

LEADING A WINNING SALES TEAM

HIRING talented sales representatives is not enough. While a few will be natural “quota-busters,” most will need to be nurtured and developed in order to reach business goals. To lead a winning sales team, you need to know three things: know your people, know how to coach, and know yourself.

Know Your People

Understand what drives your people as individuals. In all likelihood, each of them is motivated by something different. PSP studies show that success in sales is not always about money. What other buttons do you push? Some of your sales reps will respond to challenge, while others will require support and nurturing. Some seek recognition and status; others want to solve problems or make deals. Know what motivates each of your people.

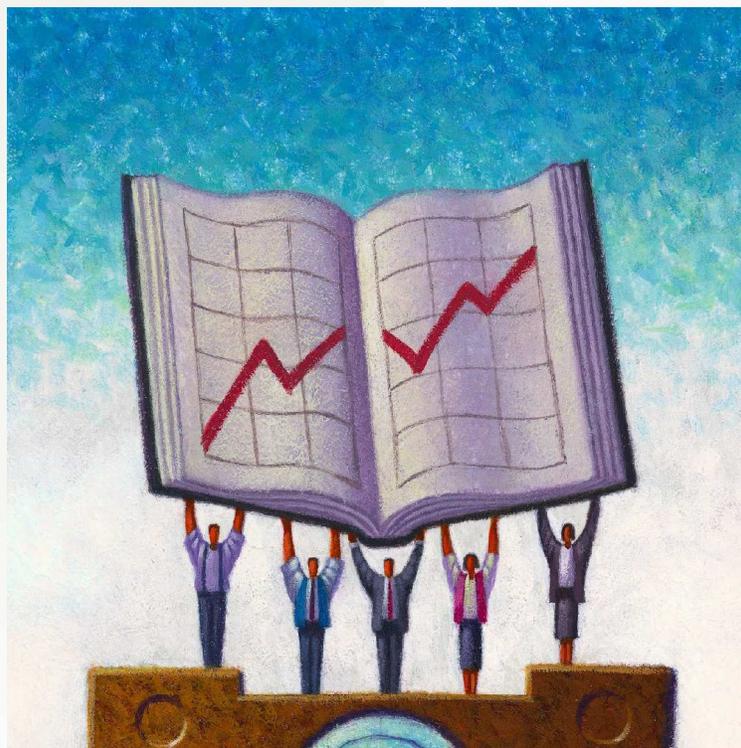
To manage effectively, understand the patterns in each sales representative’s skills and behavior, so that you can predict and shape performance. Some of your sales reps will be more creative, with greater flexibility in their thinking. Some may be strong persuaders/closers, while others earn sales by their relationship skills or need-satisfaction knowledge. Some thrive on people contact; others need alone time. Understanding the differences among your people and recognizing their strengths and weaknesses will enable you to put them in the best role vis-à-vis your customers.

Know How to Coach

Coaching a successful sales force involves leadership, management and teaching skills. As a leader, set a direction for your people. There is no substitute for clearly articulated goals and objectives. You are responsible for establishing a to reach

objectives and for aligning your people to the strategy. Once you have accomplished this, it is important to keep your people inspired. Your optimism and cheerleading” help people cope with change and with obstacles.

Coaching also involves managing your sales representatives. This is harder than it sounds; sales reps by nature are independent. Managing them, first of all, requires providing the resources needed to get the job done. These can include sales training, sales tools, budget, and staff support. Then monitor their progress and provide them with regular feedback on performance, ideally during “field visits.”



Finally, coaching involves a great deal of teaching on your part. As you do this, check your own ego needs in order to help your sales reps grow and achieve success. A good teaching coach knows how to clarify and resolve problems and understands the importance of involving sales reps in this process.

Know Yourself As a sales manager, know your own strengths and weaknesses and the ways in which they impact your sales representatives. Your sales reps are, in a sense, your customers. To be successful with this new customer base,” take full advantage of your own strengths and minimize your weaknesses. Show your people that you are a continuous learner, willing to work hard at

the right things in order to be successful.

This does not mean you should try to replicate yourself. Your sales reps are not mini-versions of you. Rather, knowing yourself helps you to understand individual differences in others and how these differences affect prospecting, selling, closing, and follow-up. Leading a sales team of individuals is no easy task, but individualization is the secret to helping sales representatives achieve success.