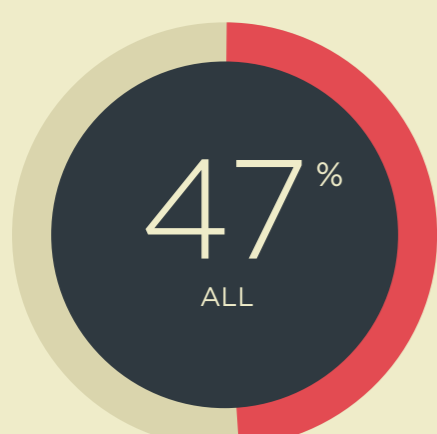
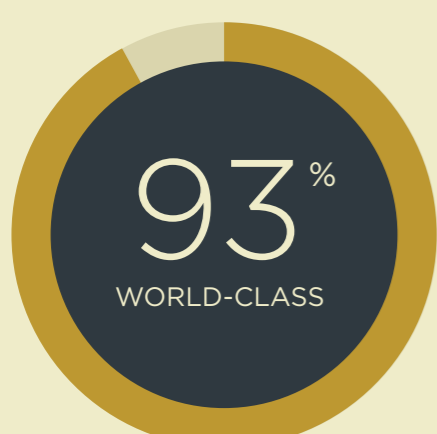


THE INCREDIBLY TALENTED SALES MANAGER: A SALES TEAM'S SAVIOR

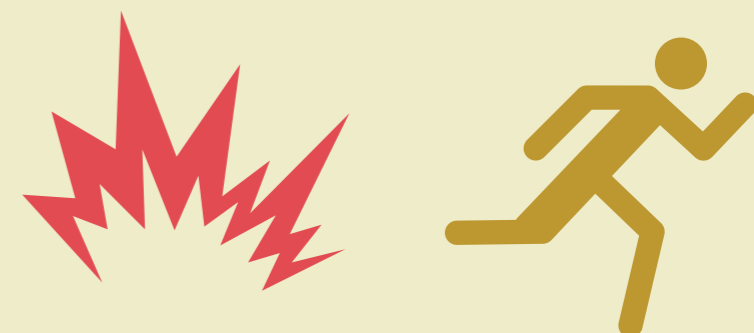
THE HEAT IS ON

“Our management team is highly effective in helping our sales team advance sales opportunities”



The pressure on sales managers to make the biggest impact on results has never been stronger, so they need to determine where they should focus their attention to provide the greatest value. That is, they must *prioritize*. Here are five things sales managers should be doing as they review their team's opportunities:

- 1 Get in Front of Customers:** The reasons your customers started doing business with you may have changed recently, so it's important that your sales team learn what's changed before meeting with them and are prepared.
- 2 Have a Valid Business Reason for Every Call:** Sales professionals who can articulate how they help solve their customers' business issues and challenges are more likely to get their calls and emails returned. Learn what your salespeople are saying when trying to secure time with prospects.
- 3 Connect With the Senior Decision Maker:** Make sure your salespeople are securing time in the C-suite, since those executives are getting involved in spending and budget decisions more than ever. Questions to ask your team:
  - Have you identified the final decision maker?
  - Have you spoken directly to this decision maker?
  - Do you understand the challenges this company is trying to resolve from this decision maker's perspective?
- 4 Get Comparable Value When Discounting:** World-Class Sales Performers are much less likely to discount in order to close deals, but when they do, they are also much more likely to get comparable value in return for a discount.
- 5 Lose Fast:** When sales are down, salespeople tend to hold on to opportunities longer than usual. World-Class Sales Performers are much more likely to have an established process in place to know when to stop investing in a large deal.



THE SUCCESSFUL FSM: DUAL—NOT DUELING—PERSONAS

Successful frontline sales managers

must function both as an expert in customer management and as a business leader. But while customer management may come more naturally for managers because they were once successful salespeople, becoming a business leader often requires learning new competencies. The two personas must then learn to function in concert:

Customer-Management Expert



While most sales managers come from the ranks of successful salespeople, in order to be viewed—and respected—by their sales teams as masters of customer management, they are also responsible for

- Developing their sales teams' skills and promoting the consistent use of established sales processes—including their own use of CRM systems
- Maintaining and improving their product knowledge in order to be viewed as a knowledge asset by their team—especially if they expect their salespeople to excel in those competencies
- Connecting to the organization's most important customers and engaging with their team's top prospects, because buyers want multiple relationships within a provider just as sales needs to have multiple relationships within a customer's organization



Business Leader



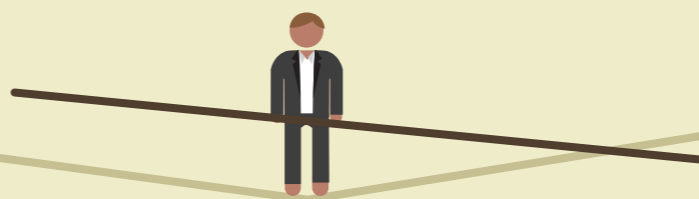
The sales manager often needs to learn new skills to perform as a business leader. In addition to managing their organization and providing sales support, they are called on to

- Execute management processes such as funnel analysis, forecasting, and other aspects of business reporting—activities they may have watched others perform but that they themselves don't have the experience of direct involvement with
- Manage and maintain a balanced set of territories, as well as recruit, hire, and onboard new salespeople in collaboration with HR
- Maintain a balance between territories in both revenue and opportunity and work with salespeople to develop a plan to achieve quota by looking at
  - territory/account opportunity
  - quota
  - compensation plan
- required activities in order to achieve goals: Set and enforce the standards and expectations for performance, activity levels, and sales process utilization
- Review the performance and determine the forecast for each salesperson, then submit their team forecast/funnel to their direct manager, which challenges the sales manager to objectively assess opportunities and the salesperson's opportunity to close them.

BALANCING ACT

It's unrealistic

to expect managers to shepherd salespeople through every sale and every activity. At the same time, too much distance can be detrimental—sales professionals may end up cutting corners without the proper guidance. It's a tricky balance to achieve, but there are a few things managers can leverage:



Sales Funnel

The sales funnel provides clarity into revenue predictability for executives and clarity on where managers can begin one-on-one discussions—identifying what areas of the funnel could be atrophied and what areas might be clogged, for instance.



Top Performers

Managers should be focusing their time on leveraging top performers rather than getting caught up in coaching bottom performers. Top-performing salespeople can lift the burden off managers by leading other salespeople by example and can also have a greater effect on sales growth overall.



Deal Reviews

Managers can use opportunity reviews to put the kibosh on negative or nonrelevant activities and to evaluate a salesperson's most critical opportunity to learn their strategy and what evidence they have from customers that the sale is progressing.



Loss Reviews

Although revenue wasn't won, the opportunity still provided value. Uncovering where and where not your sales team is being successful identifies where they're struggling and highlights performance patterns that the sales manager can coach to.

THE SALES MANAGER'S TOOLKIT

Salespeople have access

to a wide variety of tools these days to help them succeed—sales enablement programs, training, and automation, to name just a few. Ultimately, selling is about people, as it always has been. Only when a strong sales-management team is in place can an organization reap the benefits of a sales performance enhancement program. The following are five essential skills an effective sales manager needs to possess to help make that happen:



Coaching

A sales manager with great coaching skills will not only see improved sales performance but will have better salesperson engagement, reduced turnover, and improved job satisfaction. (Also one of the toughest skills to master.)



Business Acumen

Defined as the “critical business thinking required to achieve your sales objective,” sales managers need to teach their salespeople how to make wise decisions, plan better, and effectively allocate their resources based on customer needs and potential for growth.



Making Smart Hires

It is challenging to develop excellent hiring skills. Hiring mistakes are costly to fix and take time to fix, though, so sales managers who can systematically identify and select top sales talent will deliver improved team performance and sales results.



Performance Management

If performance issues go unchecked, sales team morale can be negatively affected, so it is up to the sales manager to have planned and unplanned checkpoints to address performance issues and develop a plan of action to correct any problems.



Leadership

Sales managers need to be strong leaders—to be able to create and share a vision with their sales team and then have the skill and the will to help their team adopt the vision and keep them focused on working toward achieving it.

SOURCES:

2015 MHI Sales Best Practices Study

Miller Heiman, “Top 5 Selling Activities: Priorities for Sales Managers,” 2009, [http://www.millerheiman.com/getattachment/Knowledge\\_Center/Knowledge\\_Center\\_Articles/Top\\_5\\_Selling\\_Activities\\_Priorities\\_for\\_Sales\\_Man/Article\\_Top\\_5\\_Selling\\_Activities\\_0309.pdf.aspx/](http://www.millerheiman.com/getattachment/Knowledge_Center/Knowledge_Center_Articles/Top_5_Selling_Activities_Priorities_for_Sales_Man/Article_Top_5_Selling_Activities_0309.pdf.aspx/)

MHRI, “The Frontline Sales Manager: Dual Personas,” *Monthly Research Review*, [http://www.millerheiman.com/getattachment/Knowledge\\_Center/Knowledge\\_Center\\_Articles/Newsletter/MRR-July-2013/MRR-0713.pdf.aspx/](http://www.millerheiman.com/getattachment/Knowledge_Center/Knowledge_Center_Articles/Newsletter/MRR-July-2013/MRR-0713.pdf.aspx/)

Miller Heiman, “The Future of Sales Management,” *Sales Performance Journal*, Vol. 5, No. 2, [http://www.millerheiman.com/getattachment/Knowledge\\_Center/Knowledge\\_Center\\_Articles/Sales\\_Performance\\_Journal/Journal\\_The\\_Future\\_of\\_Sales\\_Management\\_Q2\\_2010/SPJ-Print-0610.pdf.aspx/](http://www.millerheiman.com/getattachment/Knowledge_Center/Knowledge_Center_Articles/Sales_Performance_Journal/Journal_The_Future_of_Sales_Management_Q2_2010/SPJ-Print-0610.pdf.aspx/)

Forbes, “5 Essential Skills You Need To Be A Successful Sales Manager,” Steven Rosen, September 12, 2014, <http://www.forbes.com/sites/salesforce/2014/09/12/skills-successful-sales-manager/>