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SALES LEADERSHIP REDEFINED

Your Guide to Achieving Selling Excellence

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PREFACE

If you're reading this booklet, you've probably joined a new team as their sales head, or perhaps you're an experienced sales professional and you're looking to learn more about the new sales leadership, or you have been recently promoted to a sales leadership position.

Whether you're looking to enhance your knowledge or just reading it out for fun, you'll find this booklet extremely helpful.

A research conducted by a Harvard professor Boris Groysberg reveals that it is people-related skills that determine the success or failure of a new sales leader. Leaders that are able to build trust and relationships tend to have a greater success rate in their roles. The aim of this booklet is to bring less noticed people factors that can help you build a solid foundation for long-term success in your sales leadership role.

Research shows that "the average tenure of a new sales leader is 19 months." 19 months mean 4 and a half weeks. So, what can you do in such a short time span? Focus on the factors that can be controlled while working on factors you have no control over. How do you do that? Flip through the pages and uncover the secret.

CHAPTER 1

IDENTIFY YOUR CONTROL POINTS AND USE THEM EFFECTIVELY

The one thing that keeps most sales leaders from achieving success in their roles is that they fail to identify their control points. Control points are factors that are under your direct control, such as your sales strategy.

Remember there will always be factors that you cannot control yet they will have a significant effect on your performance, such as the corporate strategy of the business or the product strategy or marketing and pricing strategies. Yes, you can influence these strategies, but if you see issues in these strategies, you cannot use them as an excuse because you probably don't own them.

So, what are some factors that you can control. Let's have a look.

Obvious Factors: Operational factors are the most obvious factors you can control. These include, your sales processes and tools, the sales compensation plan and the sales coverage model. Since you are a sales leader, you can control these factors quickly, if your budget allows. These are the factors most sales leaders work on, to achieve success.

Less Obvious Factors: The factors that are less obvious yet immensely powerful are people factors. Your leadership style and actions have a direct impact on the culture and performance of your team. A research conducted by Dan Goleman on EQ reveals that 25% of a leader's success depends on their IQ and 75% on their EQ.

The secret key to achieving success for sales leaders is to lead with emotional intelligence. By aligning their teams behind a common vision and mission, leaders can create a culture of engagement and high performance. This can't be done without getting a buy-in from your sales managers. Once you're able to do this, your odds of success increase dramatically.

CHAPTER 2

CREATING STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT BY DEVELOPING EQ

When all elements of a business are aligned, that is when strategic alignment happens. This alignment should fulfil the long-term purpose of the organization. Generally, the purpose of an organization does not change, but the purpose of sales leadership may change, especially if a new sales leader has joined the team. Misalignment mostly happens here.

From your direct reports to your frontline managers, it is essential that you make your people understand your strategy. In most cases employees are misaligned with your strategic direction because they do not understand it.

Nothing beats the power of employee engagement. When employees at different levels understand your vision and strategic goals, they can execute plans more effectively and help you achieve results.

Let's have a look at how this alignment can be achieved.

Communicate your Strategy: You cannot achieve success without helping your people understand your vision and strategy and how they need to execute on the strategy. The process begins by communicating your strategy and vision to your direct reports so that they can cascade it down to their teams. A good idea is to plan an off-site retreat so that people are more focused and less distracted when the strategy is communicated to them.

Getting Buy-in from Stakeholders: Without getting a buy-in from all stakeholders, you can't expect your strategy to get you results. Sure, you may have successfully sold your strategy to your boss and peers during the recruitment phase, nevertheless, this does not automatically mean that your strategy can't have flaws. Be flexible and willing to adjust when communicating your strategy to your team, ask for their comments as you clarify your strategy. This way you'll not only engage them in the decision-making process but will also avoid costly mistakes.

Build Excitement: To excite people in your team about achieving the sales targets, it is important that you communicate your vision in the clearest manner possible. Ask people for their input and seek their help in figuring out how to achieve the vision. Imagine how powerful it would be if people at different levels contributed in the best way possible. Applaud people for their efforts. This would positively reinforce them to make greater contributions.

CHAPTER 3

CREATING SALES BLUEPRINTS TO ACHIEVE STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

In the previous chapter, we talked about communicating your vision and strategy, aligning your team and getting buy-in from your stakeholders. Nevertheless, this task is not as simple as it sounds. Especially if you are new to the industry or the organization, you would want to make sure you don't step on a landmine. You'll need to spend a considerable amount of time understanding the industry and this can be overwhelming. To help sales leaders overcome this challenge, our sales consultants work with sales heads to create sales blueprints. The sales blueprints include the following four components:

Common Purpose – To ensure everyone on your team is on the same page, have a common purpose.

Strategic Intent – Strategic intent means defining the drivers that could help you achieve your purpose.

Targets – Without targets, performance can't be measured. For each strategic intent, targets need to be defined. Be sure to map out targets for 1-3 years.

Key Actions – Key actions that define how you would achieve each strategic intent need to be outlined in a clear and concise manner.

How Our Consultants Work?

Our consultants usually begin by having a one-on-one discussion with sales heads in order to understand their vision. In the next step, they identify key players on the sales teams and conduct in-depth interviews with them to understand their perspective. Third step involves inviting 6-10 people from the sales leadership team for a 3-day workshop, which is facilitated by our senior sales trainers. By engaging participants in visioning and brainstorming exercises, they help identify possibilities and opportunities. From there, they work with teams through developing the four components of the strategic sales blueprint.

Teams then split for 4-6 weeks. During this period, assumptions are validated, and targets are clarified. Teams meet again after this period for a final meetup. In this meeting, changes are reviewed. It is ensured that all team members are on the same page with the targets. Action steps are defined for 3 years and finally ownership and accountability for execution is defined.

This is how our consultants help clients map out their sales blueprint on a single page that everyone on the team understands and has bought into. This blueprint helps clients stay on course and refresh the action items annually so that progress is monitored, and adjustments are made, if needed.

CHAPTER 4

DEVELOPING EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE: HOW TO BUILD A HIGHLY ENGAGING SALES CULTURE

The one thing that is critical to your success as a sales manager is alignment. Nevertheless, alignment alone won't do you any good. If you build a highly engaging sales culture, your chances of success would explode.

A company's corporate culture defines how things are done in that company. According to Peter Drucker, a company's culture is an attempt at creating or enforcing a strategy that is compatible with your corporate culture. It is possible to change culture, but it requires hard work and skills.

The Ingredients of a Highly Engaged Sales Culture

So, what does a great sales culture look like. It has a clear focus, with strong activity that results in a healthy pipeline, and leads to exceptional results. If you get a team that has not performed exceptionally well in the past, it is extremely important for you to know where the culture is breaking down.

For example: you need to look into a few things, such as, does your pipeline has enough activity to achieve your desired results. Is there an issue with the quality or quantity of the activity or both? Are your sales reps making enough calls and are those calls turning into sales leads? Do your sales reps know where they should focus their time and activity on and on what accounts?

Developing Emotional Intelligence: The Route to Building a Highly Engaged Sales Culture

Once you determine what needs to be done to create a highly engaged sales culture, you should move forward and do it.

You have four dimensions to take into consideration:

1. Recognition & Benefits/Rewards
2. Values
3. Goals
4. People Development
5. Systems & Tools
6. Management Disciplines

We'll discuss each of these dimensions in detail over the next few pages.

1. Recognition and Benefits/Rewards

Creating a highly engaged sales culture requires you to set rewards and recognition to motivate the behaviors that are necessary to achieve your objectives while at the same time reinforcing your values.

As a new sales leader, you need to understand how your people feel about the recognition and rewards they receive. It is a great opportunity to survey your team as well as well asking your sales leaders and star performers as you get to know them. Money matters to sales people, to a certain extent, but so do other factors such as development opportunities, recognition and doing meaningful work.

2. Values

Values help you gain clarity on the perspective of the organization, guide your action and help you define its beliefs and culture. When your employees agree to a set of values, the organization appears united as it interacts with suppliers, employees and customers. Values need to be lived; they come to life through actions and attitudes necessary for job success. You'll need to help identify these values and be sure you as a sales leader demonstrate them with consistency and recognize those who do the same.

3. Goals

The goals that you set for your people should reflect the quality and quantity of the activity that is necessary to create a pipeline needed to achieve the results that are needed.

You will need to track progress toward the objectives that give your sales leaders and reps concrete insight into where they should focus their efforts and activity and help them map a path for themselves.

4. People Development

Learning opportunities are the best drivers of employee engagement and help build a strong workplace culture. They are important for your employee value proposition, not just a way to build skills.

Offering learning opportunities shows to your people that you are willing to invest in them. Learning is an engagement tool itself. If your experience is good, it will boost performance. This can be done through informal and formal development opportunities, as well as by coaching.

5. Developing Sales Skills

In sales, there are times when you need to teach everyone about positioning of a new product, decide upon a common sales language and approach. Nevertheless, you'll have to keep in consideration the fact that development needs and priorities vary from one person to another.

Training is more likely to create engagement and success especially when it is aligned with your needs. When they have a say in their developmental plan, they will put in their best efforts to get the job done.

As a leader, you need individual development plans for each person on your sales team and their managers or supervisors, a budget for their learning and developmental needs, and the expectation that these resources will be used efficiently.

You must also require your sales managers to invest time to coach their people, if you are looking to create a sustainable change.

6. Coaching Skills

Coaching and feedback when done correctly and frequently, will elicit high engagement. If your salespeople are improving continuously, they will be engaged?

When your salespeople are getting a chance to constantly improve themselves, there is no reason for them to be disengaged. If you have joined a new organization as a sales head, do not just assume that your sales managers understand coaching or are willing to coach.

Instead of assuming that they possess coaching skills, carefully observe the manner in which they interact with their people during formal and informal sessions. In addition, you'll need to assess your own coaching skills. Be sure you have the skills to be an excellent coach. Also, make sure you always give feedback to your direct reports on a regular basis. How well you use your skills to create a great sales culture that delivers business results will mean the difference between success and failure as a sales leader.

7. Systems and Tools

Offering salespeople and managers with the tools and systems to do their jobs effectively automatically builds engagement.

As a new sales head, it is very important that you understand your team and know where they experience frustration and what they believe will help them resolve the situation. This will help you build a strong connection with your team. Your people will know that you listen to them and will take actions to right a wrong.

If you are providing new tools or systems to your salespeople to help them perform effectively, make sure you have a formal execution plan. If your execution is not up to the mark, all your efforts will go down the drain.

8. Management Disciplines

Once you establish the right attitude and commitment to skill development, take a closer look at the sales management disciplines necessary for building a highly engaged sales culture. Sales management disciplines are defined and scheduled activities that let you achieve your goals with more certainty.

You need to have a formal structure for each sales management discipline because if you have a defined process, you can maintain discipline in exercising it consistently. On the contrary, if you do not have a proper structure, each time you go to manage or coach, you'll spend too much time thinking about the 'how' instead of the 'what'.

With proper structure in place, you've already defined the 'how' and ready for you to provide the 'what'. The sales management disciplines are all about quality and quantity. Quality means, these disciplines add value to your salespeople and boost creativity in your organization. Quantity means you need to ensure not to overwhelm your sales people by bombarding them with changes at the same time.

The discipline of sales management includes the following dimensions:

- Hiring
- Onboarding
- Personal meetings
- One-on-One meetings
- Sales meetings
- Pipeline management
- Field coaching
- Performance feedback and review

If you've joined a new team, you probably have your own ideas about the sales management disciplines done, but you need to first take time to inspect how things are being done at their team, and then determine what you want to change.

If you believe change is necessary, you have your sales managers participate in the progress in order to create a new and improved approach. This way it would be easier for you to get buy-in from your team and set your future approach.

Management Processes

Having an organized internal meetings plan is what will keep your sales team agile, focused and motivated. When your sales team works well, your sales business automatically flourishes.

Having a predictable meeting schedule creates accountability. For instance, the weekly sales meetings are an effective way to define the main goals for the coming week; give your sales team a chance to discuss progress on key opportunities, identify blockers and allow the sales team lead to discuss strategy and tactics, look into resources that could help the team to meet those objectives and assign key accountabilities.

It is important to make sure these meetings are scheduled at regular intervals and have clear objectives. When meetings are unorganized, participants are not prepared, no one knows about their tasks and accountability and discussion tends to go astray or veer off into less important or unrelated topics – that's a total waste of time.

Company meetings require planning and tend to be of a more formal nature compared to team meetings. Here are some ideas that you can follow for frequency.

- Weekly Sales Meetings
- Monthly Company/Division Meetings
- 5 Training Sessions per year
- Semi-annual off-site meetings

CHAPTER 5

HOW TO EXECUTE STRATEGY THROUGH PEOPLE: KEY POINTS LEARNED

Whether you have joined a new organization as a sales leader or you got promoted to the position of sales leader in your current organization, you have taken on a big challenge that comes with a lot of responsibility.

Although your job will require you to make quick decisions, you may want to spend some time to learn more about the organization and your team. This is your golden time, be sure to use it wisely. During this time, you'll identify and prioritize the changes that you'll need to make to achieve success.

As you work your way towards building a high-performing sales culture, we would like for you to keep these points in mind.

- 1.** Sales teams need to be equipped with both technical and non-technical skills, which includes tools, knowledge and processes to meet their individual goals and objectives. This investment in the team ensures higher performance and greater engagement, and also helps in employee retention. Leaders also have the responsibility of thinking about systematic solutions and off-site learning events.
- 2.** If you're changing the sales culture and your sales management processes, this change will only work in your favor if you put in a team effort. Your leaders and sales managers are the most crucial elements of your team. You need to give them the opportunity to help you shape your organization. This will help you get buy-in from your stakeholders and tell you who wants to be part of the future and who doesn't.
- 3.** You need to aim for making progress, don't worry about perfection. You need to take the time to identify and prioritize the activities that will have the greatest impact on results. Do not attempt at bringing about wholesale change. It would make everything chaotic. You need to first focus on doing the most crucial things really well before you move on to other improvement activities.
- 4.** The strategy needs to focus on simplicity and practicality. You need to build strategic clarity that enables the right support and skills in order to build a highly engaged sales culture.

THE NEXT STEPS

To help you build clarity around your strategy and build a highly engaged sales force, we offer some great resources, including:

Survey to Assess Your Sales Culture

You need to first identify and then evaluate opportunities to build a high-performing sales culture. This will be done by benchmarking your organization against the best organizations in your industry.

Nevertheless, we always encourage you to contact us first to schedule a discussion with us about how we can best help you.

Off-Site Session for Strategy Alignment

To help you build clarity around your strategy and make your team commit to it, we'll help you organize an off-site session with your sales team. The result of this session would be a one-page strategic plan that will define a simple yet powerful course of action or blueprint of your strategy that will keep everyone on track.

Sales Conference Keynotes

This has been our most celebrated offering. We can help you create a powerful, compelling and engaging conference keynote for your next sales conference. Our keynotes are not about just jumping and dancing together. It's about aligning direction, gaining commitment and engaging meaningfully. Contact us to transform your next sales conference agenda.

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Visit www.learningmindsgroup.com to learn more about our programs and services. Our website also provides a wealth of information and insights on the most important issues facing leaders and professionals at all levels. We continuously update our website with news, stories, opinions, videos and research.

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