

An Effective Manager Learns To Wear Many Hats — by Roy Chitwood, CSP

In the past, sales management used to be about police work. The manager operated like a watchdog, making sure people came to work, made their call quota, completed the paperwork and stayed productive.

Not anymore.

Today, people are either personally or physically harder to control. Even if they are physically close, they often exhibit a resistance to the monitoring of their activities. Much of the time, however, they are in remote locations and communicate by fax or e-mail. They might even be telecommuters who rarely set foot in any corporate office. So how does the sales manager cope with these changing circumstances and still achieve excellence?

- **The sales manager's No. 1 responsibility is the development of their people.**

I absolutely believe the single greatest asset of any company is the undeveloped potential of its people. And this is especially true in sales. Anyone who is a first-line sales manager has to assume direct responsibility for the development of all the salespeople under her supervision. As well as getting them to sell more, her job entails making each one a better sales professional.

- **The sales manager should ask, "Are my people working for me, or am I working for them?"**

Anyone who answers the former is missing the point of sales management. The sales manager is there to help his salespeople perform better for the greater good of the company. And not surprisingly, as his salespeople's performance improves, he, too, will reap the rewards. Rewards such as increased pay and bonuses, promotion opportunities, and the immeasurable sense of pride in knowing he helped others help themselves.

- **Focus on team rather than individual accomplishment.**

Many times, the characteristics that make a good salesperson don't contribute to first-class sales management. Salespeople typically have great ego needs, for instance, while the manager must take satisfaction from the production of the entire team.

What's more, some sales managers create such a competitive environment that it becomes counterproductive. For example, it's a good idea to regularly post sales figures and rankings. However, when it gets to the point that the mid to low achievers' sole focus is to move up the list simply to avoid embarrassment, this is negative motivation. And their self-esteem, and likely the service they give customers, will suffer. Why should a sales manager consider pairing a low achiever with a high achiever to provide both with different perspectives and build stronger camaraderie? When a salesperson has a personal interest in not only her success, but the success of a colleague as well, both will perform at a higher level.

- **A sales manager's real task is to nurture and to teach.**

Today, a sales manager is more of a coach than a true manager. She must play a significant role in the career guidance and development of the people she supervises.

By seeking to instill in each one a purpose to improve their sales ability, she moves them beyond money motivation toward becoming a real sales professional. This makes them more effective and, even more importantly, helps the customer receive better service and have their needs more fully met.

- **Commit to lifelong learning.**

Not long ago, most salespeople stopped learning after school, coasting along on yesterday's know-how. Now, however, continuous education is a requisite of success.

The sales manager must lead the way by attending seminars and courses on a regular basis, while, at the same time, discovering the types of training his sales personnel need the most to expand. He must then sell the training to his sales force and obtain their buy in to make it effective. The buy in of the sales force is critical. If they don't buy it or believe in it, they'll blow it off making it a negative experience for all.

- **Go into the field, and work with your people.**

While modern communication makes it easy to manage from afar, a sales manager makes a terrible blunder if she fails to stay in the trenches with her sales force. The more high-tech the world becomes, the more salespeople need the personal touch. They also need the sales manager's expertise to guide them through the rough spots. Often the sales manager can't see what's wrong by talking to them. In fact, oftentimes the salesperson has no idea they have a problem or flaw until an observer identifies it. If the sales manager goes out and observes how the salesperson performs, the solutions are evident.

- **Give back to your profession.**

Truly outstanding sales managers do far more than look after the team. Many serve in professional associations or work as mentors for those just beginning. By adding to the overall image and success of her profession, she can do a lot to improve the status of the salesperson in society.

About Roy Chitwood

Roy Chitwood is an author, trainer, and consultant in sales and sales management and is president of Max Sacks International, Seattle.

His program "The Guaranteed Close" takes a scientific approach to selling. It allows sales managers to monitor and measure the effectiveness of their sales team's performance.

If you are interested in learning more about The Guaranteed Close program or any other of Roy's programs, please contact Slife Sales Training, Inc. at 800-755-1325.