
THE 10 BIGGEST MISTAKES SALES MANAGERS MAKE

(Problems these mistakes can cause and how to avoid them!)

A News You Can Use Special Report



1457 N US Highway 1, Suite 24 • Ormond Beach, FL • 32174
Phone: 800-403-9379 • 386-898-0007 Fax: 389-898-0004
www.learningoutsourcegroup.com



The 10 Biggest Mistakes Sales Managers Make

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There's an old maxim that goes "You don't know what you don't know!" This is most certainly true about sales management and sales leadership. Most sales managers have been called up out of the ranks of selling or promoted from some other business discipline because they were competent and respected as a highly successful "individual contributor." Unfortunately for the new sales manager who certainly wants to do a good job and for the veteran manager who hopes to leverage their experience to provide solutions for problems and increased revenue; there are a significant number of skills, tools, and processes specific to the sales management leadership role that must be executed in order to optimize success. Unfortunately, as a common result of being given sales management leadership responsibilities without the appropriate training or education for the role, some familiar mistakes can begin to occur. Even worse, more senior managers can, over time, entrench these mistakes into their continuing management leadership style. The following is a list of those common mistakes, potential implications of those mistakes, and how to avoid them:

- 1. Using sales instinct experience to make management decisions**
- 2. Playing the role of "fire fighter" rather than "proactive team builder"**
- 3. Acting on too many and often conflicting priorities**
- 4. Ineffectively creating, leading or managing change**
- 5. Expecting appropriate team member behavior without effective guidelines**
- 6. Poorly constructed or non-existent written plans**
- 7. Expecting consistent improvement without a consistent, effective coaching procedure process**
- 8. Inconsistent or ineffective recruiting and selection**
- 9. Failure to "re-energize" senior non-improving sales staff**
- 10. Does not teach, coach, manage and lead to a consistent consultative selling process**

Needless to say, these ten are not all of the common mistakes created by sales management and leadership responsibilities, but... these are the top 10.

In order to better understand and eliminate these mistakes as well as reduce the number of additional problems that can be caused by making them we must first understand why they continue to occur. There are two most possible propelling catalysts that contribute to the perpetuation of these sales management leadership mistakes.

- ***You don't know what you don't know... you know?*** A manager's initial management and leadership style is created much in the same way as a young parent's parenting style. Just as people commonly parent based on their experience and interaction with their own parents, managers commonly manage based on their interaction and experience with their previous managers. Yet, in today's ever changing business environment, it is quite likely that the things that made managers successful in the past are not the same things that will make managers successful today or in the future. So where are today's managers supposed to acquire the knowledge, skills and competencies of effective sales management leadership?
- ***Managers simply don't want to admit that they may need help!*** Let's face it. Whether it's a new manager attempting to live up to the confidence the leadership has shown by providing the management leadership opportunity or whether it's a tenured manager who is struggling with the changes in people, process and technology that is today's evolving business environment... no one really wants to admit that they're struggling and may need additional help to perform their appointed role.

Possibly making matters worse, these common sales management mistakes can cause a plethora of additional complications in the workplace that can be extremely costly in terms of people, time and money. A short list of some of the most likely complications follows. Review this list and determine whether you recognize any of these occurrences in your business or team environments (circle those examples that are "opportunities" for improvement).

Top 10 Mistakes and Resulting Complications

- 1. Using sales instinct experience to make management decisions**
 - A. Salespeople don't improve and sales stagnate or decline
 - B. A true "team" never develops
 - C. Team members lack respect for the manager
 - D. Business and employee issues compound
- 2. Playing the role of "fire fighter" rather than "proactive team builder"**
 - A. Consistently encountering re-occurring problems and issues
 - B. Salespeople don't except responsibility for their "whole" role
 - C. Sales and sales support processes slow down
 - D. Frustration and morale issues grow
- 3. Acting on too many and often conflicting priorities**
 - A. Manager and employees "burn out"
 - B. Missed assigned objectives
 - C. Manager frustration with role and accomplishment expectations
 - D. Employee and Leadership relationship issues develop

- 4. Ineffectively creating, leading or managing change**
 - A. Missed marketplace opportunities
 - B. Lack of employee and/or manager creativity
 - C. Slowed or no process improvements
 - D. Employee turnover
- 5. Expecting appropriate team member behavior without effective guidelines**
 - A. Unproductive team member confrontation
 - B. Human Resources and legal issues and concerns
 - C. Lack of employee direction, purpose and responsibility
 - D. Deteriorating manager / employee relationships
- 6. Poorly constructed or non-existent written plans**
 - A. Poor or inconsistent goal achievement
 - B. Confused employees
 - C. Communication and reputation issues
 - D. Employee turnover
- 7. Expecting consistent improvement without a consistent, effective coaching process**
 - A. Management frustration
 - B. Stagnating or declining results
 - C. Resentful and unhappy employees
 - D. Unusually long and unproductive coaching sessions
- 8. Inconsistent or ineffective recruiting and selection**
 - A. Little or no team member improvement
 - B. Unachieved expectations
 - C. Decreased overall team results
 - D. Elite, high performer resentment toward the manager and company
- 9. Failure to “re-energize” senior non-improving sales staff**
 - A. Decreasing revenue
 - B. Junior team members lack the motivation to improve
 - C. Morale issues
 - D. Dissention on the team and in the company
- 10. Does not coach, teach, manage and lead to a consistent consultative selling process**
 - A. Coaching sessions that take too long
 - B. Confused salespeople receiving mixed messages about their work
 - C. No sustainable improvement
 - D. Decreasing results

Whether you are a sales manager now or if you are responsible for the productivity of sales managers and their teams; there are strategies and techniques that can be utilized to prevent the occurrence of these and other issues. In order to do so we must begin by reducing the number or possibly eliminating the most common sales manager mistakes. The following are some recommendations for eliminating the top ten Sales Manager mistakes.

Recommendations

Mistake: Using sales instinct experience to make management decisions

Eliminating this mistake begins with a decision and a commitment. The decision to become a professional adult sales manager and the commitment to change and improve in order to become the best one you can be! We learn many decision “instincts” that serve us well as salespeople, but those sales instincts can derail and/or corrupt management or leadership decisions that a manager may make. Making the personal choice to find out how an effective sales manager thinks and makes decisions and then making the commitment to change your decision behavior in ways that will support that choice is critical to sales management success.

Mistake: Playing the role of “fire fighter” rather than “proactive team builder”

Too often because of the priority to “get the deal... whatever it takes,” combined with the misguided perspective that the role of the sales manager is to “help salespeople sell more stuff,” managers commonly spend a significant amount of time and energy performing tasks that should be performed by salespeople. Unless a sales manager can proactively develop the competencies and willingness of each sales professional and ultimately fuse these elite high performing players into a powerfully synergistic team, then a large percentage of the work day will be spent “putting out fires” and “cleaning up messes.” Only by becoming a proactive team builder will the manager finally realize the full potential of the sales team and have the time to focus on the true responsibilities of effective management and leadership.

Mistake: Acting on too many and often conflicting priorities

Most managers want to do the right thing... whatever that is. Meaning, they know they are responsible for improving productivity and eliminating problems on the job, but there are others who vie for the time, energy and decisions of sales managers as well. Customers have needs, salespeople require support, bosses have expectations, and other departments have requests. All of which see their need as the priority that should be immediately served. As a result, sales managers can become overwhelmed by the ever increasing demands on their time and resources and can become frustrated, or worse yet incapable of managing this professional “plate spinning” act. In order to eliminate this problem the manager must distill the needs of others and the expectations of their role down to a smaller number of effective priorities that will allow them to make better and more consistent decisions. Developing their staff, is at least in part, one of those fewer but more critical decision priorities. Only through successful ongoing employee development can the manager consistently achieve the desired performance outcome potential to serve the needs of many while maintaining team harmony and promoting top line growth.

Mistake: Ineffectively creating, leading or managing change

Change is a natural catalyst for growth. Most managers know this. They know that they personally grow and improve more during times of change and transition than they do during times of no expectation or need to change. Managers also know that people are more frequently and naturally resistant to change than in favor of it. Combine these understandings with the idea that most sales managers have had very little training in how to potently create, sell and implement change with and through employees and this can lead to a number

of regretful outcomes. Managers have to commit to becoming true “masters” of change. In order to do this, the manager must frequently look for opportunities to change or improve in any area of responsibility, be capable of helping others transition effectively through change, and must be willing to share effective transition praise with others who participated in the change. If a person, a team or a company isn’t changing and growing... then it’s dying! Managers must be “Change Masters!”

Mistake: Expecting appropriate team member behavior without effective guidelines

Expecting someone to act or perform in any fashion without expressly communicating those expectations in the form of written and unilaterally applied standards is another form of business insanity. Just like doing the same things over and over while expecting different results might be considered insane, so would expecting someone to act or perform in a certain way without giving them the clearly communicated standard to focus their sights and energy on be considered equally unbalanced. People want and need rules. They want rules that level the playing field allowing them to feel that there is an equal opportunity for everyone to succeed and they want rules that help them to be more effective in their role. People also want leadership. But they want to follow leaders who not only know where they are going but who will likewise lead, guide, and coach employees to expected levels of success. If a manager wants people to “act right,” then the manager must be willing to create standards. Those standards must be written, well communicated, completely understood and equally applied. And by the way, if the manager ever hopes to develop an “elite high performing team” then the standards must be “high” and must include all areas of expectations including behavioral, activity and results standards.

Mistake: Expecting consistent improvement without a consistent, effective coaching procedure

Great players need great coaches! Great coaches have consistent, winning coaching procedures. To create greatness in all employees, managers must be good at teaching, communicating, coaching, managing and leading people. Communicating expectations is only the first step in achieving them. Managers must teach, coach, manage and lead with “consistent process” and effort in order to produce regular growth and development in employees. A consistent and effective coaching process is what is most commonly lacking when this mistake is made. Managers need to develop a consistent procedure when coaching and also make sure that they use the same “coaching” questions so that salespeople can be more proactively prepared to receive help and thus produce great results in shorter time frames. If a manager is inconsistent in their coaching approach, then salespeople don’t know what to expect from their coach and improvement will be hindered or non-existent.

Mistake: Poorly constructed or non-existent written plans

The best results always occur by plan! Unfortunately, research proves that most managers did not achieve their current levels of success by way of consistent written planning. In fact, most sales managers achieved their success through hard work, quick creative thinking and the character of commitment to something, someone or both. And yet, employees today need and want leadership. Regrettably, employees are tired of working for managers who make decisions by simply “reacting” to the conditions or environment and want to work for and follow managers who make decisions based on priorities, plans and values. The days of creating

throng of adoring employees because a manager has the ability to “think quickly on their feet” or “dance on a shifting carpet” are long gone. It is more likely today for employees to ask, “How did we get in this situation in the first place?” And then be unhappy when they realize it was the manager’s lack of proactive planning and preparation that allowed or created the problem in the first place! In order to prevent this mistake, managers must have a written plan that extends beyond 90 days out over the business landscape and contains specific, measurable goals and tasks that they review, modify and execute on daily.

Mistake: Inconsistent or ineffective recruiting and selection

Your business is in competition with every other business in your market place when it comes to finding and hiring high quality men and women. In order to attract, recruit, select and successfully employ the best talent in today’s business world, managers must become “talent gathering ninjas.” This means that their recruiting, selection and hiring skills must be taken to their highest possible level. It also means that recruiting and selection must become an integral part of their business development plan and daily work behavior. This begins by looking for talent every day. It’s followed by implementing a consistent interviewing process which usually includes multiple interviewers and a multifaceted, professional candidate assessment process. In turn, managers must also create the highest possible level of company differentiation in the interview environment while also creating compelling desire in the candidate to come to work for them. If these things do not occur, then managers will likely wonder, “Why does all of the good talent seem to wind up down the street?”

Mistake: Failure to “re-energize” senior non-improving sales staff

Let’s face facts. Some tenured, seasoned and historically successful salespeople stop improving. That’s a fact. The real question is, “Is that acceptable?” The answer is simple... no, it’s not acceptable. Then why don’t more managers do something about it? The reason is because... they simply just don’t know how. If any company is going to achieve the levels of productivity and profitability that will allow it to stay competitive and vibrant in the market then everyone, and that means everyone, is going to need to improve. Of course we’re grateful for the revenue levels they continue to generate. It would be silly for someone to think that we don’t understand the hours and years the veteran employee has exhausted in the pursuit of our mutual success. And yet, to allow that same cherished professional to linger and possibly fall below their peer’s consistent commitment to improvement would be a disservice to both them and us. Tenured sales employees need motivation, sometimes in the form of reason and sometimes to a basic cause like pride. There are a lot of things working against the senior reps on the team. Change is number one. Everything is changing and the things that made them successful in the past may not keep them successful in the future and probably won’t. With this said, managers have to find ways to integrate, appreciate and motivate experienced salespeople into the mindset that daily improvement is not only desired but it is expected by both the company and the employee. Why should we improve? Because we can... and we will!

Mistake: Does not teach, coach, manage and lead to a consistent consultative selling process

Selling... is it an “art” or is it a “science?” Or, is it both? It’s both! The art of selling does exist for most great salespeople, many of which have most likely been massively successful in the past and some of which may be just as extraordinarily successful today. The art of selling is “that something special” that a particular

salesperson brings to their selling table, something that others can't even begin to duplicate or employ with the same level of results. It could be humor or respectfulness. It could be creativity or intuition. But whatever the art, each salesperson has and/or develops their own and it is uniquely theirs. So what is the science part of selling? That's simple... it's the process! Preferably, it is a process that produces consistent, profitable and hopefully improvable results. The selling process that is that is most unilaterally accepted as the approach in today's business world would be a truly consultative selling methodology. Still, there are many businesses and sales teams who have not committed to uncovering, developing or choosing any formal sales process at all. Many of these companies have had periods of growth and decline to both significant heights and deplorable depths and yet never understood that with a consistently utilized sales process they could have driven their company success to its highest levels. Only by adopting and nurturing a consistent, consultative selling process can a company today expect to achieve its determined goals. And, only by teaching, coaching, managing and leading to this consistent selling process can managers expect to reach the ever increasing performance expectations that continue to rise every month, quarter and year.

Our business is improving yours!

Through years of dedicated research, experience, consulting and "best practice" compilation, **Learning Outsource Group** delivers a world class **Sales Management Leadership Program** education learning continuum that can completely eliminate these top 10 Sales Manager Mistakes and many others that slow down business, decrease profitability, and complicate manager's lives.

Sales Management Leadership Program



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Value Proposition



CONTACT US

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