their sales teams. Be sure the right forms are prepared and available.

“Magic Bullets”

To improve sales management, many sales supervisors are looking for a magic bullet that “guarantees unlimited qualified leads, a full pipeline and the ability to close every deal at full price.” But the sales world hasn’t got a magic bullet and you don’t need one if you stick to the basics of selling. The fundamentals always work if your product or service offers the right value.

Sales managers must focus on the essentials. Their primary purpose is to get their team to build revenues through increased sales. Conversely, their purpose is not to work “a bazillion” hours a week, to attend an “obscene number of meetings,” to send and receive hundreds of daily emails, or to be Mr. Fix-It for the company’s various problems. “You were not hired to do work; you were put in your position to produce results.”

About the Author

Sales coach and frequent public speaker **Mike Weinberg** is an experienced salesperson and consultant. He also wrote the bestseller *New Sales. Simplified.: The Essential Handbook for Prospecting and New Business Development*.

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