



Perspectives on Sales Leadership

We recently worked with a highly respected professional services firm where top management was setting the tone for key behavioral change in revenue generation.

The company had over the years developed a set of values and a management outlook which had enabled them to grow and become a success story, now operating internationally. Their success was founded on strong operational capabilities and successful client implementations.

In discussions with management, we found that the company had developed a specific management doctrine, where their approach to the basic management processes of plan – lead- organize – and control was replaced by an approach where they provided employees with more freedom to perform.

The management thinking revolved around concepts which were verbalized as follows:

*“We don’t need to micro-manage- we need leadership”
“We don’t need to control, we need to innovate”
“We employ highly talented people – they don’t need to be over burdened by traditional management methods”*

And yet, one of their businesses was flat lining in terms of revenues and there was certainly no visible plan from the management of how they were going to improve performance in that business unit. Direction given in the past revolved around;

*“ Let them be, they will figure it out”
“Too much interference will certainly demotivate”
“ Perhaps the market conditions haven’t been favourable, things are bound to improve”*

We argued that if performance over the last 3 years was to be the point of departure of what performance was likely to look like over the next 3 years, logic dictated that something needed to change. We found agreement with the top management team around that fact!

The top team then agreed to get us in to do a review of the front end operations and we used our Review & Analysis Tools to review strategy, structure, process systems and capabilities. We also decided to use the Sales Leadership Analysis, to review;

- Setting Objectives
- Building High Performance teams
- Communication
- Problem Solving and Process Improvement
- Decision Making
- Training, Coaching and developing top performers
- Systems Utilization

The Sales Leadership Analysis doesn't focus on what makes a good leader, but how the sales leadership can set itself up to create a platform for performance, and in so doing, create the right atmosphere for success.

A fresh discussion arose around the concepts which we often debate with top teams, whether leaders were born or made and how one could go about a process of turning good managers into strong leaders.

In keeping with the wishes with the top team not to move into micro-management mode, we did find common ground in terms of agreeing to tackle the challenge taking a different road.

- We first of all agreed that businesses today need *managers who can lead, and leaders who can manage.*

Having either the one or the other in place would lead to deficiencies in terms of performance. It helped to view the above statement in the context of shareholder value. Owners of the business will all subscribe to strong leadership, but will start asking some serious questions if shareholder value was to deteriorate, through a lack of revenue growth, margin depletion or cost over runs.

We decided to tackle to challenge on a behavioral level.

We then analyzed what leadership requirements were in context and defined leadership behaviors like personal dynamism, drive, enthusiasm, purposefulness and optimism to be some of the behaviours that needed to be can be encouraged at managerial level. Even upholding the belief that leadership cannot be taught, our point of departure is that leadership behavior can in fact be encouraged and that all managers were in fact capable of understanding what good leadership behaviors were all about.

We then develop a Sales Leadership Program , that focused on creating a “leadership infrastructure” based on setting objectives, building high performance teams, communication, problem solving, process improvement, decision making, training, coaching and developing top performers . This would provide the platform for effective management.



We then supplemented this program with Leadership Capability Improvement workshops that focused on leadership development in the behavioural sense, covering the following topics::

- Self Awareness
- Understanding People
- Power and Authority
- Communication
- Visioning
- Decision Making
- Taking Charge

The result of this program was a better balance between the basic management doctrines of Plan, Lead, Organize and Control, and the more nebulous concepts that define leadership, such as enthusiasm, rising to the occasion, facing the realities that challenges present and having the charisma and presence to get a team of people to support a cause.

This two pronged leadership approach applied to sales in the revue generation context, is particularly interesting as it gives managers the ability to lead, and leaders the ability to manage, thereby satisfying the requirements of organizations that need to have the right balance going forward.

- Carpedia Consulting is a management consultancy firm focusing on sales, marketing and CRM programs that assist clients in improving revenue generation and margin expansion.



Carpedia Consulting (Pty) Ltd

PO Box 1701-Gallo Manor 20152 | Country Club Estates – Woodmead

011-258-8813 • 011-258-8511 | whess@carpedia.co.za • www.carpedia.co.za • www.thescienceofselling.co.za