

Sales Effectiveness: Four Focal Areas

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Improving sales effectiveness emanates from focusing on four critical areas: skills, management involvement, structure and processes. By channeling energy into areas where the potential for improvement is the greatest, effectiveness of sales will continue to increase.

1. Sales Skills

The acquisition and maintenance of customers is predominantly predicted by the skills of the sales consultants. Sales people need to be confidently adept in the following areas:

- Understand and use a comprehensive lead generation system
- Know how to develop, refine and internalize value propositions consistent with prospects' preferences
- Have the ability to highlight difference
- Sharpen value creation skills
- Identify needs
- Possess the capacity to talk strategy – value and partnerships
- Be able to talk results – outcomes and ROI

2. Sales Management Involvement

Sales managers need to balance three major roles effectively with regards to maintaining sales effectiveness in their teams: strategist, motivator and coach.

Lead the sales force strategically:

The sales manager needs to have the capability of aligning company and customer needs with systems and processes. He needs to lead with a strategic vision: set clear and

challenging goals, create a plan of action and use critical metrics in goal achievement measures.

Create clarity and focus for the sales force:

Motivation and encouragement are imperative when mobilizing a sales force to achieve their goals. The manager needs to be able to provide support on a person to person basis and must be clear on the vision of what success looks like. Focus is maintained through process and systems clarity, supplying the sales team with comprehensible operational lines of execution.

Coach sales people in key sales skills:

Coaching is a method of behavioral reinforcement. Creating the opportunity to acquire key sales process skills is 50% of the battle won. Coaching on the correct and effective application of skills assists sales teams to increase effectiveness and differentiates good managers from exceptional managers.

Work with others in the company to achieve sales success: Cross functional collaboration is essential when meeting the needs of customers and finding solutions to potential problems. Sales organisations function as relationship specialists and as a result the sales manager can use internal collaboration to his advantage. Specifically focused initiatives such as an X-Selling Program, can assist with organizational cohesion.

Motivate, motivate some more, and then motivate again:

Recognition and empowerment are powerful motivators. Managers need to find every opportunity to empower the organisation with regards to process. By providing sales people with large amounts of responsibility and holding them accountable for result achievement, motivation is guaranteed through initiating incentives.

3. The Sales Structure

There are six specific dimensions of internal sales structure that need to be addressed:

- Role clarity
- Commitment
- Performance standards
- Responsibility
- Recognition
- Teamwork

Sales people need to know what is expected of them on a day-to-day basis with regards to roles and responsibilities and on a greater level with regards to their goals and targets. Most organisations have the ability to set these clear expectations, however additional focus is required when it comes to taking responsibility for the attainment of results, providing recognition when it is due and functioning as part of a bigger team. Sales managers should be role models when it comes to behaviour, co-operation, team work and operational excellence.

4. The Sales Processes & Systems

There are seven key processes that support sales performance:

- Recruitment
- Performance management
- Opportunity management
- Strategic account management
- Reward and recognition systems
- Information systems
- Training and development

The key emphasis for any sales organisation is lead generation and lead conversion. Specific focus must be placed on implementing processes that assist sales people to find and secure more customers. Systems need to have the ability to manage opportunities, pipeline clients and sales performance with regards to the movement from 'prospect' to 'conclusion'. Sales skills can also be tracked through these systems as conversion ratios will reflect the ability of the sales person.

Once again, it is the manager who needs to oversee and drive these processes and systems. Regular pipeline meetings provide sales teams with a platform to openly discuss opportunities and receive positive guidance from their manager on how to accelerate the sale. Knowing when to change strategic emphasis and shift into account management are key focal areas for every sales manager.