

## Online Content

### 5 Coaching Steps to Become a Better Sales Manager

According to a new white paper, "[Strategies for Long-Term Success: How to Coach and Incentivize for Sales Growth](#)," successful sales managers are now using a blend of quantitative data and qualitative competencies to uncover useful insight about their sales teams.

The goal, say the authors of the white paper, is to use metrics to make the sales process highly strategic and consistent – and thereby remove the "gut-level" management style that can lack clear results.

What kind of metrics can help you become a better coach and stop managing by instinct? Start with these five steps to put some structure around the activities, behaviors, and skills that can lead your team to success.

**1. Identify where your team already measures up.** Identify your top earners and analyze their performance. Focus on such factors as communication, organization, and relationship-building skills. Choose five or six specific habits or skills they share, then use that information to develop a customized, high-performance plan for everyone else on your sales team. Now that you know more about why your top salespeople are so effective, share their secrets with the rest of the team.

**2. Find out what drives your team to achieve.** Strong motivation makes for strong sales. Survey your salespeople to find out what is important to them and what selling – and succeeding – will do for them. Ask them where they want to be and what kind of lifestyle they want to be leading three or five or ten years from now. Then show them how adopting the habits and skills that you've identified will help them realize that vision. Connect each of your salespeople's personal goals to the process of becoming a better salesperson.

**3. Put improvements in writing.** Ask your team to write down which specific sales-related behaviors they promise to modify. For best results, limit behavioral changes to no more than four at a time. Also, have your salespeople write down what action steps they need to take to make those changes. Both you and your salesperson should sign the written agreement.

**4. Set up a structured coaching program.** Once your people know what's expected of them and how to make it happen, monitor and assess their performance and provide feedback. Establish a structured coaching program that includes both role playing and actual on-the-job situations. Set deadlines for attaining behaviors, and measure progress in weekly reviews.

When establishing deadlines and providing feedback, take into account your team members' individual strengths and weaknesses. A new salesperson with a bad case of call reluctance, for example, might need a little more time to improve his or her prospecting skills than an outgoing, gregarious veteran who's just been spending too much time on current accounts.

**5. Acknowledge and reward success.** As much as your salespeople might want to achieve their personal goals, studies show that recognition can also be incredibly motivating. Praise efforts to improve, and remember to make the praise personal, specific, and timely. Consider offering prizes to the two or three individuals who reach their performance goals farthest ahead of schedule or to those who show the most improvement. The more ways you find to make performance improvement fun and rewarding, the more effort your team is likely to put into it.

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