

By Kevin Davis

How can you motivate your sales team to develop the skills and techniques to thrive in today's demanding sales arena? That's a question that has challenged sales managers for as long as there have been products and services to sell. Here are three suggestions:

- **TAKE TIME FOR SELF-OBSERVATION AND ANALYSIS.**

Most sales managers are so busy working in the business that they take little or no time to step back and really think. They've been salespeople for a much longer period of time than a sales manager, so it's natural for them to have difficulty adapting. It would do them good to look in the mirror and ask themselves:

- What do I need to start doing?
- Stop doing?
- Keep doing?

You are a collection of habits. Become your own observer. Identify a handful of proactive changes you can make and commit to implementing them.

- **LOOK AT COACHING, THE ONGOING DEVELOPMENT OF YOUR SALESPEOPLE, AS YOUR #1 PRIORITY.**

With today's rapid-fire pace of business, it's easy for sales managers to spend a majority of their time reacting to the incoming demands for their attention, and little or no time coaching and teaching their salespeople. Tasks such as crises, pressing problems, deadline-driven projects, interruptions and many meetings have a sense of urgency attached to them. But once the urgency is resolved, how much better is your team as a result?

Coaching is the face-to-face process that helps you analyze and improve the production your staff. I've found that the most successful sales managers are the best teachers. They have analyzed what it takes to perform, and broken the process down into its component parts. Sales coaches show and tell salespeople specific ways to improve. The key question you, as a sales manager, need to ask yourself at the end of each day is this: "Is my sales team 1% better today than they were yesterday?" If the answer is "no," your goal ought to be 2% tomorrow!

To develop a peak performing sales team you must be willing to do things that most of your peers won't do ? and that's coach every day.

- **IMPLEMENT AND MANAGE A PERFORMANCE STANDARDS SYSTEM THAT IDENTIFIES AND ENFORCES BEHAVIOR, ACTIVITY, AND RESULTS EXPECTATIONS IN CLEAR, UNAMBIGUOUS TERMS.**

Most sales managers are effective at identifying the sales expectations, and many are effective at identifying the activities expected (such as number of prospecting calls, demos, proposals, etc.). Very few sales managers are effective at translating their behavioral expectations of salespeople into performance standards.

What do I mean by behavioral expectations? Think of your top sales performer. What characteristics does that individual possess which separates him/her from most other salespeople? Chances are this person:

- is a self-starter

- is goal-oriented
- has a high activity level
- always thinks about his/her sales opportunities in process
- works long hours
- always looks for better ways to get things done
- continually learns and develops his/her skills
- supports fellow team-members
- etc., etc., etc.

Now, pull out a copy of your company's sales rep job description. How many of the above behaviors are listed there? If your company is like those I've worked for, not many. High expectations are the key to developing an elite sales team. The best sales managers expect the best from their people, so why not start asking for the above success behaviors from all the players on your team? To increase sales, implement a sales performance management system, by:

1. Identifying the sales results you expect,
2. Identify the behaviors and activities necessary to achieve those results,
3. Measure each salesperson against these objectives, and
4. Coach them accordingly.

For each salesperson, develop a corrective action plan to make him or her better.

It is the success behaviors, in addition to the necessary activities, that generate sales results. If you focus on the input-side of the production equation ? the success behaviors and activities, the results will be there.

Good luck and good leading!