

■ **Level Four — Direct Mandate:** This is your nuclear option. “This is no longer optional. This is how we’re doing it.” Simple, direct and usually a sign that you have bigger problems than just the behavior you are trying to change.

The “Or what?” here is crystal clear: comply or face progressive discipline, up to and including termination. If you are at this point, you are probably dealing with either a critical compliance issue or a complete breakdown in the manager/employee relationship.

I recently consulted with a company that had to take this approach with its entire sales team regarding a new pricing structure. The results were not pretty — the company lost three reps and had to spend six months rebuilding its pipeline.

Here is the key point: Many sales managers start at level three or four, jumping straight to compensation changes or mandates. This is a mistake. Start with influence through earned respect. If needed, move to activity management. Use compensation changes sparingly and strategically. Save direct mandates for true emergencies or when all else has failed.

Remember, at each level, you must have a clear answer to the “Or what?” question before you start. Your salespeople will test you — maybe not explicitly, but they will probe to see if you are serious about the change you are requesting. Having

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your progression of consequences clearly thought out in advance is not just good management — it is survival.

One final thought: The best sales managers rarely need to go past level two. If you find yourself frequently resorting to compensation changes or mandates, it might be time to look at your hiring process or your own leadership style, because in sales management — like in sales itself — the best solutions usually do not require force. I worked with one sales

manager who had not needed to make a single compensation adjustment in five years. His secret? He hired well, led by example and had built such strong relationships with his team that his influence alone was usually enough to drive change. That is not just good management — that is sales leadership at its finest. ■

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He helps companies navigate the elements of sales on their journeys to success. To schedule a free 45-minute Sales Strategy Review, call (913) 645-3603 or email troy@troyharrison.com. Visit www.troyharrison.com.



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