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Butch Bellah

Expert Sales Trainer & Speaker



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by Butch Bellah

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Sales Management For Dummies®

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Contents at a Glance

<i>Introduction</i>	1
<i>Part I: Welcome to the World of Sales Management</i>	7
Chapter 1: You're a Sales Manager — Now What?	9
Chapter 2: So You Got the Job, Now What Do You Do?.....	19
Chapter 3: Establishing Good Working Relationships across Departments	41
<i>Part II: Building the Team</i>	59
Chapter 4: Who's On First: Building Your Best Team	61
Chapter 5: Adding New Players to the Team	77
Chapter 6: Hiring and Onboarding New Staff	87
Chapter 7: Defining Your Sales Process and Training Your Team	105
<i>Part III: Training and Development</i>	129
Chapter 8: Defining Your Expectations	131
Chapter 9: Ongoing Training and Helping Your Salespeople Grow	147
Chapter 10: Creating and Running an Effective Sales Meeting.....	167
<i>Part IV: Sales Meetings and Key Performance Indicators</i>	187
Chapter 11: Measuring What Matters: Key Performance Indicators.....	189
Chapter 12: Assessing Performance: Keeping Score and Celebrating Wins	209
Chapter 13: Addressing Poor Performance: Counseling and Critiquing Effectively	227
<i>Part V: Now You're Managing</i>	241
Chapter 14: Inspiring Your Superstars: Managing Your Best People.....	243
Chapter 15: Making Cuts: When It's Time to Let Someone Go.....	261
Chapter 16: Managing for the Future: Developing Careers of Future Leaders.....	279
<i>Part VI: The Part of Tens</i>	297
Chapter 17: Ten Traits of a Successful Sales Manager.....	299
Chapter 18: Ten Things that Destroy Your Credibility.....	305
Chapter 19: Ten Signs of a Struggling Salesperson.....	311
Chapter 20: Top Ten Apps for a Busy Manager	317
<i>Index</i>	323

Table of Contents

<i>Introduction</i>	1
About This Book	2
Foolish Assumptions	4
Icons Used in This Book	4
Beyond the Book	5
Where to Go from Here	5
<i>Part I: Welcome to the World of Sales Management</i>	7
Chapter 1: You're a Sales Manager — Now What?	9
Understanding Your Role as a Sales Manager	9
Acknowledging what you are and what you're not	10
Inspiring, coaching, and leading	11
Transitioning from Salesperson to Sales Manager	12
Same barn, different stall	12
Past experience can lead to future success	13
Assessing Your Current Team	14
Grading on a curve	14
Finding out where you need help	15
Establishing Your Management Style	17
Deciding what legacy you want to leave	17
Chapter 2: So You Got the Job, Now What Do You Do?	19
Understanding Your Role as Sales Manager	20
Remembering you work for the sales team, not vice versa	22
Understanding the line between sales and management	23
Empowering your sales team to make decisions (Don't do it for them)	24
Managing, not babysitting (but sometimes both)	26
Keeping your relationships professional	28
Establishing Your Own Management Style	30
Listening more than you talk	31
Being consistent	32
Setting the bar high, but not too high	32
Learning the magic words: No and delegate	34
Displaying the Characteristics of a Successful Leader	36
Stay humble	37
Be firm but fair	37
Be flexible and open to input	39

**Chapter 3: Establishing Good Working Relationships
across Departments 41**

Communicating Effectively as a Sales Manager.....	42
Understanding how your actions affect others	42
Communicating without over-communicating.....	44
Listening Carefully and Asking Questions.....	45
Navigating Personalities at Work	47
Remembering why you aren't in accounting.....	47
Picking your battles.....	49
Getting along with everybody	50
Writing like a Manager	51
Avoiding the Pitfalls of Email	53
Remembering emailing is not like talking.....	53
There's no crying (or laughing or joking or winking) in email.....	54
Reading twice, sending once	55
Replying to all: Probably a bad idea.....	56

Part II: Building the Team..... 59**Chapter 4: Who's On First: Building Your Best Team 61**

Evaluating Your Current Sales Team	62
Identifying the A players.....	63
Letting your top performers know who they are	65
Identifying the B and C players and assessing their potential to improve.....	67
Dealing with the D- and F-level players	70
Key Elements of a Successful Salesperson.....	72
Product knowledge.....	73
Sales skills.....	74
Natural ability: What you can't train or teach	75

Chapter 5: Adding New Players to the Team 77

Recruiting New Sales Talent.....	77
Answering basic questions.....	77
Placing ads.....	79
Soliciting people you want.....	80
Interviewing Candidates	81
Watching body language.....	83
Listening for buzzwords.....	83
Maintaining eye contact.....	84
Avoiding the So-Called Professional Interviewees	85
Knowing When to Make the Offer.....	86

Chapter 6: Hiring and Onboarding New Staff87

Hiring Your Next Superstar	87
Creating a New Hire Packet	88
Informing all departments of your hire.....	89
Completing the company paperwork.....	91
Onboarding: An Annoying Word But an Important Process.....	92
Making a good first impression.....	93
Being (and looking) prepared	93
Acting like you've been here before.....	95
Designing a Winning Onboarding Packet	95
Clearly define job description.....	97
Training schedule	99
Providing a list of key contacts.....	101
Outlining your expectations for the first 90 days and beyond	102

**Chapter 7: Defining Your Sales Process
and Training Your Team105**

Mapping the Path from Prospect to Customer:	
Defining Your Sales Process	106
Setting a realistic timeline for your sales cycle	107
Training Your Team on Planning and Prospecting	109
Emphasize the value of planning	109
Always be prospecting.....	110
Presentation Is Everything	112
Teaching “Asking for the Sale”.....	114
Training Your Team in Finalizing the Sale.....	117
Overcoming objections.....	117
Training in following up for success	119
Training Your Team to Request Referrals.....	120
Knowing the Product	122
Knowing the necessary info	122
Using manufacturer’s and vendor’s support.....	123
Selling benefits, not features	124
Making the Most of Sales Technology	125
There’s an app . . . for that?.....	126
Making technology work for you, not against you	126
Nothing replaces a sales professional.....	127

Part III: Training and Development 129**Chapter 8: Defining Your Expectations.131**

Defining Your Expectations in Writing.....	132
Insisting on an environment of action.....	134
Working Monday and Friday	135



- Setting Up the Guardrails: Providing Regular Guidance..... 136
 - Managing like a GPS system 137
 - Establishing good habits early..... 138
 - Leading by example..... 139
- Developing an Incentive Program that Works 140
 - Changing your compensation program without causing panic... 142
 - Keeping your eye on the correct target 143
 - Rewarding positive results 144
 - Being consistent..... 144

Chapter 9: Ongoing Training and Helping Your Salespeople Grow147

- Recognizing the Value of Ongoing Training 147
- Keeping the Fire Burning: Providing Ongoing Training and Development 148
 - Modeling ways to feed your mind 150
 - Accentuating the positive..... 151
 - Scheduling regular refresher courses 152
- Spring Training: Planning an Annual Professional Development Event..... 153
 - Location, location, location: Get away from the office 154
 - Planning your event to ensure maximum benefit to your team..... 155
 - Even superstars take batting practice: Getting back to basics.... 156
 - Performing annual product reviews..... 157
 - Looking at the latest in technology and social media..... 158
- Bringing in an Outside Trainer 159
 - Benefiting from an outside voice 160
 - Finding the right trainer..... 161
 - Delivering a consistent message..... 163
- When Less Is Actually More: Avoiding Burnout among Team Members..... 164

Chapter 10: Creating and Running an Effective Sales Meeting.167

- Developing a Sales Meeting Calendar 168
 - Deciding how often to meet..... 170
 - Choosing when to meet..... 171
 - Deciding what to talk about..... 173
 - Publishing the calendar well in advance 174
- Conducting a Sales Meeting 175
 - Making the best use of everyone’s time..... 176
 - Keeping the meeting interesting 178
 - Using vendor and manufacturer support 180
- Avoiding the Pitfalls: What Not to Do 181
 - Don’t let it become the complaint department..... 182
 - This isn’t the time for criticism..... 183

Leave 'Em Wanting More 184
 Including motivation and inspiration..... 185
 Recognizing performance 185
 Ending on a high note..... 186

Part IV: Sales Meetings and Key Performance Indicators 187

Chapter 11: Measuring What Matters: Key Performance Indicators 189

The Big Three KPIs 190
 Tracking contacts 191
 Tracking presentations 192
 Tracking sales..... 193
 Looking at other Measurable Matrices 195
 Making outbound calls..... 195
 Circling through sales cycle time 196
 Weighing average sales volume 197
 Checking closing percentage..... 198
 Using CRM Software 199
 Managing the data 200
 CRM is a tool, not a salesperson..... 202
 Reviewing each salesperson's pipeline..... 203
 Looking at the Ultimate Performance Indicator 205
 The numbers don't lie 206
 Not all sales are good sales 207

Chapter 12: Assessing Performance: Keeping Score and Celebrating Wins 209

Talking about the Money: Sales Forecasts, Budgets, and Goals 210
 Forecasting the future 211
 Building your budget..... 213
 Goal setting for success 214
 Avoiding Complacency: Competition Is Good! 217
 Show them the numbers 217
 Promote sales contests..... 219
 Deciding whether to name a salesperson of the month 221
 Make it fun! 222
 Delivering Effective Praise..... 223
 Recognizing your superstars..... 223
 Celebrating the wins..... 224
 Realizing that it's not always about the money 225
 Never destroy their confidence 226

Chapter 13: Addressing Poor Performance: Counseling and Critiquing Effectively 227

Identifying the Cause of Poor Performance	227
Giving Regular Performance Reviews	229
Know what to review	230
Be honest	231
Be helpful	232
Listen to their concerns	233
Putting It in Writing: When to Issue a Written Warning	234
Be specific	237
Ask how you can help	238
Be fair across the board	239

***Part V: Now You're Managing*..... 241**

Chapter 14: Inspiring Your Superstars: Managing Your Best People 243

Managing from the Top Down.....	244
Offering perks to your best salespeople.....	245
Not Treating Everyone the Same But Not Treating Anyone Differently	246
Discovering what your top players need.....	249
Creating a Winning Environment.....	251
Remembering that Everyone Needs Attention	252
Give feedback — all the time.....	253
Keep them challenged.....	255
Don't let them get comfortable.....	256
Never cut commissions or territories (if you can help it).....	258

Chapter 15: Making Cuts: When It's Time to Let Someone Go. 261

Making the Decision to Fire Someone.....	262
The obvious fireable offenses	263
Performance-based termination	265
Reduction in workforce.....	267
Choosing Your Moment Carefully	268
Keeping It Professional	270
Have a witness.....	270
Keep it civil.....	272
Choose your words carefully	273
Stay away from specifics.....	275

Chapter 16: Managing for the Future: Developing Careers of Future Leaders	279
Managing Future Leaders	280
Identifying the Three Types of People in Every Organization.....	281
Those who want more responsibility, but can't handle it.....	283
Those who can handle responsibility but don't want it.....	284
The select few who want responsibility and can handle it	287
Building Yourself Out of a Job: Grooming Your Replacement.....	289
Developing the leaders of tomorrow.....	290
Letting your people push you up the ladder.....	292
Selecting Your Replacement	294

Part VI: The Part of Tens

297

Chapter 17: Ten Traits of a Successful Sales Manager	299
Having the Heart of a Teacher	299
Having the Curiosity of a Student.....	300
Exhibiting Fairness	300
Understanding Empathy	301
Being a Good Listener	301
Remaining Humble	302
Living with Integrity	302
Being Accessible	302
Possessing a Positive Attitude.....	303
Embracing Change.....	303
Chapter 18: Ten Things that Destroy Your Credibility	305
Being Dishonest	305
Acting Like a Know-It-All.....	306
Showing Favoritism	306
Failing to Follow Through.....	306
Placing Blame.....	307
Taking Too Much Credit	307
Procrastinating	308
Changing Commissions Unjustly.....	308
Sharing Privileged Information	309
Showing a Lack of Concern	309

Chapter 19: Ten Signs of a Struggling Salesperson	311
Failing to Make Required Calls.....	311
Frequent Tardiness	312
Placing Blame.....	312
Disappearing during Work Hours.....	313
Lack of Participation	313
Falling Customer Satisfaction	314
Deteriorating Physical Appearance	314
Increasingly Negative Attitude.....	314
Noticeable Lack of Motivation	315
Taking an Abnormal Amount of Time Off.....	315
Chapter 20: Top Ten Apps for a Busy Manager.	317
Evernote.....	317
Any.do	318
Audible.....	318
Downcast	319
E-Readers	319
Pocket	319
Customer Relationship Manager Apps	320
Scanner Pro	320
Calendars 5.....	320
WAZE.....	321
<i>Index</i>	323

Introduction

“I’d like you to consider taking over as Vice President of Sales.” I can still hear those words ringing in my ears more than 20 years after they were uttered by the man who is my mentor to this day.

At the time, he was president of the company and had called me into his office one afternoon in early 1995. Was I in trouble? Had I done something wrong? He and I had a great relationship, but a closed-door, spur-of-the-moment meeting was a bit strange.

“Uh, I’m not sure . . . are you . . .” I stuttered and stammered for a few moments trying to let what I had just heard sink in. “I’m not bucking for a promotion right now,” I can remember managing to get out through the hemming and hawing.

“I realize that. But, I want you to take over the entire sales department.”

I’d be lying if I said this wasn’t my goal, but now? I hadn’t even been with the company for a decade yet and had entered below the lowest rung on the ladder. In fact, I couldn’t even see the ladder. I got promoted twice before I found the ladder. I’d only been a division sales manager for a few years at the time.

Being a vice president was part of my goal, but not necessarily this fast.

The tone of his voice let me know this was a bit more than a request — it was a challenge. It was time to get in the game or shrink back to the bench. “I’m really not trying to take anyone else’s job, I’m just trying to do the best I can as a division sales manager.”

His next words let me know it was now or never: “If you don’t do this, I’m going to have to hire someone else who will.” And so began my career in sales management.

I inherited an entire sales department of more than 25 people, most of whom had been with the company or in the industry a lot longer than I had. I took over with no direction, no roadmap, no instruction book, and really no past experience to draw from. To say I was flying blind is an understatement.

If I was going to learn to be a leader, I was going to have to go with gut instinct and make it up as I went. I didn’t have a fall-back plan and failure wasn’t an option. I’d been hired at 21, been made division sales manager at

25, and now, at not even 30, I was being handed the job of managing a sales department generating about \$75 million a year in sales.

“Do you think I’m ready?” I asked.

“If I didn’t, we wouldn’t be having this conversation.”

I took the job. And through a lot of missteps, mistakes, and complete melt-downs, grew that company to more than a quarter-of-a-billion dollars a year in sales before acquiring controlling interest in the company with a business partner just five short years later.

I always wished I had a book in which to look things up. Now, I give you what I never had.

About This Book

You’re holding the book I always wished I had. In it you’ll find real-world experience drawn from many years (more than I care to remember) and even more mistakes while I was suffering through a lot of OJT. (For those of you new to the world of management, OJT stands for On the Job Training.)

This book truly is my gift to you: my experiences, lessons learned, and all the broken bones and skinned knees of learning to manage a sales team laid bare. I won’t tell you this book will keep you from making any mistakes — we both know it won’t. But, it can help you learn from the ones I made and minimize the ones you have to experience firsthand.

Throughout the book I use real-world stories and situations I believe you can relate to. I use a lot of sports analogies because I think a sports coach is as close to a sales manager as you can get. The two share similar philosophies, goals, and ideals.

Some of the examples I use may describe the exact situation you face, and you can see how I handled it — and whether that was the right call. Spoiler alert: it wasn’t close!

If you’re like most managers, you’ve said to yourself more than once, “I’ll bet this never happened to anybody else.” Well, yeah, it did. It happens to everyone. All that stuff you think is exclusive to you isn’t.

All sales managers go through similar if not identical situations. And all sales managers tend to think they're the only one who has to deal with their particular issues. Just wait until you go to a trade show or industry function and talk to other managers — you'll come home thinking, "Wow, I'm glad I'm not that guy!"

I attempt to paint you a picture of the world of sales management, and that picture isn't always pretty. There are ups and downs, highs and lows — but I can say without hesitation I have never wanted to do anything else. You represent the greatest profession on earth. Unfortunately, there is a low barrier of entry into sales and it seems as if anyone thinks he can just "go be a salesman."

As you probably know, it takes a strong, disciplined, creative sales manager to make things work. Anyone can call himself a salesperson, but that doesn't make him a professional salesperson. That's where you come in. You're the reason I wrote this book — so you can help me create more professional salespeople in this world. That's what I ask of you in exchange for all these years of knowledge and experience: Help me produce more *professional* salespeople in this world.

I use the term salesperson throughout the book. Let me say upfront that I've found that great salespeople and duds come in both genders. I alternate pronouns with each chapter: even-numbered chapters use female pronouns and males get the odd-numbered chapters.

Although my experience was primarily in business-to-business sales, I worked hard to include those of you in retail sales and other business-to-consumer organizations. From automobiles to . . . to . . . well, something that starts with a z, I try to include everyone.

Also, this book isn't written just for those who are managing world-wide teams doing hundreds of millions of dollars in sales. You can certainly benefit, if that describes you, but my advice is also applicable to managers whose sales team consists of herself and a part-timer. Hey, you have to start somewhere.

Within this book, you may note that some web addresses break across two lines of text. If you're reading this book in print and want to visit one of these web pages, simply key in the web address exactly as it's noted in the text, pretending as though the line break doesn't exist. If you're reading this as an e-book, you've got it easy — just click the web address to be taken directly to the web page.

Foolish Assumptions

Any time an author writes a book, they have to make certain assumptions about the reader — and I did. My first assumption is you're a sales manager (or you're about to become one) who wants to improve your performance and the performance of your sales team. I assume you understand the sales process and the role you — the sales manager play in it. But, perhaps my biggest assumption is that you know there are things you don't know. You understand there are things you still have to learn, questions you need answered and a guiding light through some tough situations.

If that sounds like you — I'm glad we met.

Icons Used in This Book

Throughout this book, I use certain icons to call your attention to specific text. These are the places where your highlighter generally comes into use. Here's what they each mean:



TIP

This is a tip from me to you. This entire book is filled with useful information, but there are times I want you to be aware of a certain passage. These little tips are your chance to learn from my experience.



REMEMBER

Again, I hope you find the entire book memorable. Heck, I want you to highlight the whole thing. But, when you see this icon, pay close attention. Whether you need it now or not, this denotes something I believe is worth filing in your mental bank.



WARNING!

Pay special attention when you see this one; it's called "Warning" for a reason. These will save you time, money, embarrassment, and heartache. I know from experience.



NEWS FLASH

I use this icon for situations and passages of text where you may think you know the answer, but I want to make sure. These are things my late mother would have prefaced with, "I've got news for you, young man." Well, you get the picture.

Beyond the Book

In addition to all the information regarding becoming a great sales manager included within these pages (or in the e-book) I put together a few little bonuses that you can access any time, anywhere on the web. I include some questions to ask when hiring a new salesperson, offer advice on how to handle conflict between two salespeople, and give you several more goodies at www.dummies.com. Just click over to www.dummies.com/cheatsheet/salesmanagement and see what all I have for you there.

You can also access some bonus material at my website, including a *free* digital copy of my previous book, *The 10 Essential Habits of Sales Superstars: Plugging into the Power of Ten*, by going to www.butchbellah.com/free10habits.

On top of several hundred blog posts on sales, sales management, and more at my website at butchbellah.com, you can also find out information and sample videos on my speaking at butchbellah.com/speaking and information and ways to contact me regarding sales training at butchbellah.com/coaching-and-training.

Finally, I'd love to hear from you, the sales managers making a difference in this world. Share your stories of triumph and tragedy (hopefully more of the former) by emailing me at butch@butchbellah.com.

Where to Go from Here

This book wasn't written with the idea that you'd sit down with it and read it cover-to-cover in one sitting — unable to put it down. It doesn't have any wizards, vampires, or zombies, and I didn't have the opportunity to kill off a main character during the slow parts to keep you interested. (I am the main character so that was definitely out of the question.)

Here's the good part: You don't even have to like to read to get something out of it. It's not really designed to be used as a textbook or something you sit beside your bed like the latest novel of romance story. In fact, you're probably not going to read it cover-to-cover and that's okay. You can start anywhere — just pick a spot and jump in.

This book is assembled so you can easily find the chapter or heading on what issue you're facing right now. Read it, absorb it, highlight it, and then keep it nearby to be referred to the next time a fire is ablaze and you're searching for an extinguisher.

However, if you want a suggested place to start (especially if you ever want a suggestion), check out Chapter 4, where I guide you through assessing what you have to work with in your organization right now, or Chapter 7, where I dive into the fun of training your team.

Part I

Welcome to the World of Sales Management

getting started
with

**sales
management**



Find additional content at www.dummies.com/extras/salesmanagement.

In this part . . .

- ✔ Understand the role of a sales manager. Find out what you are and what you are not.
- ✔ Define your expectations and establish your own management style. The old manager isn't there any longer; now it's your turn.
- ✔ See the importance of establishing good working relationships across departments. You're now in a position where every other department in the company is affected by you and can affect you. It's important to have good rapport.
- ✔ Find ways to communicate clearly and consistently. Your ability to communicate is one of the most important parts of your job.

Chapter 1

You're a Sales Manager — Now What?

In This Chapter

- ▶ Getting to know your new role
 - ▶ Making the leap from salesperson to sales manager
 - ▶ Inspiring, coaching, and guiding your team
 - ▶ Getting to know your inherited team
 - ▶ Establishing your own management style
-

You've probably worked for years to get to be a sales manager ; you've put in the time on the sales floor or in the field and now it's your turn to take the next step. You've been offered and accepted the job. And now, you're chewing antacids like gum, sweating bullets, and feeling nauseous. Hey! Welcome to management!

Seriously, it's perfectly normal to be nervous and question whether you can do the job. Anyone who ever gets promoted goes through similar feelings, and if they tell you they don't they're probably not being totally truthful.

Now calm yourself; you can do this. In this first chapter I explore the traits and functions of a sales manager and briefly touch on a few topics I cover in more depth later. By the time I'm done, you'll be a confident, successful, efficient manager leading a team of great salespeople.

And, if it doesn't work, just take two aspirin and call me in the morning.

Understanding Your Role as a Sales Manager

It's important to know how great sales managers operate; how they manage their team and how they remain productive themselves. The role

is ever-changing but has several core duties and responsibilities which cross almost all industry lines:

- ✓ Managing the sales team
- ✓ Establishing goals and quotas
- ✓ Training and developing sales skills
- ✓ Assigning and defining geographical territories
- ✓ Counseling and leading individual salespeople
- ✓ Reporting data to upper management
- ✓ Creating incentive programs
- ✓ Establishing budgets
- ✓ Hiring and firing salespeople

Are there other tasks you do as a sales manager? Sure. You'll always add new responsibilities to your plate, but you can pretty much expect to handle the jobs on this list when you get the job. In fact, many of them may have been in your job description.

Acknowledging what you are and what you're not

As a professional sales manager you assume many roles: motivator, cheerleader, sounding board, ear to vent to, teacher, judge, shoulder to cry on, and everything in between.

As the leader of your department, the buck really does stop with you. The responsibility that comes with the job is enormous and can be a bit overwhelming.



You can only do one thing at a time, and you can only do your best. When in doubt remember these words, "Do the best you can with what you have to work with."

At some point you will wonder whether you're in the sales department or management. The truth is you're in both, and you have to be able to mold and shape yourself to fit the situation you're in.

There will be times when you must make very hard management decisions and times where you have to defend your sales department against the decisions of others. Sometimes you won't know which role you're playing. There's no cut-and-dried way to tell when to be more sales or more management. There's no right or wrong answer; there's a lot of gray area. You have to go with your gut.



As long as you're consistent, you'll be fine. Don't try to please everyone. Be consistent in your actions, decisions, and how you run your department, and you'll be ahead of the game.

You're the conduit between management and sales. You're the person other department heads are going to look to for information regarding what's happening to the company's sales. The next minute you're answering to salespeople and explaining something the company decided to do.

It's a juggling act, but a manageable one if you just "do the best you can with what you have to work with."



As important as it is to know what you are, it's just as important to know what you are not. You're not a psychic who can read minds and predict the future of the company's sales down to the penny. Everyone is going to ask you to, but you can't. You have to use past history and your instincts to set budgets, goals, and sales forecasts — all of which now come from your desk.

You're also not the secretary for the sales department. Don't get me wrong, I'll be the first to say you work for your sales team instead of them working for you. But, don't let yourself get caught up in doing their tasks. That's not what you're there for. I point out ways to help you avoid this huge bear trap in Chapter 2.



If you set the tone early of doing things for people, they will continue to expect that behavior. Your job is to make your people better, not dependent.

It's now about how your team performs, not how you perform — a feeling that can be both invigorating and scary.

Inspiring, coaching, and leading

When it really comes down to it, your purpose is to inspire, coach, and lead your department. Sales is the only department in the company that contributes to profits — everything else is an expense. If your company is going to not just survive but thrive, it will be in large part due to how your department performs.



Inspire your sales team to want to achieve more and to believe they can and will. Note I didn't say motivate them. I believe motivation has to come from within — you can't motivate your people; they have to motivate themselves. However, you can and must inspire them.

Coach them to improve their skills. Your job is to observe, provide feedback, take corrective action, and go again. Then observe, provide feedback, take corrective action, and do it all over — over and over and over. You're in a constant state of coaching and training as new techniques, new systems, and new ways to communicate with your prospects and buyers are created.

Lead your team in a manner they want to follow. A leader doesn't say, "Go do this!" a leader says, "Let's go do this!" How you conduct yourself has as big an impact on your sales department as any words coming from your mouth.



Poet and philosopher Ralph Waldo Emerson said, "What you do speaks so loudly I cannot hear what you say." Leadership is taking action, not only speaking.

As a sales manager, you have a lot to digest, but understand you take this journey one step at a time. You're not the manager today you'll be a year from now or five years from now. If you had all these answers and knew how to do all these things already, you would've been a sales manager years ago. Be patient and learn.

Transitioning from Salesperson to Sales Manager

It may be only one step on the ladder of your career, but it's a big one when you move from being a salesperson to becoming a sales manager. Gone are the days of having to concern yourself only with your own sales and keeping up with what's happening only with your customers in your own territory. Now you're responsible for the whole ball of wax.

The nice thing is, although the skill sets of a great salesperson and a great sales manager are drastically different, the same drive, attitude, and burning desire that put you in this position is what will help you excel at this position.

Just because you have a new nameplate on the door or a new title on the business card doesn't mean you forget everything you've learned up to this point. In fact, you'll find yourself relying a lot on your past experience especially as you coach and train other salespeople to grow their business.



The transition from salesperson to sales manager can be especially tough on salespeople who are replacing a previous manager who was either ineffective or fell short in some way. You may face a situation where your immediate predecessor didn't set the best example. That's okay. You want to make the team your team and if you're stepping into a situation like this, it won't take much to look like the knight in shining armor.

Same barn, different stall

Many a new sales manager's biggest obstacle is going from sitting in the sales meeting and listening to sales training to now being the sales trainer. You need to take this role with a certain amount of humbleness because nobody

wants to follow a leader who is constantly regurgitating, “Let me tell you how I used to do it.”

Your first order of business is to earn your team’s respect through your actions — not your words. When you approach the job focusing on how you can help them, not how they can help you, your entire mindset shifts. You use different words, and you have a sincere desire to serve.



Your job is to make your salespeople successful. As you take on the role of the leader, manager, and trainer, step back and let them know that you’re viewing their process and practices from a slightly different angle. You get to see what they’re doing through a new lens.



I can promise you I managed salespeople who were much smarter, more talented, and better salespeople than I was. Nobody ever said the best salesperson is the next sales manager. It doesn’t work like that. There’s no correlation between being a great salesperson and being a great sales manager. The skills that make a great salesperson have nothing to do with being a great manager. Some of the biggest mistakes I’ve ever seen have been when the best salesperson was put in charge of a sales team. Great salespeople can be great at sales, but terrible at managing. To be a great sales manager, you need to be a strong manager first. That’s the skill you use more than any other.

Think of your new job this way: You have a racehorse capable of winning the Kentucky Derby but the current trainer just isn’t able to get the best out of that horse. So, the owner turns the training over to you. Same horse. Different trainer.

If you know anything about sports or horse racing, you know a small change can have a big impact on a horse just the same as a team responds differently to a new coach or manager.



As sales manager, you’re not there to upset the apple cart and start over completely; you’re simply there to take what you have and make it the best it can be while adding new talent to the roster.

Your best strategy is to simply find out how you can help each person.

Past experience can lead to future success

The “this is how I did it” style of management gets old very quickly with a seasoned sales team. They aren’t interested in what you did; they want to know what you can do for them.

I’m going to hazard a guess that when you first became a salesperson you devoured training materials, read a lot of books, and really studied your craft. You put in the time to be good at what you did and the results were there.

The same holds true for sales management. You're not expected to be a superstar from day one. Everyone in the organization understands (or should understand) that you have a nice little learning curve ahead of you as you navigate not only your own department but how it interacts with other departments.

The experience you gained as a salesperson dealing with different personalities, being committed to learning and growing, and having a burning desire deep within you to be the best you can be are the exact same traits that can make you a great sales manager.



You've displayed the characteristics of a sales manager already or you wouldn't have the job. The single biggest thing you can do is to give yourself time to learn — you're starting over again, and Rome wasn't built in a day.

Assessing Your Current Team

One of the first orders of business after a new sales manager gets settled in is to take an accurate, honest look at the current sales team to see who you're working with.

I refer to the salespeople like a professor would a classroom full of college students. You want to know who are your A students. You need to figure out how to continue to keep their fires lit and challenge them to grow and progress from where they are now. Nobody on your team is as good as they can be, trust me.

You need to identify your B students and find out how you can move them into the group with the A's. You need to identify your C students because you'll spend some time with them to determine if they have a future with you or not.



Most importantly, you need to get to know the D and F students. They're the ones who run you ragged. These are the people who constantly complain and fret over every little thing and blame their lack of sales on the government, global warming, and anything else they can come up with. These are the ones who can drag you down and take your focus away from the salespeople who really need your attention. Don't let them.

Grading on a curve

One of the interesting parts of your first few months as a new sales manager is assessing your team. Although looking at their sales numbers is good, as the sales manager you now have access to data you never had before — namely, the gross profit each salesperson generates and their accounts receivable.