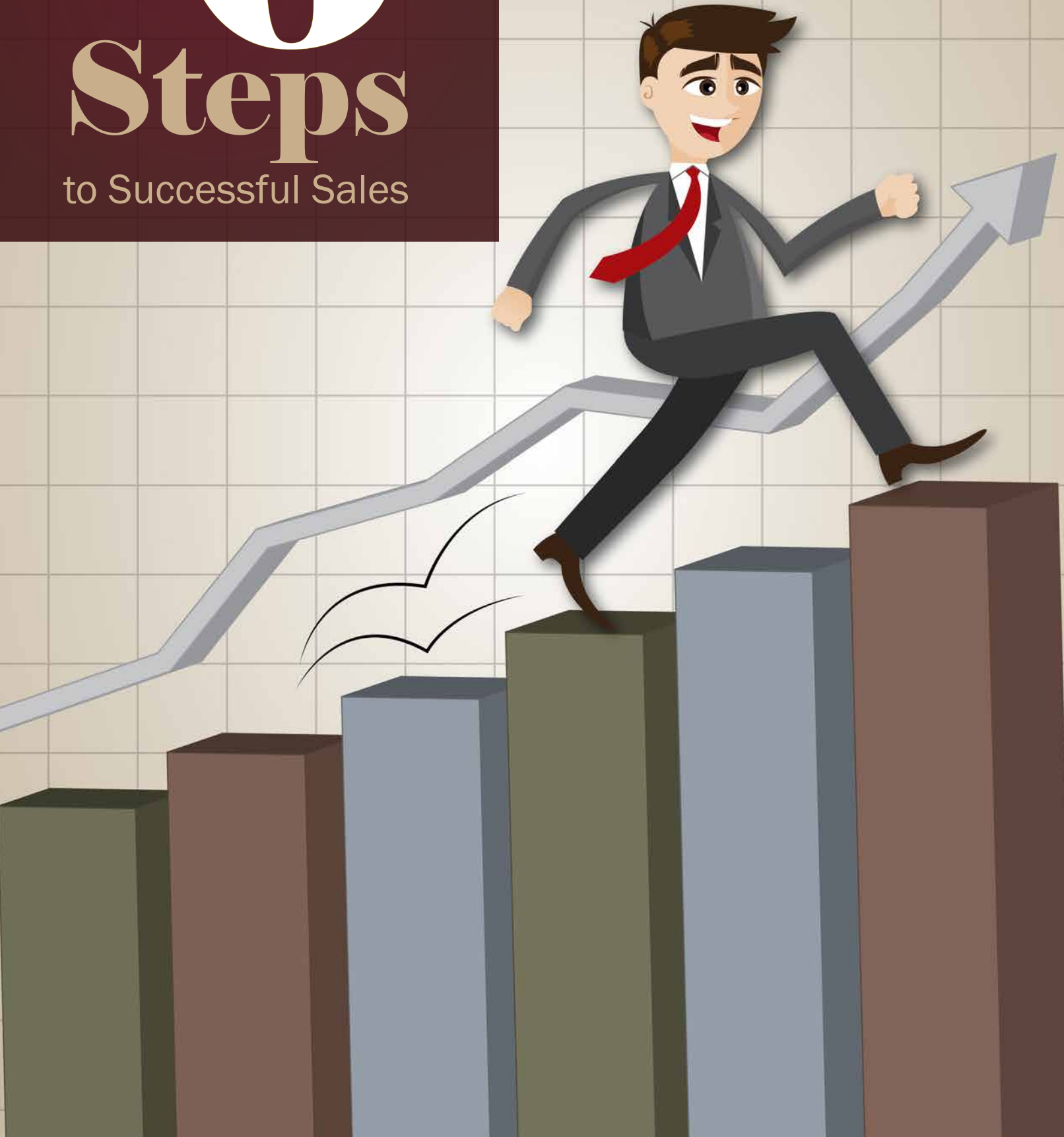


# 6 Steps to Successful Sales

Profiles  International  
imagine great people®



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# intro

**Salespeople in today's modern workforce** are not the stereotypical "product pushers"—hard headed, over-talkative types. Selling is a vital component to the success of any organization. Successful salespeople are solutions providers to their prospective clients. They are diverse, depending on culture, company, demographics, etc., but they still share core traits. Many experts believe that a person's personality, work related traits, beliefs, and attitudes are the basis for professional success. Research

also outlines how successful salespeople (in comparison to employees in other fields), possess a unique set of personality attributes that enable them to succeed. Learn how to effectively manage and coach these individuals, spot issues, and maximize sales force productivity.

This eBook offers invaluable content to not only help salespeople be more successful, but also to help the sales manager more effectively lead their sales force.

# 9 Sales Practices

You Should Always Follow



**Landing a job in sales is one thing, but being successful in sales can prove to be a much more challenging and stressful task.** There are a couple of reasons job boards are always flooded with open sales positions:

- **Working in sales isn't for everyone.** If the stress of quotas and performance-based job security is enough to keep you awake at night, and if you lack confidence, motivation, or social skills, then sales may not be for you. To be successful in a sales position, it takes an individual with specific skills and characteristics, along with the right mindset and proper training.
- **Training and coaching is often subpar.** The sad truth is, many new hires in sales positions (who would otherwise be successful) fail because they are improperly trained, thrown into a sea of prospects, and told to deliver results or get out. This situation is far too common, and is a recipe for disaster from the start.

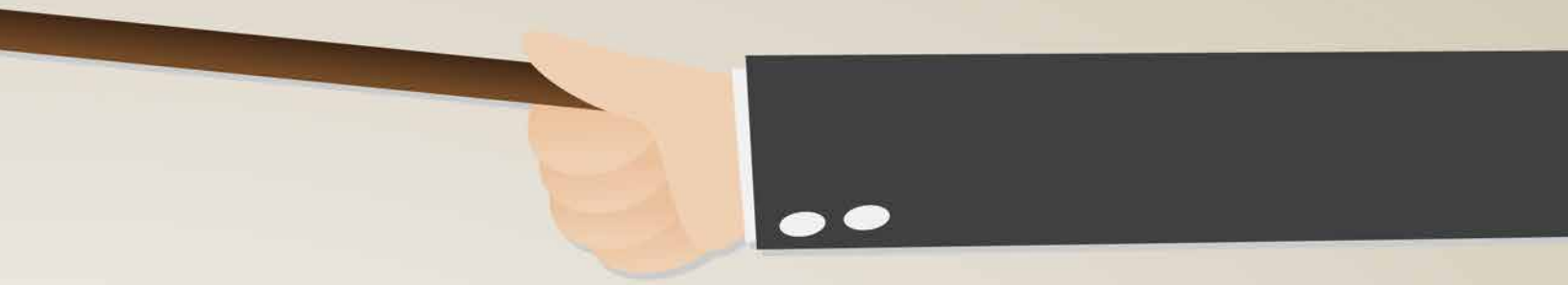
Regardless of your experience or circumstance, there are specific sales practices that should always be followed. Here are nine sales practices you should always follow:

## 1. Be well prepared

A potential client can usually tell if you're prepared or not. You should be well-informed about a prospect's industry and potential needs before making initial contact, and you should spend time preparing for any meetings or phone calls that follow. Recent survey results show that 44 percent of sales reps prepare for a prospect meeting the day before, 12 percent prep a week in advance, and 2 percent "wing it" or don't prepare at all. Without proper preparation, prospects will see you as just another telemarketer attempting to pull a fast one and take their money for something they don't need. Being prepared will directly affect prospects' perception of you and your product.

## 2. Ask strategic questions

When meeting with your prospective client, don't just throw information at them and expect it to stick. Ask strategic questions that will reveal useful insights,



## **Challenges are inevitable**, so utilize them as an **opportunity to develop your sales skills**, and you **will be even more successful than you were before!**

and allow the prospect to come to conclusions on their own. For example, you might ask, “What is your organization’s toughest challenge? What will happen if you don’t solve it?” Through proper planning, and knowing your product and your client’s needs, you’ll be able to form rhetorical and open-ended questions that will favorably sculpt the prospect’s view of your offerings.

### **3. Listen carefully**

Don’t do all the talking; always listen very closely when your prospect is speaking and maintain eye contact. The ability to be a great listener in sales is key, as doing this lets clients know that you are genuinely interested in them, their business, and that you can help with their challenges. Should the prospect communicate concerns, effective listening can help you address them, learn what is most important to the client, and pick up on cues that will help you determine the best angle to take on your pitch. One of the easiest ways to sell your product or service is by identifying how it solves your prospects’ problems. Ask questions to find out what they need. For

example, they may have no need for the flagship solution that you are pitching, but could utilize a different product.

### **4. Focus on prospects’ needs**

Knowing your prospect and their needs is the most important step in determining what products to pitch, thereby gaining their business. If you were to offer someone a vacuum, but they just bought one last week, it’s unlikely you’ll be closing the sale. Now, let’s say you ask strategic questions and discover they have a 30-year-old refrigerator that needs repair—you focus on their need for a new refrigerator, which you also happen to offer, and close the sale. Every potential client has a different set of needs, so identifying and catering to their needs through specific products or services is crucial to getting new business.

### **5. Build value**

If you can effectively build value in your offerings, they will essentially sell themselves. Give examples of situations where a past client had a challenge, how your services helped solve it, and what the end result

## It's easy to get down when you're on a losing streak with prospects, but remember that **Rome was not built in a day.**

was. This strategy is effective because it describes real-world applications of what you are offering, and the client doesn't feel like they're being sold to. Once you discover specific solutions the prospect is most interested in, keep building value around those points. Before closing, it's important to go back and summarize each point of value you discussed earlier.

### **6. Be honest!**

Prospects may be apprehensive to fully trust you because you may be perceived to have self-serving motives as a salesperson—commissions and quotas, etc. This is a hurdle that you will face in almost every sale, so learning how to defeat it quickly is vital to gaining business. People want to buy from others they can trust, so honesty and transparency at every point in the sale is an absolute must. Throw in some humor if you can, and be genuine in your conversation. Remember that the point of making the sale is only one part of the transaction, so don't think you can use dishonesty as a closing tool without it coming back to bite you. A great overall buying experience—from interaction, to the product, to service after the sale—creates returning customers and increased sales through referral.

### **7. Ask for the sale**

The moment of truth is at the point when you ask for the sale. When asking for the sale, never ask the prospect a question they can answer “no” to! For example, instead of asking “Would you like to buy this today,” you would ask, “Would Monday or Wednesday be better for you to come to the store?” This tactic assumes the sale and offers the client options, which gives them the feeling that they are in control. Should the client say “neither,” offer him or her more choices.

If you have successfully built value, and addressed the prospect's needs and concerns, then asking for the sale and getting a “yes” should be a given.

### **8. Handle rejection professionally**

Sometimes things don't go as planned, no matter how well the pitch goes. Maybe the prospect wants the product, but doesn't have room for it in their budget. Other times, a prospect may be interested, but not convinced. Regardless of the reason, rejection always stings the same. Handling rejection in a professional manner can be difficult, but it is always necessary. You never know when that client's budget might increase, or whether they will become convinced after hearing how well it worked from a friend. Prospects sometimes come back after the initial “no,” so don't burn bridges.

### **9. Keep trying!**

It's easy to get down when you're on a losing streak with prospects, but remember that Rome was not built in a day, and even the most successful salespeople have their slumps. This step applies to both rising from sales slumps and persistence with the client that said “no” until you get a “yes.” If you have a client that remains unconvinced, don't give up. Instead, figure out what their objection is, find a solution, and try again! If you're in a sales slump, treat it as a learning experience, and make the most of it by finding and testing new, more effective sales strategies. Challenges are inevitable, so utilize them as an opportunity to develop your sales skills, and you will be even more successful than you were before!

# Catch a Falling Star:

## How to Save a Flailing Sales Rep

**So, you hired a new sales rep. He seemed highly qualified:** great resume, very personable, relevant work experience, and he nailed the interview. But, months have passed since he was hired, and he just isn't delivering the numbers. What's going on? Is it time to let him go?

The costs associated with hiring and training a replacement sales rep are daunting, and depend on a variety of factors, like start date (both how quickly a new rep can start and at what time during the quarter or year they start), sales experience, and training and cultural assimilation, not to mention the specific factors that go into making an effective sales rep.

There is a third option: can the rep be coached? No matter how you break it down, it's clearly more expensive, time consuming, and risky to bring in a new rep, which is why most sales managers would prefer to invest in the reps they have, if given the choice. Recent research from [CSO Insights' sales survey](#) shows that coaching sales reps is the number-one key to helping them rev up their sales. A greater emphasis on coaching is a necessity that will help your new sales hires become fully productive faster and more efficiently.

So, how do you go about effectively coaching an underperformer? Here are three fundamental steps sales managers must take to coach and develop underperforming sales reps:

### 1. Assess

Before you begin coaching, you need to know and understand the individual as best you can. You need to know their specific strengths and weaknesses, skills and attributes, and personality and behavioral traits. Most of this information isn't found in a single job interview or resume. To fully understand them, you



need to assess them! Profiles International offers the Profiles Sales Assessment™ that specifically measures how well a person fits sales jobs, and includes seven critical sales behaviors: prospecting, call reluctance, closing the sale, self-starting, working with a team, building and maintaining relationships, and compensation preference.

### 2. Compare with top performers

After the underperformer takes an assessment, you compare their results to those of a top performer, so you can see the areas where the individual is struggling. The differences will show where the underperformer needs to improve to succeed.

### 3. Train and develop

Once you know the areas in which the individual is struggling, you can give them appropriate sales training designed to improve those traits or behaviors. Let's say an individual scored lower in the area of assertiveness. The sales manager can cater training to specifically improve the sales rep's ability to not take no for an answer.

It is also critically important that the sales manager fully invest in the training process on a personal level, not merely manage the numbers. "Unless the direct supervisor is perceived as owning that coaching, the coaching is likely to have relatively minimal impact," says [Brent Adamson](#), senior director of the Corporate Executive Board.

# The One Skill

That Will Make You Better  
at Managing a Sales Force



**Sales strategy professor Steve W. Martin estimates** that 70 percent of salespeople are born with natural skills and instincts that make them great at their jobs. While most sales managers would agree with this, it is easy to fall into the trap of using statistics such as these as an excuse to treat your entire sales force the same. Yes, your salespeople more than likely have innate traits that make them great prospectors, cold callers, and relationship builders. But the difference between managing a good sales force and managing a great sales force is in the subtleties.

Among your sales force, one person may be especially great at selling in southern regions because that is where he or she worked for years. Another salesperson may be particularly great at building relationships with working mothers. If you forget to treat your salespeople as individuals, you will miss opportunities to align your successful salespeople with the opportunities where they are most likely to succeed.

One skill that will take your sales talent to another level of success is appreciating your salespeople's differences, and learning how to leverage them for sales effectiveness. Here are four steps you can take to get started:

- 1. To manage differences among your salespeople,** you must first know what those differences are. Assessments like the Profiles Sales Assessment™ can help you measure how well a person fits specific sales jobs in your company. You can model jobs based on geography, department, and a host of other factors. The key in this step is to figure out what skills your employees have that go beyond the basic sales skills. While your entire sales force is probably proficient at prospecting, maybe one of your salespeople is exceptional at it. Shifting more prospecting duties to him or her would make your entire team more effective. Perhaps you have a salesperson who makes the majority of his or her sales via phone, without needing face-to-face visits. He or she should take on more cold calling duties.





Your sales team is **not simply a unit**; it is a collection of people with **different personalities and skills**. Recognizing each of their strengths will help you utilize them to **achieve success for your organization**.

- 2. After identifying those differences, it's time** to place your salespeople where you know they will succeed. It is important to keep your sales force in the loop on this step. Do not change your salespeople's assignments or regions without telling them why. One of the best ways to motivate your salespeople is to let them know why you believe they will succeed in a particular function. They will go out with the confidence necessary to close deals.
- 3. Train your salespeople on how to use the right** combination of their basic sales skills and individual strengths to successfully sell. Now that you have identified the strengths of your salespeople and motivated them to use those strengths, it is time to teach them how to use them. This will require knowledge of the sales opportunities you have coming up. Go over each of your salespeople's

assignment lists, pointing out the ways you discovered that their strengths could help them in closing a particular deal.

- 4. Even though you are now aware of the** individual skills your salespeople have, do not neglect to develop their basic sales skills. Every job has a set of core skills that you must have to succeed. Sales jobs are no different. Continue to invest in workshops, webinars, and conferences for your sales force. This will allow them to maintain a solid base from which they can continue to build their individual selling styles.

Your sales team is not simply a unit; it is a collection of people with different personalities and skills. Recognizing each of their strengths will help you utilize them to achieve success for your organization.

## Are Your Salespeople Burnt Out?



**Did you know, according to Outbound Excellence,** that about 20 percent of your sales force delivers 80 percent of the revenue? That is a lot of work! When a salesperson is hired on, they are pumped, motivated, and ready to work. But, that could also be an issue! Salespeople put their hearts into the job and start out in full sprint; but eventually that sprint turns to running, which turns to jogging, which turns to walking, which turns to stopping, and then eventually collapsing (hence, the burnout). The reason these people collapse often comes down to three critical factors: aspiration, engagement, and leadership.

How can you tell when your salespeople are starting to burn out? There are tons of signs, but you can usually tell when someone is burning out because their attitude changes, they start to become negative, and there is a huge decrease in productivity. What started out as aspiration and inspiration soon starts to turn into despair. Motivation becomes excuses. So, what caused them to give up and lose hope?

Sales jobs are hard; that is why only a select group of people are cut out for them. The burnout could be because of time. It takes a lot of man hours to be a salesperson. Another reason is lack of results, which causes a decrease in commission. Money is a key motivator for some salespeople. Or, it could be that they heard too many “no’s!” Imagine talking to 20 people and hearing 19 “no’s” —it can take a toll on you.

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Once salespeople have lost their aspiration, they can become highly disengaged. Engagement involves the employee's commitment to the company and its mission. An engaged employee puts the company's best interests first. If the employee is disengaged, it could cause trouble for the company. A disengaged employee also costs the company money! Disengagement will cause salespeople to burn out even quicker.

Could this have been avoided? Yes! Leaders need to spot the signs before the collapse of a salesperson. Hiring managers and leaders often neglect one simple question: "Does he want to do this and can he do it?" Sixty-four percent of salespeople fail because they are in the wrong job, not because they cannot sell. Pre-employment assessments can help determine if they are right for the job.

So, what can you do to prevent a salesperson from burning out? Lead! If a leader sees a salesperson becoming less productive, does that mean the leader should make them retrain? No, because salespeople should constantly be training. They should be networking with peers to see what is working for them, continuing to learn new tactics and skills, reading business and sales books, going to seminars. . . the list goes on. Those types of things can start to inspire them. The leader should also sit with the salesperson and ask them to remember what motivated them in the beginning, and what motivates them now. Talk to them about their goals. Giving someone something to strive for can help build motivation. Talking to your salespeople will improve engagement. Don't let your salespeople burn out!

# 6 Ways

## To Coach Your Sales Team to the Top



**Your sales team is the lifeblood and backbone of your organization.** Regular sales training is imperative to the success of your organization, as sales produces the revenue that supports many of your other essential business operations.

### 1. Know what you are coaching

Before coaching begins, sales managers need to decide which areas to focus on, and how those areas will be measured. Remember, areas of focus should include strengths and weaknesses, skills and attributes, and personality and behavioral traits. Creating a benchmark for these areas will allow managers to measure how the sales reps naturally approach sales, and where the coaching effort is needed most.

### 2. Coach early and coach often

Effective sales managers coach their sales reps from day one, and they coach and offer sales training on a regular basis. This allows managers to catch any potential problems before they happen, and helps to increase performance by showing continued interest while providing feedback. Sales managers should work with each sales rep to set clear, realistic goals based on performance expectations.

### 3. Coach each individual

Although sales reps share certain characteristics and skills, they are individuals. It is important for sales managers to remember that one size does not fit all. Each rep possesses unique qualities. The better a

manager understands the sales rep, the more effective the coaching and the results.

### 4. Implement coaching-based performance management

Good performance rarely happens by accident. Coaching-based performance management provides key insights about each salesperson, and shows the rep how to leverage that knowledge to improve sales performance. This methodology works because managers can use it continuously and proactively from the beginning of each sales rep's career.

### 5. Coach relationships and team dynamics

Relationships directly impact productivity, and understanding relationships improves team dynamics. Unhealthy relationships clearly undermine performance, while colleagues working together in harmony have the best chance of success. Potential conflicts need to be identified and dealt with early. Defining conflict points will enable leaders and sales team members to work together to avoid or solve issues.

### 6. Coach to develop strategic workforce planning

Taking time to develop and improve your sales team generates leadership, and ensures future business success. The coaching that sales managers provide should prepare reps for leadership positions, and should align with the organization's mission, strategic plan, budgetary resources, and desired workforce competencies.



## Ensure salespeople fit with Profiles Sales Assessment™.

**Profiles Sales Assessment™** draws upon data based on the top-performing salespeople in specific sales jobs in an organization, and is used primarily for selecting, onboarding, and managing salespeople and account managers. The “job modeling” feature is unique, and can be customized by company, sales position, department, manager, geography, or any combination of these factors.

### **Profiles Sales Assessment™** helps you:

- Evaluate an individual based on the qualities required to perform successfully
- Predict on-the-job performance in seven critical sales behaviors: prospecting, call reluctance, closing the sale, self-starting, working with a team, building and maintaining relationships, and compensation preference.

# Show Me The Money:

## How to Maximize Sales Force Productivity



**Salespeople are the individuals who represent a** company and sell the products or services that the organization offers. The job of a sales rep can vary greatly depending on the organization and types of products and services they sell; however, sales reps are often considered some of the most important employees within an organization. Sales equal money, so without sales, an organization would cease to exist. The importance of a company's sales force cannot be understated in a competitive marketplace.

Finding good salespeople can be difficult and time consuming. Many organizations struggle to create, develop, and maintain a successful sales force. This article will focus on what companies can do to maximize the productivity of the entire sales team once they have hired sales employees.

According to a survey conducted by Profiles International, there are seven actions organizations and sales managers can take to transform their sales team into lean, mean, selling machines:

### 1. **Address negative or disengaged attitudes immediately**

The nature of sales provides plenty of opportunities for negative emotions to surface: loss of a sale, loss of a client, rejection, and market conditions. Negative attitudes can lead to decreased levels of employee engagement, productivity, and morale. Managers need to address these negative attitudes before they have the ability to impact productivity. A positive atmosphere in the sales department is important to motivate employees so they can press through the challenges that accompany a sales job.

### 2. **Set valid time and activity goals for tracking progress of sales employees**

Tracking employee performance is a no-brainer, and it is crucial for sales employees. Sales managers need to set clear goals, and measure the progress of each sales rep. Performance-tracking tools help managers organize and follow sales, revenue, and client goals for each salesperson. The pressure to meet a goal can provide additional motivation for less-productive employees.

# **Sales equal money, so without sales, an organization would cease to exist. The importance of a company's sales force cannot be understated in a competitive marketplace.**

### **3. Share knowledge and information concerning the sales process**

Knowledge sharing is an effective way to increase the productivity of sales employees without removing them from their job. Technology provides many tools that allow knowledge to be shared easily within a department; online chat forums, online training videos, webinars, or emails that publicly recognize the success of sales reps and share the specific techniques used to achieve success.

### **4. Implement a systematic process to attain new clients and win new business**

Organizations have a variety of goals and objectives when it comes to sales. These goals not only depend on the product or service, but industry size as well. Upselling existing clients is always one goal, but sales reps should always strive to win new clients and sales. Planning and establishing strategies for obtaining new business will ensure long-term growth for your sales force, along with the entire organization.

### **5. Establish a strategic process to grow and increase key accounts**

It definitely costs more money, and takes more effort, to gain a new client than it does to maintain an existing client. Organizations need to create strategies and processes that increase sales in key accounts. Growing key accounts and maintaining clients over a long period of time are significantly more valuable than one-time buyers or short-term clients. Sales managers and reps need to understand the

importance of maintaining and growing existing clients, and the financial implications that accompany that process.

### **6. Provide targeted training for sales employees**

Sales training is imperative. Organizations must select training programs that fit the strengths of the sales department, and provide specific tools that will help the sales team meet organizational goals. Training should balance focus between interpersonal interactions, persuasive communication, and utilizing new technology to learn more about prospects and clients. Sales managers and organizations must be aware of the needs of their sales force in order to select the best training programs.

### **7. Equip the sales force with the tools needed to be successful**

Sales managers are not responsible for forcing salespeople to do their jobs, but they are responsible for providing sales reps the opportunity for success. One way managers can do this is by providing efficient technology, access to market and client information, and additional sales training. Providing these tools can not only increase productivity, it can also help build trust, commitment, and loyalty between the sales manager and the sales team.

Organizations and sales managers often face challenges when trying to develop their sales force and increase productivity. By taking the steps listed above, companies can rise to the challenge of maximizing the productivity of their sales force and ensure future success.



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