

# The Perils of NOT Training Sales Managers

Many companies invest heavily in sales rep training, but are disappointed when they see little impact. Ironically, the lack of results from sales training can often be traced to a lack of sales manager training. New skills or methods that reps pick up from sales training fall by the wayside because untrained sales managers often aren't effective at holding salespeople accountable for implementation.

That's why to get the most out of your sales training investment, the best first step is to train your sales managers how to do their jobs more effectively. This training is critical because sales managers are often top-performing salespeople who have been promoted into management positions. Their background and experience has honed their sales skills, but done nothing to prepare them to be managers.

Untrained sales managers are prone to a number of problems that can hinder their effectiveness and limit the achievement of their sales team. Unless they are taught how to do their jobs well, sales managers may:

- **Fall back on their sales mindset rather than develop a leader mindset.** Because they don't know how to be an effective sales manager, a promoted salesperson will continue to do what comes naturally: *sell*. They will spend most of their time with their top salespeople, working on the biggest deals. That leaves the rest of the sales team—the people who need the most help—to sink or swim on their own, without a leader/coach.
- **Not manage time effectively, or know how to set and enforce priorities.** Sales managers can easily become buried in “stuff” work and reactive fire-fighting, and feel overwhelmed as a result. They're working harder than ever but are unable to catch up, and have no time for what should be their #1 priority: to coach salespeople. That means the individual on the team with the most highly developed sales skills—the sales manager—has no time to teach those skills to others.



You can't get sales managers to coach simply by teaching them HOW to coach. You must also help them solve the problems they have that prevent them from coaching.

- **Be unsure how to diagnose sales performance problems... so problems persist in both “skill” and “will.”** Untrained managers too often harp on bad results, but don't address the unsuccessful sales rep behaviors and activities that created those poor results. Results can't be managed, but the behaviors and activities that create those results can and must be managed.
- **Tolerate mediocrity; hang on to low-producing salespeople far too long.** Because untrained sales managers aren't coaching reps on a consistent basis, they won't know why a rep continues to turn in a poor performance. The manager accepts a rep's excuses for poor production, erroneously assuming the rep will turn it around. By the time the sales manager realizes the problem is persisting, the coaching opportunity is a thing of the past. The manager takes the blame for the “failure to coach” and, out of guilt, gives the rep even more time on the job to fail some more. The manager's acceptance of one salesperson's mediocrity brings the entire team down.
- **Too easily cater to the prima donna sales performer.** Untrained sales managers don't define standards of performance and they don't coach to standards. When unsuccessful sales behaviors occur by a member of the sales team—behaviors detrimental to the team—the manager fails to confront the situation. *What you don't confront you condone.* Without sales discipline there can be no team excellence.
- **Fail to develop or enforce a development plan.** Untrained sales managers lack the skill to develop their teams. They don't know how to:
  - Help a top-performer assume the role of the “bell cow” on the team—become the person that everyone else looks up to as a model of the standards set for the team and top results.
  - Determine what obstacles are standing in the way of achieving the team's sales goals.
  - Identify what steps of selling different teams members are weakest in and understand how to help them improve.
- **Fail to follow-up.** Untrained sales managers make suggestions to salespeople on how to improve and then assume that person will implement their suggestions. After all, when the manager was a



salesperson, he/she implemented the boss's suggestions. Managers who fail to follow-up create a team culture that's lacking in accountability.

A great salesperson can become a great sales manager, but they must be taught how to avoid these problems and others. The good news is that the investment in sales management training is one of wisest investments a company can make: improving the skills of sales managers is one of the best ways to improve sales performance across the board.



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Kevin Davis, president of TopLine Leadership, is the author of ***Slow Down, Sell Faster! Understand Your Customer's Buying Process and Maximize Your Sales***, available wherever books are sold. His company provides custom workshops based on the "Slow Down, Sell Faster!" sales model, as well as a Sales Management Leadership workshop for sales managers. Contact Kevin through his website at [www.toplineleadership.com](http://www.toplineleadership.com)