

Part Five: Clearing the Way

Are you onboarding your salespeople correctly?

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Editor's Note: This is the fifth of a five-part series. The first four parts appear in the September, October, November and December 2021 issues of Office Technology.

We have spent years developing our salespeople into the successful performers they are today. It is painful to think they could be using our coaching and development as selling experience to add to their résumés and then apply for careers in other industries. Is it futile to think we could keep them with our companies long term? The answer is not an easy one. In order to find it, we need to understand more about why our salespeople turn over.

If you search “why salespeople quit” on Google, you will read all of the typical responses: bad relationship with the sales manager, no training or development, no future growth, etc. Each of these reasons represents something in the way of a salesperson’s success and there is a good chance he (or she) will see if the grass is greener somewhere else. When looking to solve the turnover challenge, these are good places to improve to allow the potential of growth for your sales team members. However, why do we still lose the good salespeople on our teams? It is because they cannot see a future for themselves in this industry.

Part of figuring out the turnover game is to also figure out how we can develop those who are already doing well. We need a strategy for continued growth that feeds our reps’ excitement and desires for personal knowledge and advancement that are beyond the normal onboarding programs of our dealerships. In the final part of this series, we will explore how to clear the way for the continued success of our salespeople and keep our top-performing ones motivated and excited about their long-term futures at our dealerships.

Your High-Performing Sales Team

Imagine the potential of a tenured sales team at your company with salespeople who are obsessed with improving their skill sets because they understand that the more skilled they



are, the more money they can make. It is not a myth.

From what I have seen, there are three main benefits from achieving this state: (1) Salespeople will start to stay longer, across the board, at your company; (2) You will increase sales revenue in the different services you offer (managed print services, managed IT, software); and (3) You will have higher profit margins

through increased sales ability and experience.

You can get to this point, but you have to put things in place to attract the level of talent you are looking for and those who want to put down long-term roots at your company. In order to get there, your leadership team members need to become great at identifying and fostering potential talent on their teams, as well as creating ongoing learning paths for those high performers.

Foster Intrinsic Motivation in High-Potential Reps

Too often we get excited about bright spots of potential in our salespeople and we end up making critical mistakes in their development. I can recall multiple instances where we prematurely promoted a salesperson without enough experience into a sales manager role and then asked him to lead the team. We rationalized it with backward logic like, “He was a sales manager at a previous job” or “He may not be ready right now, but he will grow into the role and I will support him along the way.” When we do this, we are setting the person up to fail.

We cannot forget that people learn in levels. Our salespeople need to become successful sales executives before they can advance to the next levels in their careers. That means they need to finish their development while over-achieving performance expectations. When we spot a high-potential salesperson on our team, we need to make sure we keep him motivated to complete the mission — to become the successful salesperson he set out to be, and all the commissions and accolades that go with it.

The reason we set our salespeople up to fail here is because we do not have a proper system in place to foster their potential while we keep them focused on the task at hand (i.e., hitting their numbers and making a ton of money). Dan Pink's book, "Drive," lays out a system we adopted for our salespeople (during my tenure at MRC in San Diego, California) that works very well to keep them motivated.

"Drive" is all about how to awaken the intrinsic motivation inside of people. Intrinsic motivation is defined as doing an activity for its inherent satisfaction rather than for some separable consequence. In other words, how do we get our salespeople to want to become better salespeople? A big piece of the answer comes from how we get them to motivate themselves.

Pink says three components are required to create intrinsic motivation in someone: autonomy, mastery and purpose. We tackled these components for our salespeople one by one. For autonomy, it is our job to make sure our salespeople understand what is expected of them and know how to run their business like it is their own. For mastery, we need to create learning paths that allow our salespeople to continue to develop the skills they think they need to improve on. For purpose, our salespeople need to believe in what they sell and understand how it helps their customers' businesses and their livelihoods. As long as we created an environment where autonomy, mastery and purpose existed, our salespeople would literally motivate themselves.

What is the message here? When you have high-potential salespeople, you need to find a way to make sure you are continuing to foster their intrinsic motivation so they can complete the mission and hit their own definitions of success. If there is no intrinsic motivation present, you should expect them to look elsewhere for that inspiration.

Create Learning Paths to Light The Way

A big part of awakening intrinsic motivation in our salespeople is mastery, giving them the ability to improve. Mastery is why sales training is so important. People leave their jobs because they are not being developed enough. Consider the appeal for people to go back to school for MBAs. There is a natural drive within humans to improve and a desire to try to become the best versions of ourselves. We are always in search of it, and if it is not available at your company, people will leave with reasons like, "There was nowhere else for me to grow here" and "There wasn't really much challenge left for me."

Your answer for mastery is to create learning paths. Think of learning paths as MBA programs within your

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company. There is so much your people can learn within your dealership: They can learn about the finances and terminology of an organization from your CFO. They can learn about shipping, logistics and order to install from your operations team. They can learn about customer service and managing difficult conversations from your service technicians, human resources team members and even your call center em-

ployees (if you have them). They can learn about creating a business case and a vision for a company from your CEO. They can learn about sales leadership, accountability and ownership from your management team members. They can learn sales best practices from the major account representatives. They can learn how to become production technology specialists through your partners and vendors. They can learn how to become workflow specialists with software solutions from your partners and vendors. They can learn how to better understand IT departments and the challenges that are solved through managed network services. The list goes on and on. You can create your own MBA through these learning paths.

What happens when you ultimately put together groups of these trainings with certifications? You get a sales leadership program. You get a production specialist training program. You get a solution specialist training program. You get additional learning paths you can put your salespeople who have qualified for this ongoing program through. This mastery option will inspire them to continue to learn within your organization for years to come.

But not everyone qualifies for it, either. The salesperson's primary role and expectation is to hit his quota by the end of the year. If that is not being done, he should not be given anything extra to do. However, those with high potential who are overachieving need to know that there is something else for them when they start mastering their roles.

Summary of This Series

We covered a lot related to onboarding salespeople in these past five articles. In the first article, we explored training to outcomes. Nothing is more important than our people at our dealership. It is our job to make sure they can do their jobs exceptionally well. Every opportunity we have to train them needs to have a specific goal in mind where they can actually do something at the end of the training that they could not do before. This must be inspected and constantly improved over the years.

In the second article, we looked into the first 90 days on the job. First impressions matter with everything in life.

How are we designing those first 90 days to produce an incredible representation of our company and a future sales star? This is where we prove to our salesperson that we believe in him and, as a result, he believes in us.

In the third article, we took a deep dive into product training. When we talk about what we sell to friends and family, no one is excited to say they sell copiers for a living. They need to learn that what we sell matters and makes a difference to businesses everywhere. When salespeople believe in what they sell, the passion comes through and the customer can feel it.

In the fourth article, we learned about the importance of teaching salespeople how to sell. There is a distinct difference in learning sales skills that are beyond products and services. They need to see themselves as the “future” type of sales consultant and not the “slimy, used-car salesperson with a bad reputation.” When this is done correctly, you end up with salespeople who believe in themselves and can handle any product or service you add to their plates.

Finally, in this fifth and final article, we finished with clearing the way to success. We cannot forget that the process of salesperson development never really ends. We need to continue to foster their intrinsic motivation, and inspire them to continue to feed that thirst for knowledge and development

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through learning paths and achievement. The result is a tenured sales force filled with high-performing salespeople.

In the end, onboarding and developing your people into top sales performers is a lot of work. It will take your attention, inspection, course correction and positive inspiration. There is no question about the time it will take to get it done correctly. What you will find by implementing a few of the ideas you have learned

in these articles is that you will end up growing your sales teams more quickly, bringing in more revenue and closing the years with more EBIT. ■

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