



## **Strategies: Five ways sales managers get set up to fail**

**Denver Business Journal by Colleen Stanley**

Date: July 29, 2014

Congratulations! Your company revenues require hiring a full-time sales manager. You, the business owner, are ready to transfer your current responsibilities of sales management and focus on leading the company.

You interview several candidates and are impressed with their selling prowess and resume of success. The offer is made and six months later the only thing growing is the additional cost to the payroll. What went wrong?

There is a good possibility that you didn't interview for the specific skills and attributes required for effective leadership. And there is also a good chance you didn't provide training that would give your sales manager a shortcut on the road to success. Here are five key areas to vet during the interview process and/or offer education to help your new sales manager be successful in their role as a leader.

**Hiring and selection:** For some reason, CEOs think that sales managers are born with an innate ability to interview and on-board new hires. The reality is most sales managers have never attended a behavior-based interviewing course. Without this knowledge, they don't know how to discern between true sales producers and sales imposters.

Without such training, sales managers ask the wrong questions during interviews such as, "*Tell me what you would do to build your account base.*" Without knowing it, the sales manager is testing for theory and probability, not reality. A better question, learned through behavior-based interview skill training is, "*Tell me about a time when you had to build and grow your account base.*" The answer to this question will tell you what the candidate did in a previous position rather than what he's hoping to do.

**Accountability:** Great sales managers are comfortable setting high standards for the team and holding them accountable to metrics. Even good salespeople push back when new goals and standards are set. The pushback is more from the fear that they can't achieve the standard, rather than the standard itself.

Strong sales managers stand firm and don't lower the achievement bar. Holding salespeople accountable takes self-confidence. It's lonely at the top and effective sales managers can handle temporary loneliness until the new habits and skills they are measuring improve, along with increased commissions.

Test your future sales manager's ability to hold others accountable with this question. "*Give me an example of a time when you had to hold your sales team to specific metrics and/or standards — and they didn't like it.*"

**Corporate hat and field hat:** Effective sales managers are able to wear two hats, the corporate hat and the field hat. Your best sales managers are in the field, meeting with prospects and customers. They hear firsthand the needs and wants of prospects and customers. It is their

responsibility to convey those needs and wants to the rest of the executive team. This can be a tough job because it sounds like the perpetual *"We need this to be successful"* speech. Confidence and assertiveness is important when asking for tools and products that will better serve the customer.

At the same time, sales managers must possess solid business acumen in order to discern which needs and wants align with corporate strategy and profits. Good sales managers avoid shiny object syndrome which leads to developing products and services — that are never ordered.

**Transfer of knowledge:** Your sales management candidate can be the greatest closer in the world. In fact, that might be how that 30 percent growth was achieved in her previous sales management position. If your sales manager is unable to transfer the skills that made her a top producer, growth will be limited. There is just not enough of her to be at every deal.

Most sales managers have never been taught the skills necessary to be a teacher and coach. It's no wonder they get frustrated with their team's ability to learn, change and grow. As the CEO or business owner, you may need to invest in skill training that helps your sales manager learn how to be a better trainer and coach.

**Emotional Intelligence:** Effective sales leaders are able to read and relate to the various members on their sales team. In the emotional intelligence world, it's called empathy or the ability to walk a mile in someone's shoes. Sales management requires stepping into the various shoes on the sales team and seeing the world through their lens.

For example, one salesperson needs a daily pat on the back. Another appreciates more public recognition. And still another requires a tough love conversation to point out blind spots inhibiting success. The good news is that emotional intelligence can improve with education, focus and commitment. Test for empathy during the interview process and provide additional training, if necessary.

Don't set your future sales manager up for failure. Interview for the right competencies and provide ongoing education. Both will ensure sustainable sales success.

Good Selling!

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