

## The 3 P's of Sales Performance

### People + Process + Passion = Sales Performance

Sales is a full-contact sport. It goes without saying that people buy from other people, and there is really no substitute for this arrangement. Sales people have a distinct advantage over marketing channels, because they connect personally with their customers to translate the value of their products. If growth is your goal, then it makes sense to further invest in your sales force. The question is which sales investments will have the biggest bang for your buck. Sales performance has several moving parts that are best expressed in the equation: People + Process + Passion = Sales Performance. If any piece of the equation is missing or weak then revenue growth stalls. But as you improve each of the 3 P's the reverse happens: sales grow!

### Start with the People

The Achilles heel for most sales organizations is the people. If you are going to make any investment in your sales force, start with your people. Jim Collins wrote in *Good to Great*, "Those who build great companies understand that the ultimate throttle on growth for any company is not markets, or technology, or competition, or products. It is one thing above all others: the ability to get and keep enough of the right people." I believe in Collins' statement whole-heartedly. When you upgrade the talent pool, especially in sales management, performance skyrockets.

Getting the right people on board is an overused and extremely subjective expression. What criteria do you use to define the traits for success? For sales positions, your customers' buying patterns provide key insights for uncovering your ideal sales profile. Your customers have real expectations for the personality, expertise and skills of your sales people. If the sales people don't have what your customers expect, then they can go to the competition to find the service and the experience they desire.

Don't forget that a sales force is a *force*. A larger sales force will sell more than a smaller one. A better trained and equipped sales force will sell more than a neglected one. Sales people that are hired, trained and coached to serve their customers' buying patterns have a distinct competitive advantage in delivering value to their customers.

### Process is more than training

One of the most frustrating things to witness is a sales person fail. In almost every case I believe the system failed the person:

1. The wrong person was hired.
2. The person received inadequate mentoring, training and activity management to be successful.
3. The organization is stuck in its ways and has lost touch with its customers and market.

4. Management has a culture of egalitarianism and complacency.

Great sales forces are obsessed with achieving their goals. They obsess with execution. Process and execution are closely linked together, because it is in the company's hardwiring that allows each person on the team to pull their weight in unison.

Sales is activity driven marketing. The sales force gets paid for results, but it is the behaviours they do day-in and day-out that deliver performance. By examining and improving the operations of the sales force, management can greatly build upon the talents of its people and drive results. For example, to effectively upgrade the talent pool of your sales force you must clearly define the traits of success for each position. Concurrently the hiring processes must be evolved to source and select the people who will make a difference. These process improvements focus everyone to execute every single day.

**Nothing happens without passion**

When I quote "People + Process + Passion = Sales Performance" I cringe. The equation is the answer to developing a sales organization, but for some reason the word "passion" seems cheesy. Passion is critical. It is the glue that holds the organization together. It is the fire that drives people. It is the pursuit of perfection to continually improve processes. Without passion all systems and people are doomed to mediocrity.

Leaders have a primary duty – to be corporate evangelists. Evangelistic leaders take responsibility for pushing passion into the culture of their firm. Passion is the connection of a vision or a dream with a purpose. Once you sink your teeth into the purpose of your job, a huge source of energy and inspiration is brought into everything you do. Passion is infectious. Great managers spread passion throughout their team with fervour, zeal and anything else to convince their people and their customers of the value of the pursuit. Simultaneously passion provides the energy and purpose for every investment made in people and processes to return in multiples. You may get a return on training your people, but without passion it is not likely to stick for the long haul.

**People + Process + Passion = Sales Performance**

Sales forces are in the business to execute. Anything you do to improve the people, processes and passion in your sales organization will impact the growth and development of the entire company. It is a holistic process where no investment happens in isolation. The challenge is to identify which area of improvement will have the biggest bang for your buck.

I start with people. To quote Collins again, "The executives who ignited the transformation from good to great ... first got the right people on the bus (and the wrong people off the bus) and *then* figured out where to drive it." Once you have maximized performance by getting the right people on board set your sights on process. The goal is to evolve the sales processes and management systems to form



a learning organization – an organization that adapts to the market, learns from its customers and sets a culture of execution. The pursuit for sales performance is exciting. I love it, because the results are tangible and you see them in your wallet.

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