



# Coach Your Sales Team To Extraordinary Success

**T**iger Woods has a coach. The coach doesn't play golf better than Tiger does, he just needs to watch what Tiger is doing and get him to be his best. Is your sales team performing at its best? Coaching is not just for athletes, but also for individuals who want to transform their lives from satisfactory to extraordinary. Tiger Woods is an extraordinary athlete. Eric Schmidt, CEO of Google is an extraordinary business executive who also

has a coach. Coaches help already successful people improve performance by increasing self-awareness, maximizing strengths, and creating action plans to obtain goals.

Would it help to boost your sales teams' performance and reduce turnover? The key to a loyal and results-producing sales team is the investment you make in developing your people. Coaching can help them realize their full potential and long-term benefit to your organization.

## ACTIVE LISTENING

In order to transform your sales team, and maximize productivity, a manager needs to develop several key traits of a coach.

The relationship begins with listening. We ask salespeople to listen actively to the customer, but do we listen actively to them? When a salesperson is consulting you on a problem, do you ask questions? Share views? When we listen, we often focus on getting to the point and resolving the problem. An acronym that I use to help me listen effectively is WAIT — Why Am I Talking? Sales managers should not solve the problem, but lead the salesperson toward a solution. Communication is a two-way street. Coaching for better communication is achievable only when you are truly being authentic with your sales team.

Two important elements of coaching will evolve out of listening: ownership and respect.

An individual who comes to a solution on their own, with a little help from their coach, will have a buy-in and greater conviction in executing the solution. Coaches help uncover skills we already possess. Respect will follow as your salesperson sees that you paid attention to what they were saying. First you have to walk the walk.

Align yourself with your sales team. This doesn't reduce your status, but adds to it. In gaining their respect, let them know that you have been there on the front line and you haven't forgotten the challenges they face. Be a role model. Share strategies you have employed and get their input as to how these would work for them. There is no one-size-fits-all. A good coach helps each salesperson discover which approach works best for them. Let them see themselves through your eyes and those of their clients. Be a mirror. In order to grow and evolve, we must first know where we are now.

## INDIVIDUAL STYLE

The coach needs to be adept at dealing with the many personalities on his team. Understanding how to motivate each salesperson is critical for your success. Listening will aid you in identifying the style and manner that works best for each individual. Help them set specific goals by understanding what motivates each salesperson. Tap into what drives them, what is most important in their lives. This will enable you to challenge them to stretch to obtain those goals. Discuss how you will measure attainment of their goals. Their ideas may differ from your method of measurement. Coaching is a very customized process; in order to gain the best results, you must stay on track.

Coaching is all about results. The manager's goal is to enhance a salesperson's performance in order to contribute to the company's overall objectives. You are responsible for cheering them on while confronting tough issues. Salespeople need to be accountable to the coach for the plans they set forth. There will be no ambiguity about expectations if they have been clearly delineated. Honest feedback, authentic conversations, and self-evaluation will enable your salespeople to stay focused on results-producing action plans.

Coaching turns performance management into a collaborative process that benefits productivity and increases sales and profits. ■■■

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