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The **One** consistent
thing the Worlds Top
Performing Sales
Managers do.

Developing Sales Professionals who can compete and win



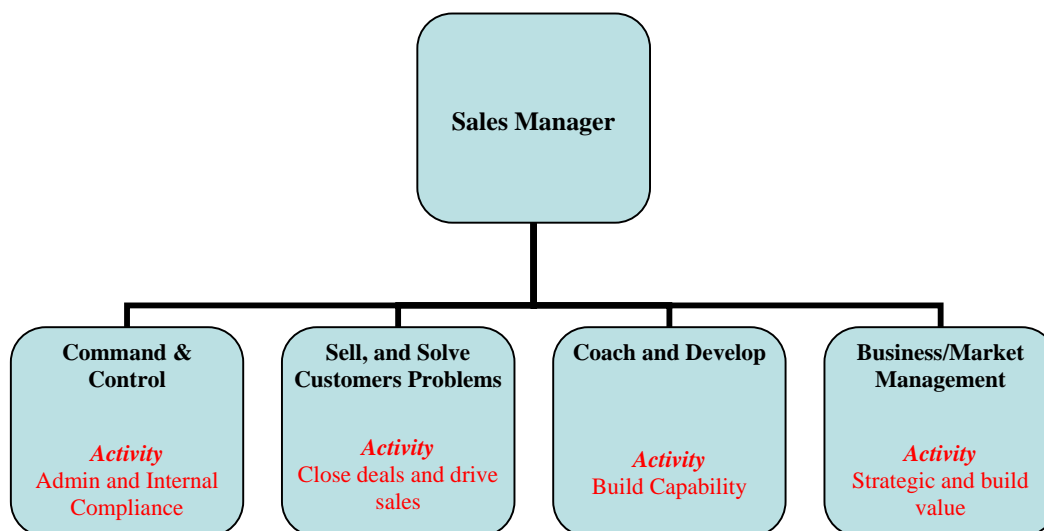
Facilitation Consulting Coaching

The one consistent thing the Worlds Top Performing Sales Managers do.

By Paul Newsom, Sales Partners International

Sales managers have a multitude of tasks and responsibilities. Hiring, training, planning, reporting, admin, motivating, selling, fire fighting, managing performance – any sales manager will readily add to the list. But what sets the top sales managers apart from the rest?

Typically these tasks and responsibilities fall naturally into one of four areas of what I call ‘the sales management spectrum’.



1. Command and Control

This sales manager is the administrator. Their day revolves around day to day admin, operating mission control mostly via their email, measuring and reporting, and filtering out all the clutter so that sales people are not distracted.

2. Sell, and Solve Customer Problems

This sales manager enjoys selling more than managing. They get involved in all the big deals and building relationships with clients. They often ‘take over’ deals from sales people at the critical time. In fact they might sometimes be better employed as the top sales person, rather than a sales manager.

3. Coach and Develop

This sales manager spends high quality time with their sales people, truly helping them to develop into top performers. They are excellent at identifying and recruiting talent. Sales managers of large teams who truly focus on coaching and developing will spend a large proportion of their time building the capability of the team.

4. Business/Market Management

This sales manager is the strategic thinker who works on the big picture, building value in the business. They are looking for strategic alliances, and work closely with marketing on changing trends and opportunities. In smaller companies, they will be the strategic marketing department, driving product development based on market intelligence and research, as well as being the sales manager.

The best sales managers I know are effective across the spectrum. However, many sales managers have an individual style which favours just one or two of the key areas. Indeed, many sales managers that I have worked for tended to spend their time on the command and control.

So is one area of the spectrum more important than others?

I consider that the most important job of the sales manager is to help their sales people succeed. As a sales manager, if your sales team are successful, then it stands to reason that you will be successful. Building the capability of the team, through training where needed, and consistent coaching has to be the primary focus for the sales manager.

Most importantly for me, as a sales person, there was one common trend with the command and control managers that I have worked for - I didn't learn much from them. They were not helping me to be successful.

Recent studies all point to the fact that the one consistent thing that the worlds top performing sales organisations do is that the sales managers are highly effective coaches.

For example, here are the findings from three trusted sources:

'The most important skill is that of the sales manager who coaches and develops the sales person. However, most sales managers are more administrator than coach.

Sales people who receive ½ day per week 1:1 with their sales manager are twice as productive as other sales people.'

Source: HR Chally Group world class sales excellence report 2007

'Top sales performers work for managers who create a culture of development, recognition and coaching. These teams were 38% more productive, and had 27% higher profitability.

Consistently superior results depend on the manager.'

Source: Gallup Organisation, survey of 250,000 sales people, 1 million customers, 80,000 managers. 2003

'The manager activity most closely associated with sales rep success is coaching. However, of the skills that managers possess, an ability to coach individual sales reps is relatively the weakest.

The SEC findings are that the worlds best sales managers provide, on average, 3-5 hours coaching per person per month. Teams who did achieved 107% of target. Teams who did less than 2 hours per month achieved 90% of target.'

Source: Sales Executive Council – world class sales coaching 2007

Some sales training works, but quite often it doesn't. When it does work, the part the sales manager plays in reinforcing the training, after the training has been done, is key to the success of the training, and particularly the business results. When training doesn't work a primary reason will be that there is nothing in place to reinforce the training - to turn learning into performance.

Old habits die hard - people carry on doing what they have always done.

The SEC report confirms this: *'reps fail to recall 87% of what they have learned within 30 days of receiving training. When training is complemented by in-field coaching, productivity is quadrupled, increasing from 22% to 88%.'*

You have probably seen similar statistics before on class room training. They are somewhat scary if you invest in the training, but have nothing in place to follow up. Sustained coaching is vital to derive the benefit and value of most sales training and help the team to apply the knowledge and use the tools they have learned in the class room.

I do find that coaching is not well understood. Giving direction and orders, showing someone how to do something, or persuading that person to do something are common examples of what I see when managers think they are coaching.

Recent research supports my observations:

'Many organisations do not have a 'coaching culture', and managers worldwide, who have direct reports and therefore by definition are team leaders, currently struggle to understand what coaching really is, let alone reap the rewards that coaching can deliver.'
NZATD People & Performance, June-July 09, *The Coaching Conundrum Asia – Pacific Executive Summary*

So before you embark on your next sales training program, do your team a favour and develop your own coaching skills, or get help from someone who can assist with this. You will need to figure out how to coach the process, using the tools and techniques introduced in the training. For the sales manager who has not done any professional development in sales coaching, then this should perhaps be the biggest priority in your own personal development.



'It's what you learn after you know it all that counts' – John Wooden, American Basketball coach.

Contact us now to learn more about our 'Coaching for Performance' programmes

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Paul Newsom is a nationally recognized consultant, trainer, coach and author, helping sales professionals and sales managers to compete and win in a complex sale.