



Coaching The ‘Coach’

Turn sales managers into successful coaches by improving three traits

By Jim Peduto

We’ve all heard sales managers “coach” salespeople. Do any of these statements sound familiar: ‘How did the call go?’ ‘Let’s close more sales.’ ‘Make more appointments!’ ‘Ask better questions.’ ‘Ask for more money.’ ‘Go back and try again!’

Coaching is the single most important activity that sales managers can do to increase sales, yet surveys show that six out of 10 sales managers lack a strong coaching competency and are simply not effective.

I find that the best coaches regularly commit to the following three tasks:

- **Spend enough time:** Experts agree that sales managers should spend at least 50 percent of their time coaching salespeople. Unbelievably, only 3 percent all sales managers spend enough time coaching. As a result, it is common to find managers who are ineffective simply because they aren’t spending enough time coaching their salespeople. Effective coaching requires between 30 and 60 minutes per day per salesperson.

- **Create the right environment:** Creating a supportive environment is the foundation for successful coaching. Salespeople must have good business relationships with their managers, trust their intentions, believe in their advice, and respect their expertise. Salespeople should be open to change and sales managers should be re-focused rather than self-focused. Even the most well-intentioned sales managers will have difficulty if they have not created an environment that supports productive and effective sales coaching.

- **Develop coaching skills:** After 20 years of collecting data, we know that fewer than 7 percent of sales managers have enough of



the sales coaching skills to be highly effective. Sales managers need to possess certain skills in order to positively impact their sales teams.

A sales manager should be able to:

- Debrief efficiently;
- Handle joint sales calls effectively;
- Ask questions;
- Control emotions;
- Know why people buy; and
- Know how people buy.

In addition, a good coach has a sales process, doesn’t seek approval from salespeople and doesn’t rescue salespeople.

Most sales managers are promoted into their role due to prior sales success. However, the skills and behaviors that make a successful salesperson do not necessarily translate to a great sales manager. The coaching skills required to succeed as a sales manager can, and must, be learned.

Coaching is the key to unleashing sales growth. To improve sales coaching, the best approach for distributors is to measure and baseline the amount of time sales managers spend with their staffs, the organization’s environment and the percentage of coaching traits that its sales managers possess. With a clear understanding of each, distributors can take action to close gaps and build on strengths. **SMI**

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