

Introduction

As we continue to work with successful sales organizations all around the world, we have discovered that highly effective sales managers have a set of skills and characteristics in common that set them above all the rest, and which enable them to help their teams to achieve results that are also way above average. These characteristics are defined in the topics below:

Source: <https://www.salesforce.com/blog/2014/11/12-tips-to-improve-sales-performance-gp.html>

1. Many sales teams are over-managed & under-led

That is to say that many sales managers rely too much on metrics and deadlines to drive performance. Highly effective sales managers find numerous ways to come alongside team members to motivate and reward them in a social format that brings out the best in them in a way that inspires everyone.

2. Culture eats strategy for breakfast

This is just a way of saying that highly effective sales managers don't rely on theoretical or arbitrary programs to drive sales team performance. Yes, every team should have a sales process and set goals and measure pipeline, but it works best to align those organizational goals to a social network. Leveraging social goals gives sales individuals targets that are practical, comfortable, and therefore more natural. Of course, behavior that feels more natural will always work better and longer than activities that don't..

3. Building the team, find & hire talent

Effective sales managers are committed to hiring the best talent available. If you want the best, hire the best, and save loads of time and money on training while protecting yourself from failure six months down the road. It costs more up front, but it definitely pays off over time. Look for individuals with social goals that are already more aligned with your organizational goals.

4. Cadence and Consistency

Set and manage the heartbeat of the team

A sales team thrives when all the components of the sales and management process follow regular standards and schedules. If sales managers have the tools, real-time tracking and instantaneous feedback are by far the best methods. When sales reps don't feel a need to stop and check in or work against intermittent review "events," they can give more energy to selling and immediately incorporate managers' instant feedback with deals in motion.

5. Key Performance Indicators:

The glue of your communication strategy

An integral part of a consistent winning cadence is the tone and the topics of your communications with your sales team. Nothing is more important to sales makers than knowing what is expected of them and when it is expected. Effective sales managers keep their communication clear and their expectations well defined, so that team members know what to aim for, and understand what will happen if they hit it (or not).

6. Manage the Forward Pipeline

The difference between pipeline and forecasting

Most sales managers understand the necessity of communicating regularly with team members about pipeline and forecasting. However, highly effective sales managers understand there is a difference between the two. Forecasting is focused on late stage deals. It does little to help with future quarters. Pipeline is focused on the future development of sales, which ultimately impacts later forecasts. Most managers don't differentiate or understand the difference between the two. Keep this in mind when aligning new goals. When coaching for performance, help some reps better understand your coaching by pointing out the respective impact on pipeline or forecasting..

7. Process

Don't over-engineer it, but don't ignore it

Every sales team works within a standardized process that defines how to approach, qualify, work with, and close the customer. This is a good thing. However, highly effective sales managers know it is possible to have too much of a good thing. Highly regimented, complex sales processes can confuse a sales rep and tie their hands. So, an effective sales manager will use all the tech and tools available to track performance in real time. Up-to-the-minute tracking lets managers make up-to-the-minute adjustments, giving their teams "guided flexibility" that is optimal in modern dynamic sales environments..

8. Coaching:

In the day – in the moment

Coaching is the responsibility most neglected by sales managers, because it requires them to borrow time from their already busy day. Highly effective sales managers realize that placing a high priority on coaching will build confidence and drive production for their team better and faster than any other single practice. Therefore, they take advantage of every opportunity, scheduled or unscheduled, to provide feedback that will make their sales reps perform better.

9. Herding cats

Dealing with the mavericks and high performers

It takes a special kind of person to thrive as a sales professional. The highly competitive profile of a successful sales rep can make them a challenge to work with and lead. Effective sales managers know how to motivate and reward this unique breed of cat, to maximize performance and minimize conflict, thus taking a "good" sales professional making them "great." Shrewd managers also leverage social networking, using the success of high performers to motivate others, turning great individual performers into great performing teams..

10. Leading Indicators

Worrisome patterns of behavior

Effective sales managers are always thinking ahead; they can recognize what small trends indicate before they become big problems. By noticing small changes in sales rep performance in what otherwise might look like still "reasonably" good numbers, the sales manager can be proactive by coaching reps as they perform. In doing so, the manager helps prevent weaker performances from becoming anchored as bad habits that sap overall yearly productivity and sales.

11. Protect their time

You can't sell if you aren't spending time with customers

Highly effective sales managers practice good time management habits, and they enable their sales teams to make the most of their time by eliminating demands on their time that don't directly help drive revenue. With clearly aligned goals, all activities can be quickly evaluated. activities that don't support these goals can be eliminated or updated to bring them into alignment.

12. Winning is fun

Celebrate it!

This ought to be self-explanatory, but some sales managers wait too long and then don't celebrate enough. Effective sales managers understand that the best way to dispel some of the pressure is to reward wins – even small ones – as often as possible and use it as an opportunity to give everyone a little boost. A little celebration creates motivation and that goes a long way.

