Part One: Train to Outcomes

Are you onboarding your salespeople correctly?

by: Derek Shebby, Modern Sales Training

Editor's note: This is the first article in a five-part series.

You just completed the interview process and could not be more thrilled about your new sales employee. You are investing in your company and this individual is going to be the catalyst that helps you grow your dealership to new heights. Right now, just like you, he (or she) is telling everyone he knows about how bright the future is and how he is going to do amazing things working on your team. He is proud to work for your company. He is willing to do whatever it takes to reach success and your promise to show him the way is enough for him to go all in on this opportunity.

How does someone with such potential and hope become one who is consistently underperforming, negative and faking his activities? The answer is found inside the onboarding process at your dealership. Are you onboarding your salespeople incorrectly? In this article, I will cover the first of five key components you must have inside your sales onboarding process if you want to develop top performers.

Train to Outcomes

There is so much a new salesperson needs to learn when he joins your dealership. He needs to learn about your management process, including your expectations for performance and activity. He needs to learn all of the tools he has at his disposal, like the CRM, pricing systems, order processing programs, order paperwork automation and qualifying tools, like EDA. He needs to learn all about the products you sell and the services you offer. He also needs to learn the fundamentals of sales and funnel management. Most dealerships have different people involved in the training process to help deliver this information to their new recruits. That is where problems start to arise. The effectiveness of the delivery is all over the place.

Regardless of what is being taught or by whom, there needs to be a common system of development for salespeople to learn the material. Without a system in place to put accountability around that learning, the new hire will not retain the information he is being taught. Not only that, but how are we certain the topic he is being trained on matters in terms of him becoming a top salesperson at your dealership? This does not mean all of your instructors need to have teaching degrees in order to train properly. All they need to do to be effective is to follow these three steps:

Step One: Decide the outcome first, then choose what to teach. ("I told them what to do. Isn't that enough?"— Underperforming manager) Too many training programs become what is commonly referred to as "check-the-box" training. This means the instructor teaches what he knows in a way he thinks people will learn best. However, there are no checks and balances inside of the training to measure that the material stuck. Still, the trainer walks out of the training session feeling accomplished and that he did the job required of him. This is the worst type of training to attend, as the new hire most likely spent the whole time on his phone checking TikTok.

The problem is not the instructor's intention — he genuinely feels like he is imparting knowledge to the new hire. The problem lies solely in the methods he used to create the structure of his training. That structure is created by working backward from the desired outcome.

What do you want your rep to be able to do after training? He should be able to set more appointments with prospects, clearly explain your offering's value proposition, move a deal through the funnel and end up being consistently over plan at the end of the month. Aren't these the most important things? Once you know the desired outcome, you can determine how to go about giving the new hire that information inside of a short, interactive session. If the outcome is not achieved, then the training was not effective. Ultimately, training should give the rep step-by-step instructions on how to achieve the outcome you expect.

Step Two: Demonstrate the behavior you expect. ("When I used to cold call, this is what I did." — Underperforming manager) The instructor cannot expect a new rep to do something he would not be able to do himself. He is there as proof that the methods inside the training work. This builds the new hire's trust and excitement.

Coaching is how we prove to our salesperson that he is worth our time and effort, and that you are both a team fighting a common battle.

Every training program should involve a component where the instructor demonstrates what great looks like. Would you believe it when I say this is almost always missed? We must lead by example. Instructors: The following are some examples of what needs to be demonstrated to the new rep.

- Do you expect him to be able to recite product knowledge? Show off a little by flexing your own product knowledge first.
- Do you want him to know how to do an effective demo? Dust off your seven-step demo skills and show him what you want to see him do.
- Do you want him to put together a perfect order packet? Put one together in front of him and show him how it can be done quickly and efficiently.
- Do you want him to set appointments over the phone? Show him how to set one with ease while on speakerphone.
- Do you want him to use the CRM after his phone blitzes? Show him how to input the activities and schedule next steps.

After the new hire is taught how to do something (Step One), the instructor must show him that the step-by-step instructions work.

Step Three: Coach him along the way. ("I don't understand why they just don't do it the way I would." — Underperforming manager) Coaching is the most important step of them all. It is where we make sure the new rep has properly learned the step-by-step instructions and is about to use them in a real application. Yes, this means if the instructor taught him how to do a demo of one of the dealership's flagship products, the training is not done until the instructor observes and coaches the new hire during a live customer demo. This does not mean that if the rep does one live demo for a customer he is proficient at the skill. The instructor must keep coaching and observe him until he can demonstrate excellence. Remember to lead from the front. The instructor needs to have shown the new hire what excellence looks like in Step Two. The rep needs to have that picture to strive for.

One of the most difficult parts of being a manager is wondering why your salespeople do not just do things the way you would do them. Have you ever wondered that? The answer is more simple than you think. It is because they are not just like you.

The instructor's final job is to make sure he brings the best out of his rep as he works to master the skills needed to be a top salesperson. During that journey, the instructor will constantly need to find ways to relate to the rep and speak to him in a way that resonates. As long as the instructor never gives up on the rep and keeps fighting to make sure he demonstrates his skills at a high level, there is no way the instructor can fail. The rep will keep fighting as long as the instructor believes in him. Coaching is how we prove to our salesperson that he is worth our time and effort, and that you are both a team fighting a common battle. Can you imagine what your salesperson thinks if he is abandoned to do it alone?

Part One Summary

"Hire for attitude, train for skill." That is the common mantra for hiring good people. As long as the new hire has the attitude, we can train him to be successful. He is bringing the attitude, but are we doing our part to teach him how to be successful?

In order to effectively onboard a new sales rep, there must be a system in place to deliver the information he needs to be successful. We do this by training to outcomes. The training system needs to be applied throughout the entire onboarding process and the salesperson's experience. Following this training structure increases the chances of paving the path to success for your salesperson down the road.

In my next article, we will continue with "Part Two: The First 90 Days," where I will go in-depth on the best practices needed for your salesperson to get off to a fast start in his career at your dealership. ■

Derek Shebby, founder of Modern Sales Training, spent 17 years as a top sales executive and sales director with Xerox Corp. in California. During his tenure at Mr. Copy (MRC), he was a 13-time Sales President's Club Award winner, coached hundreds of salespeople and sales leaders to excellence, and helped grow his local division from $40 million to more than $100 million in annual revenue (30 to 500 employees). Now he spends his time raising his soon-to-be three boys in San Diego, California, while helping dealerships across the nation increase revenues and profits through his private coaching group and copier/MFP sales training courses. He can be reached at derek@modernsalestraining.com and has exclusive sales trainings for BTA members at www.modernsalestraining.com/BTA. Visit www.modernsalestraining.com.