

Achieving sales success

Are your sales reps delivering the results you expect?

In my experience, at least 80% of sales reps take orders well and can communicate their product/service. However, most can tell but don't sell i.e. they don't close the deal. In addition, if you have five reps, two will not achieve their sales targets; and if you have three, one will not achieve his or her sales target.

Armed with this knowledge, you can implement measures to encourage your reps to deliver the expected results. Managing reps - if your business demands them - is one of your most important tasks. They represent a huge investment, and they must match this through their sales. Here are two simple checklists to help you assess your reps:

The first list is for you, the business owner, to help you manage them. It will help you understand what is important to you and what you expect from your reps.

SALES REP ASSESSMENT GUIDELINES

(Score 1 to 10, 1 being poor, 10 being good)

1. SALES RESULTS	SCORE
Achieving, reaching, exceeding sales targets, rands and GP%	_____
2. PEOPLE SKILLS/ATTITUDES	
Communication, internal and external	_____
Listening	_____
Building mutual respect	_____
Positive vibe	_____
Proactive	_____
Opportunity-driven	_____
3. SALES SKILLS	
Closing the deal	_____
4. PRODUCT KNOWLEDGE	
Technical	_____
Product benefits and features	_____
5. TIME MANAGEMENT	
Quality vs. quantity	_____
Effectiveness and efficiency	_____
6. SALES ADMIN	
Reports/emails etc.	_____
Quotes	_____
Following the system	_____
7. KEY ACCOUNT MANAGEMENT	
Growing accounts	_____
Building lasting relationships	_____
Adding value	_____
8. SALES PROSPECTING	
Finding new clients	_____
New business	_____
9. DEBT COLLECTION	
Close the deal/cash in the bank	_____
Cash flow	_____



SALES REP - SELF ANALYSIS

This second checklist is for your reps - and allows them to do a quick self-analysis across eight key areas.

(Score 1 to 10, 1 being poor, 10 being good)

1. PROSPECTING	SCORE
Skill	_____
Level of prospecting	_____
2. CONDUCTING INTERVIEWS	
Face-to-face with clients	_____
3. ANALYSING CLIENT NEEDS	

4. PRESENTATION SKILLS	
Presenting your company and benefits	_____
Company's competitive advantages	_____
5. TIME MANAGEMENT	

6. NEGOTIATING THE DEAL/DEALS	

7. CLOSING THE SALE	

8. SERVICE/RELATIONSHIP/FOLLOW UP	

The checklists will help you identify areas in which your reps need additional training, and which skills need to be learnt or re-learned. It will also give them a clearer understanding of your expectations, allowing them to focus on key areas.

IDENTIFYING AND SELLING TO DIFFERENT PERSONALITIES

Do your reps know how to identify and sell to the four different personality types? This information I gleaned from my mentor Bill Gibson - a great expert in sales tactics.

Most people are a combination of two of the types below - the trick is to identify which:

1 Supporter

These sensitive individuals love to help others. They generally lack structure and will do anything to save a relationship. To persuade them you will need to provide guarantees and assurances. They like to play a supportive role, and to fit in. They will always help a friend in need.

To sell to supporters keep the following in mind:

- Show sensitivity- don't box them in
- Give space - a comfortable approach
- Tone - build a relationship
- Feelings - be helpful
- Ask for support - don't rush
- Show trust - respect loved ones, etc.
- Show sincerity; talk and show feelings
- Don't ask them to take risks
- Move them slowly towards acceptance
- Show your care for humanity
- Console and listen

2 Promoter

These individuals enjoy applause and always get off to a good start in whatever project they are tackling. They do look to save energy along the way, however, and are big dreamers and followers of their intuition. To persuade them you will need to provide client testimonials and incentives. They are extremely expressive and are likely to become attached quickly. They do, however, lack focus and tend to think aloud.

To sell to promoters you need to:

- Exude energy and fun - visually show your response
- Give compliments - be personal
- Use appropriate control - talk to them, not down to them
- Be witty - have time for them
- Show flexibility- keep them away from details
- Don't criticize - they'll attack
- Show them the positive impact they have on you
- Show them how to save effort and look good
- Be willing to listen to them; expand on concepts
- Keep them on focus

3 Analytical

Analytics need you to provide the details, and like facts and figures. They don't like being shown up or embarrassed and will do anything to save face. These personalities lack spontaneity. To persuade them, you will need to show a lot of

support and thinking behind your service or product. They can take forever to make a decision and when in doubt, will avoid you.

To sell to analyticals you need to:

- Cover the fine points and be accurate
- Be specific and deliver quality
- Do your research - talk savings/security
- Respect their schedules
- Ask for their input
- Don't push them - be friendly
- Don't be flashy - don't touch
- Don't embarrass them - don't interrupt
- Don't change directions once agreed
- Use dates, facts, graphs, charts, reports
- Acknowledge and work within their principles and thinking

4 Controller

These people love to see results, like to save time and are keen decision makers. They like to be in charge. To persuade them, provide options and probabilities to support their conclusions. They like to see quick action, and always have to be right. With a "my way or the highway" attitude it can be difficult to sell to controllers.

To sell to controllers:

- Talk results and stick to business
- Talk profits - but don't control the conversation
- Be concise and use logic
- Be clear - summarise
- Don't waste their time - hit the highlights
- Get to the point - don't argue
- Talk bottom line
- Give options
- Outline the probabilities
- Show your abilities
- Don't get too personal
- Don't be too chatty

Organising their time

We all know that time is a precious commodity. But do you know how much of the average 40-hour week your reps spend face-to-face with your clients? In my experience, they probably spend between 5% and 20% of their time actually selling. If you start with the knowledge that most people are very poor at managing their time, you'll be prepared for the huge task of helping your reps manage their time.

So many reps are busy just being busy. Being able to prioritise, organise and plan is critical. One way to help them to do this is to get them to split their day in two; with 8am to 12pm set aside for client meetings and 1pm to 5pm dedicated to paperwork, admin issues, following up and setting appointments. Your reps need self-discipline to ensure they are not pulled from pillar to post.

But what happens to this neat plan if a client calls and wants to see a rep urgently at 3pm? One option would be to say that you are seeing a client at 2.45pm, another at 3:45pm and a third at 5pm, and to ask to meet the next day instead. Nine times out of 10, your client will be accommodating. But there are always exceptions to the rule, so if it is a particularly difficult client, you may have to make an exception.

Effectively a rep has 10 months within which to achieve a 12-month budget. I call this the 10 to 12 Ratio. Why ten months? Quite simple - at least one month is taken for holiday and sick leave, and that second month is time wasted because the rep is disorganised.

I read an article 10 years ago that predicted that sales professionals would disappear over time as a result of emerging technologies, such as email, the internet, social media etc. But I don't buy into this school of thought because face-to-face relationships can't be beaten!

CLOSING THE SALE

Let's look more closely at closing the sale. When you quote, do you and your reps have your closer rate on hand? Those who do, keep them, those who don't, don't? Here are two examples:

Scenario 1: Jack was struggling to do R1-million sales per month in his business. My first question was how many reps he had in place. At the time he had four reps and two support staff. I next asked about the value of the quotes going out to potential clients each month. He didn't know. So to start we put a system in place to track this. As it turned out his reps were sending out quotes to the value of between R4-million and R6-million each month. So their closing was poor, not their reach.

We then looked at why they weren't closing more quotes, by asking questions like:

- Do we take too long to follow-up?
- Are we not persistent enough?
- Was it because we tried to close the quotes over the phone vs. face-to-face?
- Was the client comparing apples with apples?
- Was it because of price?
- What is our relationship like with the client?
- Are our presentations poor?

Scenario 2: Peter was struggling to reach R3.5-million in sales per month in his business. He knew that his team's closing rate was usually four out of 10 (at least he knew this!). We then started going through the questions above systematically with his reps. The closing rate went up to six out of 10.

Let me end with a positive quote that I still remember from my first sales course in 1981, by Alfred Tack: "To the sales people of tomorrow, keep your standards high, your profession is an honourable one - without sales people there would be no economy. Remember other people's happiness may depend on you selling your way to success". **YB**

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