

# salesmanagement

REX FITHIAN

## SALES CALL COACHING

Sales Call coaching is a fundamental part of developing high performing sales teams. The sales manager's role is often misunderstood and mismanaged. We tend to think the sales call is ours and the sales person should just pay attention and learn a thing or two.

There are three key points to remember. First and foremost, it's the sales person's sales call – not yours. You build the sales person's respect for you and enhance the customer's respect for them if you adopt this attitude. What happens when you "take over the call?" You might get the order, but what happens the next time the sales rep has a challenging situation? Yep, they bring you in to make the call.

Second, coaching is done to improve the performance of the next call. If your rep isn't well prepared for this call, there is little you can do to make it productive. Use pre-call briefing to make sure they cover all the bases. After the call ask questions that help them know how to critique their own performance – when you are not on the call with them. That's the goal of effective sales call coaching.

Third, spend your sales call coaching time where you'll get the greatest return. Here's the question: If you only have a limited amount of time for sales call coaching (and you do!) and you could choose between a two percent improvement from your top performers or a ten percent improvement from your bottom performers, where would you spend your time?

Yes, there will be several folks in the middle who may need improvement, but don't spend all your valuable time with under performers.

To be effective with sales call coaching, it takes proper coaching techniques before, during and after the call.

### BEFORE THE CALL

Get an understanding of the purpose of the call and how well the salesperson has prepared. The following questions will give you insight into how well they have planned.

- **"What is the objective of the call?"**  
Allow them to verbalize the action they want the customer to take as a result of the sales call.  
You are looking for preparation, focus and determination.
- **"Who are the key people?"**  
Does the salesperson know the important players and what influence they have on the buying decision?  
Get an understanding of how well the salesperson has developed the relationship. It's important to know that they are dealing with the ultimate decision-maker.
- **"What information will be exchanged?"**  
There are two areas that are important:
  1. What information do we need from the customer?
  2. What information do we want the customer to have that will help him decide in our favor?

- **"What concerns should be anticipated?"**  
Listen to what potential questions and obstacles the salesperson has identified and how they are prepared to respond. Ask them to refer to previous experiences with similar objections.

### DURING THE CALL

Let the sales person conduct the call. If the customer asks you a question, reflect it back to the person responsible for the relationship – your sales rep. Don't be disrespectful, but say something like, "You know that's a great question. John here is one of our most knowledgeable reps about that issue." Then, turn to your rep and say, "John, tell him about what we are doing in this area." You just made your sales rep ten feet tall.

### AFTER THE CALL

After the call is complete, create a positive environment that allows the salesperson to critique themselves – ask, don't tell. Remember, your objective is to help the salesperson learn to critique sales calls when you are not present. Ask the following:

- **"How do you think the call went?"**  
Allow the salesperson to critique the meeting and their performance. Hear their perspective before presenting your viewpoint.
- **"What part of the call was the strongest?"**  
Begin the critique from a positive perspective. Use this to encourage and reinforce the type of performance you desire.
- **"What part of the call was the weakest?"**  
Make sure that you provide guidance toward correcting or improving the steps in the selling process that are not what you expect. Use the stronger performance as a means to bridge to the improvement you want.
- **"What should you do differently based on the experience of this call?"**  
Let the salesperson express their approach on how to improve their sales call performance. Add your suggestions and direction in a way that supplements their strategy.

You don't have to use these techniques on every call you coach – just the ones you want to be better.

*Rex Fithian is a member of SMEI Dallas and is President of ExSell. He is a popular sales coach and leadership counselor with experience on "both sides of the sale". You can reach him at [rex@exsellpro.com](mailto:rex@exsellpro.com)*