

## Strategies: Why 'emotionally intelligent' sales teams outperform the competition

Denver Business Journal by Colleen Stanley

Date: December 1, 2014

Emotional intelligence has long been studied in the executive, leadership world. However, sales leaders have not been as quick to embrace the idea of soft skills. They often confuse soft skill with, well, soft sales results.

It's time to challenge your thinking and gain an edge on your non-educated competitors. Successful sales organizations may not be labeling certain skills or activities as soft skills, but when you take a closer look, these top-performing cultures are embracing and leveraging the power of emotional intelligence skills. Here are three traits that help sales teams win more business with the right customers.

**1: They are competitive and collaborative.** Great salespeople are competitive. They also know who and where the real competition is -- and it's not the person sitting next to you. Sales organizations lose thousands of dollars every year because of a lack of teamwork. Salespeople don't ask for referrals from clients because they are concerned that the referral might not be in their territory or vertical they are selling. Others don't want to share best practices because they're concerned their insights might help a team member get better. Maybe even give them a run for top sales dog position.

News alert: the competition is outside the building, not inside the building. Emotionally intelligent sales organizations recognize it takes a "sales village" to win. Veterans are encouraged to mentor and help newbies. Ramp-up time is decreased and the newbie is on their way to earning commission checks quicker. Top performers share their best practices. These smart salespeople realize that one hot shot salesperson hitting quota doesn't insure financial stability or consistent growth for the company.

### Is your sales team competing with one another or the competition?

**2: They are comprised of salespeople with high self-management skills.** Does anyone else find it strange that sales managers have to keep asking salespeople to do what they get paid to do? For example, a salesperson interviews for a position, knowing that it requires both business development and closing sales. The salesperson is pretty good the first month on the job. Then lack of self-management (discipline) sets in. Activity metrics aren't hit, affecting sales results. When asked the reason, excuses abound.

*"I don't have time."*

Translation: I lack the discipline to calendar block and set aside specific times for business development and account management.

*"My prospects buy only on price."*

Translation: I lack the discipline to invest time honing my consultative selling skills. Salespeople with good self-management skills have the ability to set goals, define the action steps to reach the goal and most important: execute. They don't need to be cajoled or forced into doing what they are paid to do. They are similar to top athletes who choose to train during the off season to be better during the real season.

### **Is your sales team self-managing or management dependent for sales results?**

#### **3: They manage stress well.**

The bounce-back factor is important in sales. Every sales person experiences setbacks. The deal that was 90 percent closed went away because of an unexpected change in decision makers. You are prospecting consistently and still hearing "no" more than "yes." Salespeople lacking the ability to handle stress become less productive due to Biology 101. When your body gets stressed, it emits the stress hormone of cortisol. As a result, clarity of thinking and creativity are diminished. Fatigue sets in. The result is non-productive, no production sales behaviors and results.

The No. 1 quality found in salespeople who handle stress well is the ability to change their perspective on adversity. Instead of whining, moaning and inviting people to a pity party, they ask themselves critical questions.

- What's good about this setback?
- Where's the lesson?
- How can I learn from this adversity to do better in the future?

This lesson learned mindset creates energy and focus on what can be done rather than what can't be done. Years ago, a very successful colleague of mine was on his way to close a six-figure deal. He received a phone call from his prospect on the way to the meeting. His prospect's biggest customer just filed bankruptcy and all decisions were on hold. My colleague's response was typical of a person that handles stress well. *"Oh well. Some will, some won't, time for me to find another prospect."* He didn't miss a beat and exceeded his quota for the year.

### **Does your team bounce back or get set back?**

In 2015, look at those perceived soft, squishy skills called emotional intelligence. Soft skills do produce hard sales results.

Good Selling!

Colleen Stanley

Colleen Stanley is president of SalesLeadership Inc., a business development consulting firm specializing in sales and sales management training. The company provides programs in prospecting, referral strategies, consultative sales training, sales management training, emotional intelligence and hiring/selection. She is the author of 'Emotional Intelligence For Sales Success' and 'Growing Great Sales Teams.' Reach Colleen at 303.708.1128 or visit [www.salesleadershipdevelopment.com](http://www.salesleadershipdevelopment.com).

Permission is granted to reprint this article in print or electronically as long as the paragraph above is included and contact information is provided to [team@salesleadershipdevelopment.com](mailto:team@salesleadershipdevelopment.com). Thank you.