

## Your role and responsibilities

Welcome to our first day together! Over the coming week we will explore what makes a successful sales manager, and provide you with some useful tips and ideas. Perhaps you have recently become a sales manager for the first time, or you have aspirations to move in that direction? Maybe you are already an established sales manager and are looking to refresh your skills? From time to time we will ask you to stop and think about your own situation, and perhaps make a few notes to clarify things for yourself.

Whether you choose to dip in and out of this book or read it from cover to cover, we hope it will give you a clear idea of the role and responsibilities of a successful sales manager. Whatever your situation or preference for using this book, we hope you enjoy your week with us!

### Success or failure?

What makes a successful sales manager? What is it that sets the successful apart from the 'also ran'? Let's look first at a sales manager's primary role and their responsibility to their team, their organisation and themselves.

Whatever your situation, the most important things to come to terms with are your role and responsibilities. A challenge that people face when they become managers for the first time, of any discipline, is to let go of the responsibility of 'doing the job'. Managing a successful team or department is not about hands-on 'doing'. It is a whole new ball game requiring different rules and skills.

Take a moment to think about what you think your responsibilities are.

It is certainly up to you to make sure that sales are won, business is increased, satisfied clients come back for more, and that sales goals and targets are achieved. However, it is not up to you to win the business yourself! That is the role of your team. Your role is simply to help them do that. Sound easy?

It can be difficult to recognise that sales success should not be coming directly from you. Working out in the field and calling on customers are the responsibilities of your team now. Your responsibility, as a manager, is to achieve success through others. Your role is to support your team, motivate them and provide the resources that they need to win business. A useful definition of a manager's role is, 'The Manager must achieve agreed performance objectives and increase overall profit through the members of the team, in an efficient and effective manner'.

If you find yourself calling on customers, to make sure that targets are met and business is won, you are not doing your job as sales manager. So often, newly promoted managers find it hard to separate themselves from the day-to-day activity of winning business, and concentrating on helping their team to do that. Your job is to recruit the right people, put them in the right place, agree goals, support the achievement of those goals and develop their skills so that they can keep on being successful. Your success comes from *their* success, not from selling to clients!

Of course, you may get involved in calls to clients with your

team, but again, your role will be a different one. You will be there either to support their efforts, to build a key account by building a relationship with the organisation, or to coach your team out in the field.

Moving to a sales manager role can be a difficult process, and needs commitment and persistence. It also requires un-learning many of the habits you had as an effective salesperson. Traits and behaviours that were useful then, will actually get in the way now, if you are to be a manager in the true sense of the word. Sales management requires a whole new mind-set. Every day you will make decisions that affect your team, your clients and your organisation, and of course, yourself.

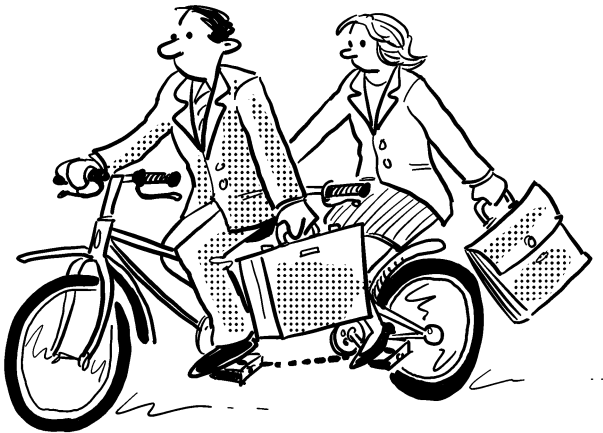
- Where are you operating from now?
- Do you think like a salesperson, or like a sales manager?

Sun Tzu, a military strategist in 500 BC wrote in *The Art of War* that: 'Your strengths will eventually become a weakness'! For a salesperson moving to a management role, this can be the case. While your focus was to develop accounts and clients business, it now needs to develop the team. Instead of your own achievements of targets and generating business, you should concentrate on developing and supporting others to do that. Your ability to be self-sufficient and get on with the job as a salesperson has to adapt. You need to learn to delegate and let others do it.

Whereas the role of the sales person is to look for immediate wins, as a manager you should look for longer term gain, which involves a lot of patience, planning and strategic

practice. You have to slow down, take a step back and remove yourself from the front line. You are no longer charged with winning business, but with building and maintaining a winning team.

It can hard to make the transition and, to be honest, some people realise that management is not for them. If they made excellent salespeople, it does not mean they will make excellent sales managers. In fact, if being excellent at selling, enjoying the chase, the cut and thrust and the buzz when the client says 'Yes' drove you to succeed, can you settle for more of a back seat, getting the buzz from others taking the driving seat?



## Case study

Another factor that can hinder the transition to sales manager is the culture and attitude of the company you work for. We recently worked with a team of sales managers who simply were not ready to let go and become managers. They kept a lion's share of their team target as their own personal target,

and kept a list of clients as their own. As a result they became stressed and very busy, always fighting for time, and always in demand by people who needed their support. They were ineffective as managers because they were not available for their team. They created a dependency that they enjoyed and were proud of. Why did they do this?

By keeping their own targets and winning their own business, the sales managers were protecting themselves. Their organisation valued income-generators, people who brought in revenue – the sales team. The sales figures were the focus of management meetings; the managing director always enquired what new business had been won, and the salespeople were the highest paid. One of the organisation's competitors had been bought out, and the level of management responsible for the sales teams was 'not required' by the new parent company. As a result these sales managers viewed the role of the sales manager as a vulnerable one. It did not generate income, it was not offered incentives and reward, and it was seen as 'easy to get rid of'.

Human instinct determined the need to protect themselves. They felt valued and safe as individuals who brought in the money. The organisation did not seem to recognise the value and benefit of having effective managers who could develop, nurture and grow the team; they valued revenue in the bank. Until the mind-set and culture of the organisation changed, there was no incentive for the sales managers to change their mind-set and see their value in a different way.

A lesson to be learned from this is to clarify and agree your role and value as an effective sales manager. Look at how you are measured and rewarded. Confirm with your senior

management team their expectations of you, both in the short and longer term. If the culture does not encourage the change in mind-set required to be an effective manager, the transition you need to make will be even more difficult.

## **What makes an effective manager?**

After all is said and done, what is it that makes an effective manager? Spend a moment or two thinking about managers that you have worked for. What was it about them that made them a 'good' manager or a 'not so good' manager?

Chances are, the good managers will have listened and welcomed your ideas, involved you in the decision-making process, recognised your achievements and motivated you to achieve more. They probably also made things happen, followed through on promises and supported you in your development and acquisition of new skills. Perhaps they gave you responsibility and did not tell you what to do, how to do it or when to do it – unless it was something new and you asked them for advice. They made the best use of resources, and made sure that whatever was lacking was provided where possible. They communicated clearly and promptly, treated you like an adult, an individual, who was informed and aware of what was required and expected.

You might also describe good managers as fair, honest, open, supportive, encouraging, motivational, reliable, consistent, flexible and understanding. Possibly they had good technical knowledge, were charismatic and adapted their behaviour and style of management to suit the individual and the situation.

And the not so good managers? Perhaps they did not have a clear vision, did not plan, could not adapt their style. Maybe they were very bureaucratic, relying on rules and punishment to make things happen, unaware of what was happening for their team. They kept things to themselves, told rather than discussed and agreed and had mood swings so you never knew where you stood with them. And so the list goes on.

As we move into roles as supervisors or managers, without any formal development, we often adopt the approach and style of what we feel our best manager had. We see them as a role model and take on the behaviours they demonstrated – good or bad. In the same way that a child adopts the values, beliefs and behaviours of others around them, as newly promoted managers we take with us how we have seen it done. However, sometimes this is not necessarily the best way to go.

Consider the skills, traits, qualities and characteristics of a good manager, and compare your list to the one below. Start to think about which of these areas you want to develop yourself, in order to be a successful sales manager.

<b>A successful manager will</b>	<b>Yes/No</b>
Organise and make best use of time	
Plan ahead	
Identify the root cause of problems	
Possess appropriate decision-making skills	

Communicate clearly and often	
Listen to others	
Appraise performance and give feedback	
Know how to motivate themselves and others	
Recruit and retain good staff	
Delegate effectively	
Remain unbiased and objective	
Empathise with others	
Manage the development of themselves and others	
Manage resources effectively	
Be motivated and enthused by their team's success	

## Management competences

In order to do what you are employed to do successfully, there are underpinning management competences that you need to make sure you have.

To create a sales strategy, you need to be able to plan ahead, think clearly and analytically, forecast and monitor performance, and identify problems and solve them. The ability to think clearly and solve problems is not necessarily something we are taught at school. It may not be a natural behaviour for you. It is, however, an essential skill that you

need to develop. Many sales managers focus on the issue of the day, rather than focusing on longer term success. By being reactive to problems that arise and taking on a fire-fighting role, they often find that the same issues appear tomorrow, next week and next month.

How good are you at making decisions? Analysing the situation, uncovering the root cause, thinking of the long-term implications of what, right now, feels like a good idea that, typically, we want to implement as soon as possible. Can you separate yourself from the here and now and look further down the road to what that decision might mean in the future – to you, your sales team, the organisation, clients, indeed any stakeholder?

Do you communicate effectively? Do you ask questions without bias, to uncover information and then actively listen to the response? Barriers that get in the way are our need to speak, our mind working on the response we feel is appropriate or the next question we want to ask. Such matters often cloud our listening. Actively listening involves working hard to remove these barriers, not just to hear the words, but to listen and evaluate and only then to respond accordingly. Again competences that were important to you as a salesperson, but which now need to be utilised to get open and honest answers to help you help your team, not to influence the outcome.

Interviewing for staff is more than ‘just a quick chat’. How well do you prepare for and structure interviews? Do you employ your communication and analytical thinking skills to make sure you get the best person for the job? How clear are you in determining who the best person for the job really is?

Once you have recruited your team, do you have the necessary skills and mind-set to support and promote their development? Do you understand their needs and can you align them with the needs of the business? Are you committed to that development, and do you make time to effectively appraise performance to aid further development?

Do you have the necessary skills, knowledge and understanding to manage performance and deal with inappropriate behaviours in a way that is helpful and supportive? Is your style of management too critical or judgemental, making rash decisions based on insufficient information? And once you have the right team in place, do you understand how to motivate them, as well as yourself, in order to achieve the success they desire?

## Summary

As you work through the advice offered in this book, you will start to fully appreciate that the role of a sales manager is not an easy one. In fact, the role of any effective manager is not as easy as it might look. Add to that the responsibility for a team of people who are hungry for success, representing your company to the world at large, who are naturally competitive, selling themselves and your company, and without them and the business they generate, the organisation would not be in business. Do you have what it takes to be a successful sales manager and lead a high performing team to their full potential? This book will point you in the right direction, but only you can develop the right mind-set and make it happen – are you ready for the challenge?