



Can A Self-Managed Sales Force Succeed?

Salespeople need more coaching and less autonomy

By Jim Peduto

Think about your sales force. Now, think about your mediocre and underperforming salespeople. Does the phrase “They’re not costing me anything” sound familiar? If so, then this article applies to you. This article is also for you if you believe that salespeople should be given autonomy as long as they “produce results.”

It is shocking how many CEOs treat their sales force like independent contractors. As long as incentive-based salespeople are earning their way, leadership takes a hands-off approach.

The data is in and the days of the swashbuckling, self-managed salesperson are over. There is no room for discussion. Top sales forces are closely-managed, disciplined and process-driven. Elite sellers use a milestone-centric sales process and are rigorously coached.

Sales process: Based on evaluations of over 1.8 million salespeople, we know that elite salespeople are 400 percent more likely than weak salespeople to have sales process as a strength.

As the table below shows, elite salespeople use a process. Weak salespeople do not.

Sales Percentile	Sales Process Is A Strength
Elite	85%
Weak	21%

Think you have a sales process? Think again. Dave Kurlan’s “Modern Science Behind Sales Force Excellence” white paper found 68 percent of the companies surveyed claimed to have a formal

sales process. Yet, when tested, only 9 percent of salespeople actually follow one.

A fully implemented sales process is a growth engine. Kurlan’s research shows that 75 percent of companies reported an increase in sales as a result of adoption of a formal sales process. A sales process is both the basis of training and the backbone of ongoing coaching. A well-designed, disciplined and fully implemented sales process positively impacts all aspects of selling. It’s no wonder the best sales teams are committed to their sales process from the top down.

Coaching: Effective sales coaching can improve long-term performance up to 19 percent. We also know that sales training combined with consistent coaching produces a four times greater impact on sales than training alone.

Most significantly, strong coaching produces more than twice the number of elite salespeople compared to weak coaching.

Strength of Coaching	Percentage of Elite Salespeople
Weak Coaching	6.02%
Strong Coaching	12.47%

Elite professionals, whether in sales or any other profession, do things the rest don’t do. That is one reason why they are elite. Using a sales process and receiving great coaching are two of the most impactful ways to produce an elite salesperson.

As markets continue to evolve and customers seek trusted advisors over product peddlers, the importance of leadership is clear. Salespeople can no longer be left to their own devices. Leadership requires creating a sales environment built around a sales process and continual learning. As Harvey Firestone said, “The growth and development of people is the highest calling of leadership.”

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