

# Sales Coaching

## Tuning your Sales Performance – a Case Study



Even the most experienced sales person, who has not missed a quota club yet, can improve. As, in athletics, where gold medal winners continue to set new personal bests and new world records, so it is in sales. Even for the best, there is always something new to learn, an ability that has become dull and needs honing or a technique that has been forgotten. Experienced sales teams do not need more training: they need personal coaching. With a wealth of practical experience, we provides a unique Sales Coaching consultancy, designed to bring out the best in your staff and ensure your sales force delivers on their targets

This case study looks at the benefits that a major software vendor has received through coaching. This is just one of the many companies who have gained from the technique. To protect the innocent, we will call them Sales R Us.

Experienced athletes don't need to be taught how to run, but they all have personal coaches. In fact Lynford Christie had four! The role of the coach is to bring out the best in the athlete, tuning their existing talent, skills and expertise to achieve their true potential.

**Your sales people know how to sell.  
But are they maximising your potential?**

Your sales team lie between you and your targets. Improving the performance and motivation of each sales person will make it far easier to meet and exceed your corporate goals.

A happy sales force is a successful sales force. One may also argue that a successful sales force is a happy sales force, which by definition will also be true. However, faced with a lack of success at the corporate level, the most direct approach to rectifying the situation is to address the individual needs of the sales people. To be happy, and hence to perform well as individuals, most people need to feel secure, they need to feel valued and they need to know that the reward for their success is being achieved through their own endeavour.

By addressing the skills, knowledge and motivation that each individual sales person requires to achieve their personal needs and ambitions, sales coaching supports the achievement of your corporate objectives.

### **Background**

Sales R Us is a major international software company. With a target of growing to 130% of last year's revenue, at the half-year they found themselves lagging slightly behind plan. It was at this point that they decided to introduce coaching, to improve the individual sales peoples' performance. Everyone, from the most junior sales person through to the sales manager was involved.



### **What is Sales Coaching?**

As distinct from sales training, where groups of people are tutored on the strategies, tactics and techniques of selling, sales coaching is delivered through a one on one approach.

It starts by creating an inventory of each individual's sales skills. Through this understanding of the individual's personality, ambitions and motivations, their strengths and their development needs can be defined. Typically, one key area that requires development and two or three other needs are identified initially.

Individual coaching sessions are then used to address these specific needs. The coaching sessions are carried out within the context of the actual business. This is not a theoretical exercise that takes time out of the business, but one that actually moves the business forward during the learning process. This makes coaching a particular effective use of the training budget.

Sales coaching works by setting development objectives and then implementing small purposeful changes that are often initiated by the salesperson themselves. The effect of each small change may be relatively transparent but the combined effect is a measurable increase in their performance.

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*"increasing your sales revenues"*

## ***Coaching for all***

The role of the coach is to cultivate the capabilities of the individual and motivate them to exceed their past performance.

The coach's background in senior IT sales roles, enables him to relate to the issues which typically confront the sales people they are coaching. This understanding and empathy is used to create a bond of trust between the sales person and their coach.

However, being a coach does not mean you have to be a better sales person than the one you are coaching. At Sales R Us, the most experienced sales people were actually the most appreciative of the coaching and found it most beneficial. To quote the sales manager "In 10 years of doing this job, this is the first time someone has taken the time to talk to me about the things which are important to me. Despite my heavy workload I always make time for my coaching sessions."

The more junior salespeople, At Sales R Us, tended to benefit most from coaching on the importance of building a strong pipeline, which with a typical sales cycle of 9 to 12 months, can be equally as important as closing this quarter's deals.

Senior staff typically honed their skills through a better appreciation of the processes and cultural facets of handling large international deals for global accounts.

In each case, while improving their sales skills, the coaching also helped to move key sales forward.

## ***The Benefits***

Most sales directors appreciate the importance of nurturing and coaching the sales staff but often find that there isn't the time because of the corporate demand for business growth rather than staff development. And as Drucker so succinctly points out, *"Individual needs are not catered for by treating people as Human Resources"*,

By introducing an external sales coach the sales manager can ensure that his staff's needs are well catered for while he/she gets on with the job of growing the business. In addition, the inhibitions inherent in a manager/employee relationship do not interfere with the successful skill and knowledge transfer, which are essential to good coaching.

By addressing the individual performance issues coaching brings out the best in people, improving their

confidence and their motivation. While this has obvious benefits in terms of short-term revenue achievement, it also leads to a significant decrease in the attrition rate and turnover of sales staff.

Sales R Us investment in sales coaching has not only created a better sales force, it has reduced the amount of money and time spent on the recruitment and induction of replacement sales staff. Time which the sales manager can now spend selling.

The real proof of the effect that sales coaching has had at Sales R Us can be seen in the company's results. After 6 months there is not a single account manager who hasn't met target!

To quote the MD **"Our investment in sales coaching has gone straight to our bottom line"**.

Having seen the difference coaching can make, Sales R Us are now expanding their investment in sales coaching into their other European subsidiaries.

Please contact us for further information on our consultancy services:

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