

Effective Coaching

Teaching managers how to teach their sales reps “how to fish”

To teach managers how to teach their sales reps “how to fish,” our approach is one of focus. Most managers don’t effectively develop their people’s skills, whether it is selling skills or sales strategy skills. We work with managers to help them develop their coaching skills by having them coach sales reps to focus on sales skill and sales strategy effectiveness.

We have found that the most effective way to develop sales reps’ skills to the point that they are able to achieve sustainable business results year-in and year-out is to work extensively with their managers to teach them how to develop their sales reps skills i.e. teach the managers how to teach their sales reps “how to fish.” We are able to develop managers into effective coaches because the client allows us to spend the necessary time to change and develop their skill behaviors relating to coaching.

However, this point is counter-intuitive. Many business managers would like to believe that it is really quite simple to develop managers into great coaches; all you need do is educate the manager as to what works and what doesn’t work and the manager should be fully capable of replicating this with his or her people. This couldn’t be further from the truth. In fact, for most managers considerable time must be invested in them in order to develop their behaviors that are conducive to the effective coaching and skill development of sales reps.

This point is crucial to any success that we are able to achieve with a client. We have conducted many training programs with

many clients. However, with clients where the sales force has not developed the strategic and sales call skills that were expected as a result of the training program, we have found that coaching after the training to be poor to non-existent. On the flip side, our clients who have truly achieved a sustained increase in sales, reporting period after reporting period, have invested sufficiently in coaching their sales reps to improve their selling and strategic skills.

Who Should Be Coached?

This begs the question, “who should be coached?” Should everyone be coached? Probably not! The answer lies in this simple analysis of a cross section of managers/sales reps:

- *10% to 15% top performers* - These managers/sales reps either have a style of their own that works really well for them (and attempting to further develop their skills would not provide a fair return) OR even though they could benefit from coaching they probably wouldn’t be receptive at all.
- *15% to 20% bottom performers* – These managers/sales reps could definitely benefit from coaching. However, other factors could be over-riding: they might not be “keepers,” their attitudes are bad, the effort it would take could be considerable i.e. you can’t wait that long to see results.
- *65% to 75% middle performers* – These managers/sales reps would probably benefit most from coaching. As long as they were receptive towards being coached and developed they would

probably be the best candidates. So, out of the 65% to 75%, let's assume that at least 50% would fall into the category of receptive *and* needing to be improved.

We have found that concentrating on the *middle performers* can in fact demonstrate significant, tangible gains in sales results. Our objective is to provide managers intense one-on-one skill and strategy coaching so they can teach their sales reps "how to fish."

Areas of Involvement

We are involved in these potential areas:

- Conduct one-day coaching workshop with manager.
- With the manager's immediate superior, conduct an initial manager assessment and develop first-pass development track.
- With the manager, conduct an initial manager assessment and develop mutually agreed-upon coaching skill development track.
- With the manager, conduct an initial assessment of sales reps and determine priority skill areas.
- Help manager plan for initial sales rep coaching meetings.
- Observe manager conducting skill assessment meetings with sales reps.
- Review progress manager is making with personal and sales rep's development plans.
- Discuss and help manager work through challenges he/she is experiencing personally or with sales reps that are slowing or hindering development progress.
- Help manager plan for sales rep coaching meetings.

- Observe manager conducting sales rep coaching meetings.
- Conduct meetings with manager and his/her immediate superior to discuss progress and challenges.
- Provide feedback and coaching to the manager.

Types of Coaching

There are two types of coaching, sales skill and strategy skill coaching. We work with the manager to become more effective at both.

- *Sales skill coaching* is sales call based. Sales skill coaching can only be accomplished on a "live" sales call, either around an in-person meeting with the prospect or on a conference call with the prospect.
- *Strategy skill coaching* is account-based and is usually done behind the scenes via a combination of in-person, telephone and email meetings.

Tactically, we use a simple, yet highly effective, coaching process of *Plan – Do – Review*.

- *Plan* – Discussing and refining the plan helps to improve the actual call execution.
- *Do* – Watching and analyzing the call execution helps in more effective Review.
- *Review* – Debriefing the call makes for a better Plan.

Most managers don't effectively Plan and Review with their people. We help the manager to focus on becoming more effective at all three.