



Increase Sales by Building High-Performance Teams

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Meeting organization goals is a top priority for sales executives today. These goals include increasing revenue, improving business efficiency, creating competitive advantage, improving customer satisfaction, controlling costs and leveraging intellectual assets. The first question asked is 'How' can this be accomplished. Many organizations have struggled with this answer and very few have found an answer that is successful, until now. The answer lies in the development of a 'High-Performance Sales Team.'

Sales teams represent a very powerful mechanism for getting significant results in organizations today. Much has been learned about the development of sales teams over the past few years. We have seen what works, what doesn't and the best approach for developing and nurturing a sales team. A new class of sales team is evolving that has the potential to replace traditional hierarchical organization structures with a flat, self-directed, cross-functional, process-oriented structure. 'High-Performance Sales Teams' are a special class of team that has the ability to easily adapt in a rapidly changing environment and is an essential element for highly successful organizations. The first step in building a high-performance sales team is, understanding the essential team ingredients that create a recipe for success.

Building high-performance sales teams is a top priority for many sales executives. The benefits and value produced by these teams are very clear and being viewed as essential tools in their business strategy.

High-performance sales teams produce the following benefits.

1. Increased sales revenue
2. Increased productivity
3. Improved customer service
4. Ability to do more with less
5. Increased innovation
6. Ability to quickly adapt to change
7. Ability to solve difficult, critical problems

Sales Team Essentials – the Ingredients

So where do we begin? Like a great chef making the perfect soufflé, we must follow a recipe that will deliver the best possible outcome. This recipe includes the ingredients, preparation and the process for making the perfect soufflé. If you forget an ingredient, add too much, eliminate



preparation steps, or change the process you will not end up with the results you are expecting. For sales executives, this translates into ineffective teams that cannot meet critical business goals.

For today, let's look at the ingredients necessary for building a high performance sales team.

Trust

Trust in your sales team, their trust in you and the trust between the team members is the core ingredient that holds everything together. You develop trust by setting guidelines for sales team behavior and decision making, where the people have certain freedoms to make decisions, take risks and speak their minds. They will also have certain obligations to always speak the truth, work with other teams, be accountable for decisions and actions and to learn from their mistakes.

Sales executives who have rules and policies for everything create an environment of bureaucracy and stifle team performance. The environment is orderly and structured, but leaves little room for team members to use their own judgment, take ownership or be motivated to complete tasks quickly. On the other hand, sales executives who have no guidelines for the team run the risk of leading a team in chaos. Neither of these work.

Implementing guidelines where people are trusted, promotes an environment where sales team members will give their best, produce more and with improved quality.

Vision

High-performance sales teams share and support a 'Vision' of what the team will accomplish. Team members are highly focused on meeting their goals and objectives. Sales executives work with the team to develop a vision that brings real meaning to the work that is being performed. The vision defines the future state and is clear, defined and concrete. The sales team needs a winning, inspirational vision that will motivate them to go above and beyond when the effort is required. Let's look at a few great vision statements: Rid the world of AIDS, cure cancer, triple the sales in every office, or increase customer satisfaction to 100%.

Optimism

The next key ingredient is 'Optimism.' High-performance sales team members have dreams of achievement. These dreams are fueled by the sales executives' optimism. It is true that team members will flourish when they have hope and they will give up when they don't. High-performing sales team members thrive on accomplishment and recognition they get when working through difficult problems and persevering. This perseverance requires optimism.

The responsibility of a sales executive in an optimistic environment is to be realistic and optimistic at the same time. Realism is important because it acknowledges the facts of the situation no matter how unpleasant they are. An optimistic environment dictates that given the facts of the situation, the team will continue to work toward their goals. When sales teams lose optimism, it is the responsibility of the sales executive to coach the team to get them back on



track. Together the sales team acknowledges the situation and begins to generate ideas for solving the current problem.

Enjoyment

A sales executive must make the environment enjoyable to work in. Team members perform at their peak when they enjoy what they do and with whom they do it with. Enjoyment doesn't mean you play cards all day long. Real enjoyment comes when the sales executive and team are deeply involved in working a critical problem and they persevere together as a complete unit.

The sales executive sets the tone for the sales team. Setting the tone for an enjoyable work environment is accomplished by showing that you enjoy your job, that you like the people you work with and that you appreciate their hard work. Thank sales team members for working through the weekend. Let them take a long lunch if they worked 12 hours the previous day. Praise them for new ideas. Never blame team members for mistakes, laugh and learn from their mistakes. Keep the sales team focused on winning instead of failing.

Empowerment

High-performance sales teams are self-directed. When empowered to accomplish a goal, these sales teams take ownership of their responsibilities and are committed to succeed. Sales executives leading high-performance teams work to focus the sales team on 'what' needs to be achieved. The 'What' is defined as the vision, goals, objectives and milestones for the team. The 'How' work is to be accomplished must remain the sole responsibility of the sales team. When sales executives start telling their teams how the work is to be done, the sales team becomes de-motivated and performance drops dramatically.

Opportunity

The final ingredient for a high-performance sales team is developing an environment where team members can grow. Sales team members need to learn new skills and be permitted to develop and implement new ideas to work at their peak. Creating an environment where sales team members can experience different roles, cross train, work with diverse teams and learn new specialties will develop sales team members who are more self assured, who listen, and are more open to new ideas. This strategy of continuous learning will keep the team energized and motivated to perform at the highest levels.

A Final Word

As a sales executive, you have the power to influence the people and performance of your sales team. If you truly believe in creating an environment where Trust, Vision, Optimism, Enjoyment, Empowerment and Opportunity are encouraged, then you will build a solid, sustainable and high-performing sales team.

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