

DOUBLE YOUR SALES IN 90 DAYS!

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“Double Your Sales in 90 Days”

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Introduction



You can double your sales in just 90 days – or fewer. Now, whilst this may sound like hyperbole, when you follow the logic of this simple three-step formula, you'll see how easily it can be done – in any market:

- ✓ Increase your team's sales productivity
- ✓ Maximise the impact that you as a sales leader have on your sales team
- ✓ Amplify the effectiveness of your salespeople and the value of their time spent with the customer/prospect.

The goal for each of the three steps is to increase your sales by at least one-third. Let's begin this 90-day journey by tackling the first step, the productivity of your sales team.

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Doubling Your Sales Productivity



The more productive your salespeople are, the more sales they will generate for your organisation. The more holes there are in your sales team's productivity, the more sales are being left lying on the table for your competitors to grab.

How productive is your sales team, really?

I am going to show you how, without too much effort on your part, you can increase your sales team's current levels of productivity by at least 33.5%. And in some cases more. As a sales leader, there are two critical measures of sales productivity you need to get your head around if you want to begin your productivity improvement effort. Only once you know what these measures are, can you set about improving them to multiply your sales. The two critical measures of sales productivity are: the 'percentage of non-selling time' your salespeople are engaged in, and the 'gross profit impact percentage'.

Measure 1: Percentage of non-selling time

What is the percentage of time your salespeople spend engaged in administrative activities, paperwork, reports, training, sales meetings and solving customer problems, as opposed to actually selling? How much time do they spend on customer service calls and pop by "how ya doin'?" follow up calls, versus face-to-face or telephone selling? The key measure you need to determine is... their actual amount of real face-to-face, or phone selling time.

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Recent studies have shown that due to administration and paperwork, travel time, inefficient sales processes and poor time planning, most salespeople are working at really only a fraction of their true capacity. No doubt so are yours.

These sales productivity studies vary, showing that actual time salespeople spend selling ranges from as little as 11% through to a maximum of only 40%. Whichever way you read it, there is an awful lot of non-selling time that can be translated into increased sales. (By the way, it is important to note that in the majority of cases, salespeople believe they spend twice as much time actively selling to customers than they actually do.)



The two critical measures of sales productivity are: the 'percentage of non-selling time' your salespeople are engaged in, and the 'gross profit impact percentage'

So what if you could get your sales team to invest only 15% more time actually selling?

Based on their current conversion rates, what would that equate to in terms of additional sales? Imagine... your same people, with the same level of competence, the only difference being that now they are investing 15% more time actively engaged in selling.

Here is the 'Five Step Sales Productivity Audit' that you can apply to your sales team. This will determine their current non-sales activity levels and how to convert that number into additional sales.

The Five Step Sales Productivity Audit

Step 1. Sit down with each of your salespeople individually.

Step 2. Review their diary/organiser, looking at the following areas, as suggested by efficiency expert Dave Brock, with some of my own questions also in the mix. Analyse where your salespeople are spending their time:

- How much time are they spending in meetings with customers addressing new sales opportunities? (These meetings can be telephone or face-to-face meetings)
- How many of these meetings do they have a week?
- How much time are they spending preparing for these calls?

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- How many of these meetings are with new prospects (within current customers, or with new customers)? How many of these meetings are with current customers?
- How much time are they spending in meetings with current customers on customer service/satisfaction issues? These are important meetings, but too much time could be an indicator of problems
- How much time are they spending in internal meetings, not related to new sales opportunities? What are these meetings accomplishing?
- How much time are they spending doing internal reports? Who is asking for the reports? Are they really necessary? Are they being used?
- How much time are they spending in training?
- How much time are they spending in travel? To/from customers, other travel?
- How are they spending the remainder of their time?
- How do they manage their time?
- Do they block out chunks of time for business development?
- How do they prioritise?
- What do they believe about what's important?
- Do they know what is expected of them?
- How different are their perceptions of what's expected compared with your expectations of them?

Step 3. Create a list with three columns:

- Column 1 – List all the 'low hanging fruit' – areas where, with only a few small adjustments, the individual could easily create more selling time.
- Column 2 – List the areas of time where the roadblocks (both perceived and real) would take a far greater concerted effort to transform into selling time. List and prioritise the top three roadblocks. Once they have implemented all the changes listed in column 1, you can begin coaching them through the process of changing their behaviours required to transform the issues in column 2.

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- Column 3 – List all the trip wires and roadblocks common to all your salespeople. These issues will more than likely require some internal company processes to be re-engineered to create an improved outcome.

Step 4. Establish an individual plan to implement the changes.

Step 5. Follow up regularly on the one-on-one session, to determine the impact of the changes.

Measure 2: Gross profit impact percentage

How often have you thought to yourself: “If I could only get more money to invest in xyz... or purchase more xyz... then I could get more sales. After all, you have to spend money to make it don't you?”

In the current soft market many a sales manager has gone cap in hand to the executive suite asking to have their margins lowered to become more competitive. Many a sales manager has requested more money for things like more lead generation, more salespeople, better (more expensive) salespeople and better sales tools. However, in these challenging economic times, no doubt their impassioned pleas have gone unanswered.

Well, if you want more money to invest in growing sales revenue, you are going to have to get it from your gross profit. But there is no way that your finance people are going to allow you to get your hands on any of it unless you can prove to them that it's your money.

So here's the solution. If you can find a way to measurably add an additional 1% or 2% more gross profit would your requests for additional funding be better received? Most likely they would, because, if you can reduce your sales production costs by 1-2%, then the money saved would go straight to the bottom line. These funds can now be freed-up to be invested elsewhere to drive sales.

Re-engineering the sales team for greater profitability

Today, to remain competitive and respond to shrinking margins, there is constant pressure to 'do more with less', and to do it faster. As a result organisations are constantly re-engineering their internal systems and processes, all with the view of becoming more competitive. Yet how much time and resources have been invested to significantly improve the output and productivity of your sales team?

Suppose your sales team currently costs 25% of your gross profit. And suppose that you could cut that cost by 1-2%, with the savings dropping directly to your organisation's bottom line. Now for you to gain access to those funds you will need to do two things. Firstly, you will need

to be able to prove the additional sales production savings. This means that you will have to establish a reliable measure of your current sales productivity. This measure must be one that will stand up to your finance department's scrutiny. Secondly, you'll need to figure out areas within your current sales production effort where you can make the 'shavings'.

Let's tackle each of these in turn.



Salespeople believe they spend twice as much time actively selling to customers than they actually do

Measuring sales productivity

The simplest formula for measuring your current sales productivity percentage I have come across was created by Dave Kahle of "Kahle Way Sales Systems".

Using his straightforward formula will provide you with a simple and accurate measurement of sales productivity.

This yardstick can be applied over time to measure your progress. Kahle's four-step calculation can be used to measure both individual productivity, and the productivity of your entire sales team:

- ✓ Step 1. Pick a period of time, such as the last financial year or the last quarter.
- ✓ Step 2. Taking each salesperson's numbers individually, calculate the total direct cost of that person for the above time period. Total cost must include everything: their earnings, taxes, all expenses, car allowances, additional fringe benefits, bonuses, insurance, etc. This total is the number that most accurately describes the cost of that salesperson to the company for that period of time.
- ✓ Step 3. Now, calculate the total gross profit dollars produced by that salesperson over the same period of time. Compare that number to the costs, and you'll have a ratio of cost to contribution.



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- ✓ Step 4. Now, reduce that ratio to a percentage by dividing costs by gross margin. This percentage is an accurate measurement of the productivity of that salesperson.

Now you can compare each of your salespeople against one another in terms of their productivity percentage. With Kahle's formula, the lower the number, the more productive the salesperson and the more profitable that individual is to the company.

It is advisable to get agreement from your finance department on this number, so that the savings efforts you make can be proved, so you can then apply them elsewhere in your sales effort.

Reducing sales production costs

Now that you have figured out your sales productivity percentage, it's time to reduce your sales production costs. Below is a list for you to review and select three key areas where you can best measurably reduce the production cost of a sale, thereby driving cost-efficiencies into your current sales process.

Here is the list of areas within your sales process and from where savings could very likely be made:

- Lead generation
- Business development/prospecting
- Research and data entry
- Sending out product information
- Setting sales appointments
- 'Belly to belly' sales calls
- Developing sales presentations
- Proposal preparation
- Negotiation
- Diary management
- General correspondence
- Sales reporting
- Customer service and follow-up
- Expediting orders through the system
- Project management
- Key account management
- Service calls
- Customer retention
- Are there technology, systems, tools and templates that you can take advantage of that would save your salespeople time, effort and selling cost?

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- Can you outsource designers, web site optimisation, writers, translators, marketers, researchers, web design, data entry, list management, content creation, sales administrators, contractors etc. to less expensive providers, perhaps working for you online?
- Is there a way you can hire more effective salespeople?
- Can you improve the teamwork of the sales team?
- What are the 'low hanging fruit' areas that you can train your salespeople in that would have a powerful impact on your sales conversions?
- Are there some improvements you can make to your compensation plan?
- Can you reduce the cost of your sales footprint? Can you extend your call cycle etc.?
- Can you improve the quality of your leads?
- Is there a way to reward your salespeople for their productivity?
- Are there ways you could streamline sales reporting and other sales admin activities?

Start doubling your sales in the next 30 days

If I was coaching you to double your sales over the next 90 days, then the only work you and I would be doing in the first 30-day period would be to measurably improve your sales productivity.

Start by establishing a sales productivity percentage for each individual team member and the group by using Kahle's four-step calculation. Secondly, put all of your salespeople through the Five Step Sales Productivity Audit. Finally, select three key areas where you can measurably reduce the production cost of a sale. The result should be an increase in sales of at least one third.

In the next chapter I will show you how to maximise the impact that you as a sales leader can have on your sales team. This will add a further third's worth of sales to your coffers. And finally we will wrap up with strategies and tactics for amplifying the effectiveness of your salespeople and the value of their time invested with the customer/prospect. This will add the final third of additional sales to your business.

Follow this formula and you really can double your sales in just 90 days or less.

Time To Take Charge!



Earlier, we said that if you are going to double your sales 90 days from the time of reading, then you need to go to work on the following three-piece formula.

We suggested that each month, for three months, you tackle each one of three key areas:

1. Increase your team's sales productivity
2. Maximise the impact that you as a sales leader have on your sales team
3. Amplify the effectiveness of your salespeople and the value of their time spent with the customer/prospect.

In the previous chapter, I unpacked the two key measures of sales productivity and the steps required to accelerate them. The focus of this part is maximising your impact as a sales leader on your sales team. We will look at the two highest value activities you can employ to accelerate your sales team's selling efforts.

Your plate is full!

You have a full plate; of that there is no question. Goal-setting, planning, establishing metrics, evaluating performance, managing the pipeline, market planning, generating reports, reporting, meetings, more meetings, recruiting, keeping abreast of technology and market trends, key account management, putting out fires, promise fulfilment, internal roadblock removal... the list goes on.

With all you have on your plate the big question is: how truly productive are you?

One of my first business teachers and mentors, Tom Hopkins of How to Master the Art of Selling fame, would often say that if you want to start multiplying your business, you “must do the most productive thing possible at every given moment”.

This truly is the difference between being really successful and failing – it’s as simple as that!



Unfortunately, however, over the course of time in our role as sales leader we often drift away from the most productive thing. We may think we are being productive because we’re always so flat out busy, but the reality is that we are often not very productive at all.

To begin with, as a sales leader you must clearly define what the most productive thing is for you in your business. Then, as another management guru, Dr. Stephen Covey, would say: *“The main thing is to keep the main thing the main thing!”*

So, let’s first determine what the main thing really is for you in your role as sales leader, and then we will take a look and see how your own personal productivity stacks up against it.

What is: ‘most productive time’?

It is fascinating to note that in a recent study of Fortune 500 CEOs, they estimated that they only had 28 to 38 productive minutes a day. In other words, these very busy executives only invest around half an hour each day on true profit-building activity. Pretty incredible isn’t it?

When you consider your own role and what you are paid to do, how much productive time do you really invest in profit-building activity? Productive time doesn’t simply magically happen – you have to be focused and disciplined and consciously create it. How much of your week last

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week was spent on maintenance and fire-fighting, rather than on your primary task of generating profitable income?

As the individual charged with the responsibility for generating sales revenue, the most productive thing you can do at any one time is to increase the profitable sales revenue generation of the sales team.

So let's discuss you and the number of truly productive hours you put into a day. Do you invest an hour of productive time a day? Two hours? What's your most conservative estimate at this point? Unless you have really focused on maximising your productive time before, my best guess would be that you currently work no more than two hours of productive time a day (And that is probably conservative).

Remember, we are talking about only time invested to increase the profitable sales revenue generation of the sales team. We are not talking here about writing a report that your boss needs for his executive meeting, nor are we talking about meeting with the logistics manager to discuss merchandise delivery issues, we are not discussing customer complaints and putting out fires, nor are we talking about fielding general rep queries from the field.

Right now, stop and review your to-do lists from the last three days. Looking at all the time you spent working, how much real time was invested in doing the most productive thing to increase the profitable sales revenue generation of the sales team? I challenge you to be really self-critical in your estimate. Imagine that I was there with you questioning every little detail. How many truly productive hours you have worked in the last three days?



Fortune 500 CEOs only invest around half an hour each day on true profit-building activity

By the way, the small number of productive hours that you have come up with is more than likely very indicative of the way you operate most of the time. So, if you have been highly critical about where you currently invest your time, you have more than likely concluded that your productive time score is far too low.

So, looking at that number is, it any wonder that you are behind on your financial goals? So your first task this month is to take yourself to task and go to work on carving out three to four hours every day where you only work on increasing the profitable sales revenue generation of the sales team.

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To do this, you need to carry out the following simple (but not easy) three-step process:

Step 1: Evaluate your current reality.

Determine how many hours you currently invest in increasing the profitable sales revenue generation of the sales team. Be really tough on yourself. Now resolve to double the amount of 'truly productive time' you intend to work each week.

Step 2: Lock in 'truly productive time' activities into your diary.

These times are non-cancellable for any reason other than life or death! Hey, if you had a dentist appointment and your number one customer or your boss asked to see you at that time, you'd no doubt negotiate another time to catch up with them, right? Well your 'truly productive time' activities must be no different. They demand your highest priority.

Step 3: Invest your 'truly productive time' carefully.

Use it to work with and coach your salespeople one on one, in the office and in the field. Step three segues nicely into the second of the two highest value activities you can employ, namely, sales coaching.

The 19% factor

Sales management without coaching is equivalent to managing a sports team without a coach. Research data has proven overwhelmingly that this one primary activity will have a greater impact on your salespeople, and thereby their sales, than any other you perform as a sales leader.

For example, regular studies and benchmarks by US research organisation The Corporate Executive Board very clearly demonstrate that sales performance coaching alone contributes a 19% increase in sales. Right now, if you had an extra 19% sales how close would you be towards achieving your numbers?

But forget about the stats for a moment, even though they all consistently point to sales coaching as being the number one success factor of world class selling organisations.



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Come into my 'common-sense corner' for just a moment. Take yourself back to the first three to six months of your sales career. Imagine if you had been fortunate enough to have had a sales coach who worked with you regularly, one on one.

Imagine if you had benefited from a coach who went out on sales calls with you, not to do the selling, but only to observe, and provide you with corrective feedback after every call. How much quicker would your improvement have been? How much sooner would your confidence have increased? How many bad sales habits could you have avoided? I rest my case.

The number one reason that sales managers put forward for not coaching their salespeople enough is... lack of time. Well, we have just removed that as your number one objection by ensuring that you carve time out of your diary to work on the key task of increasing the profitable sales revenue generation of the sales team. This primary activity requires that, as a minimum, once every fortnight you should spend between 60 and 90 minutes with each of your salespeople. This time needs to be devoted entirely to coaching them individually.

What if you have had no coaching training or you have never had a role model to emulate? How do you go about making sure your time invested with your people is valuable? Well, it would probably be a worthwhile investment of your time to attend an open coaching course in your area, or at the very least pick up and read a book or two on the subject.

Having said that, there are three principles you need to follow to get you started quickly. If you keep these values in mind, your coaching sessions will be worthwhile:

- ✓ Listen and clarify. Just as in selling, listen more than you speak
- ✓ Transfer responsibility. It's their life, it's their career, so their success is ultimately their own responsibility
- ✓ Emphasise action learning. True learning happens on the job, not in the classroom. Make sure they leave the session with key actions that they will attempt. Then have them keep a record of their experiences and learning and insist they share them with you in your next session.

Here's a simple two-step process you can employ during your one-on-one coaching sessions that will drive the quickest sales success result.

Step 1: Help your 'coachee' plan the week coming up in detail – who is going to do what, by when?

Step 2: Unpack the week just past, also in detail – what happened? (ie. what were the outcomes of the previous week's plans) and what was learnt?

If you just focus your time on these two areas, you will see the individual's productivity increase along with their sales results. By the way, there are two other powerful benefits that will arise for you as a result of implementing a regular coaching practice. First, you will reduce

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the salespeople's reporting paperwork and second, because you will have an intimate understanding of how they are doing in terms of their pipelines, your forecasting accuracy will improve dramatically.

In the next edition of Winning Edge we will look at the final piece of the 'double your sales in 90 days' formula, optimising the value your salespeople's time spent with the customers or prospects. So, until then your task is twofold: first, implement the three-step 'most productive time' process; second, begin the fortnightly practice of coaching your salespeople.



Once every fortnight you should spend between 60 and 90 minutes with each of your salespeople

Face To Face Facts



Previously, I have explained how you can double your sales in 90 days in any market, if you tackle each of three key areas:

1. Increase your team's sales productivity.
2. Maximise the impact that you as a sales leader have on your sales team.
3. Amplify the effectiveness of your salespeople and the value of their time spent with the customer/prospect.

As discussed in the previous two features, the quickest way to ramp up sales is to accelerate the sales production of your sales team. The vast majority of salespeople are only working at around 60% of their capacity. If all you did was implement systems that increased sales productivity by a small percentage, the results would more than likely have you achieving your sales targets.

The fact is, it's a whole lot easier to increase sales productivity than it is to improve the effectiveness of your salespeople in the face of the customer or prospect. So begin your sales increase effort with sales productivity first. Once you have your sales productivity ramped up, then it's time to amplify the impact of the time your salespeople spend in front of the prospect or customer.

However, before I explain how you amplify the effectiveness of your salespeople, I have a question for you: What have you done differently since reading the first or second chapter? If you are like the vast majority of sales managers, then the chances are that you haven't really done much.

While the advices may have sounded interesting — and you may have even considered applying some of the tactics — actually implementing ideas or concepts from what you read in a magazine article is a whole different ball game.

Why don't we implement what we learn?

- So why don't we implement good ideas?
- Why is it that we will attend a workshop, read a book or an article, listen to an audio series, get inspired to change, and yet still not act on what we have learned?
- What stops us from applying methods and processes that would increase our sales, especially when we need to capture all we can?

The truth is that we blame our lack of action on being time poor, or we put it down to the fact that we don't have the resources we need. Either way, we continue to do what we've always done and therefore guarantee that we keep getting the same results.

Our own lack of action is a clue as to why it is so hard to get salespeople to change their behaviour. Yes folks, we don't have to go very far to discover why sending our salespeople off on training courses to improve their skills has such a limited impact. We only have to look at our own example to see how challenging it is to take a concept and apply it to drive behavioural change. This is why, so often, even though we invest the money and time to train our salespeople, very little change occurs. This is why we don't get the results promised by the course.

So getting your salespeople to ramp up their effectiveness and the value of their time spent with the customer/prospect is the most challenging piece of the sales creation process.

To know and not to do is to not yet know

Let me give you a classic example of what I am talking about. Let's take the concept of Socratic or consultative selling — selling by asking effective questions. If you were to ask any of your salespeople if they know about 'asking questions' as a method for selling, no doubt every one of them will (a) agree that asking questions is essential to the sales process, (b) know all about open-ended and closed questions, and (c) have gone through training using specific questioning formulas (eg. SPIN Selling). And yet, if you go out on the road with them and watch them in a real life selling environment... talk, talk, talk, talk, talk is what they do.

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As Stephen Covey always says, *“To know and not to do is to not yet know.”*

Making the effort and investing the time to change one’s behaviour can be tough, especially when you are not necessarily compelled by any outside force or you don’t believe you need to change. So we continue to read articles and go on courses, but really only apply a tiny percentage of what we learn.

Most salespeople believe that they are better at selling than they really are. Unfortunately, the vast majority of the sales population don’t believe they need to change their current selling approach, even though the evidence is quite clearly pointing to the contrary. As sales managers we need to understand that most salespeople think that they are better at selling than they really are. Research suggests that only a minority, 32% of the sales community, really know how to sell.

Have you noticed that when the subject of sales skill development or training comes up, typically these self-satisfied salespeople will tell you that more product knowledge is what they need? “I already know how to sell, I just need to know more about the product,” they say, as if being able to describe more facts and features to potential clients will make customers buy from them.

The sad truth is that in any sales community — setting aside those natural-born, talented, rainmaker salespeople, who only make up about 3-4% of the entire sales population — 68% of salespeople out there selling today lack the soft skills and the processes for delivering consistent sales month in and month out.

They lack the ability to use the phone to set appointments. They struggle to get past gatekeepers and voicemail. They may preach the concepts of solution-based selling, but lack the skills to apply them effectively.

They are unable to connect with all the parties associated with the purchasing decision. They struggle to qualify opportunities and lack the competence to convert prospects into buyers. They find it hard to justify value in the face of brutal and less expensive competition, and their ability to diagnose problems and opportunities leaves a lot to be desired.

Yet they are convinced that more product knowledge will solve their sales woes.



So it is vital that you recognise the uphill challenge facing you when it comes to modifying sales behaviour to increase the effectiveness of your people in front of the customer. That said, here is a six-step strategy for sales effectiveness amplification that you should find simple to apply.

1. COMPLETE A CURRENT REALITY, DUE DILIGENCE SKILLS AUDIT

Before you can begin to influence your individual salespeople to change what they are doing, you must get an accurate picture of the dysfunctional behaviours they are currently displaying.

To do this you need to have a set of key behavioural criteria that you are measuring them against. (For a free list of the competencies and behaviours that salespeople must have to be successful, that you can easily customise to suit your business and your market, feel free to email me at ian@iansegail.com and I will gladly send you the checklist.)

Once you have developed your key skills checklist, your next step is to go out into the field with all of your salespeople and conduct a current reality, due diligence skills audit.

2. CREATE A COMPELLING REASON TO CHANGE

Once you have completed your skills audit, you need to communicate individually with each of your salespeople in turn. You need to work with them to create a compelling reason why they need to modify their behaviours and improve their skills. Here is where it will be an advantage to apply your knowledge of them and their motivators and demotivators.

To create a persuasive reason for the change, you might have to use a 'carrot and stick' approach, if that's what is required. This is the stage where it is important that you gain a commitment from them to change for their own best interests.

3. SET REALISTIC BEHAVIOURAL/SKILL IMPROVEMENT GOALS AND UNPACK ANY PERCEIVED ROADBLOCKS

Effective behaviour change must be realistic. Sales leaders looking to improve the skill levels of their salespeople need to assist each individual to set small, very specific, behavioural change targets that can be achieved over a realistic timeframe. Choose one key behaviour or skill to work on at a time.

There are two ways you can do this. First, you can apply the 80/20 rule to select the one key skill that will have the greatest impact on their ability to sell. Alternatively, if you are looking to develop learning confidence, then select one or two of the low hanging, easy to implement, 'fruits' for them to work on. This way they can get a few successes under their belt and build their confidence, before they tackle the big ones.

Once selected, you, as the sales coach, will need to test for any potential roadblocks they may perceive in tackling their new skill development. Ask them: "What do you think may hinder you or get in the way of you going to work on this new skill?"

It is essential that the salesperson believes that they can actually make the specific change required. Not only must they recognise that the change is essential for their sales career, but most importantly they must truly believe that they are able to adopt the new skill/behaviour into their sales repertoire.

4. PRACTISE, DRILL AND REHEARSE

You need to recognise that when an individual salesperson learns a new skill or behaviour outside their normal range, it can often prove difficult to transfer it into everyday selling life. As their sales manager, therefore, you must set up a 'practise of practice' programme. This is where the learner gets the opportunity to practise the new selling behaviour in a non-threatening environment. They do this either by modelling the new skill/behaviour in a role-play situation or by observing the desired behaviour being modelled, either by you or by one of their team.

There is a wonderful saying in the behavioural change movement: 'A higher dosage leads to a greater response.'

For salespeople this means that skill development or behavioural change is more likely to gain traction when the skills are learned, rehearsed often and rewarded over a number of sessions rather than in a one-off training session. A sequence of short lessons is far more likely to transform behaviour, simply because more sessions mean 'increased dosage'.

More sessions, more often, allows for greater opportunities to practice the new selling skill in a safe environment. Also, by giving the learner workplace assignments, reading materials and CDs to listen to, as well as having them spend time in the field with 'buddies' who can demonstrate the skill being used in the real world, this too increases the 'dosage' factor, thus accelerating the skill development process.

5. IMPLEMENT ONE BABY STEP AT A TIME

How do you eat an elephant? One bite at a time. This is what you need to do to ensure your salespeople are successful in integrating their new knowledge and converting it into skills.

Take each of the behaviours you wish to see modified and dice them into smaller actionable components. As an example, let's say you want to implement the SPIN Selling model into your sales process. Take one type of question, say 'implication questions', and then have your salespeople go out into the field and ask only implication-type questions for the whole day or the whole week. The following week, have them focus their efforts on asking 'need pay off' questions — and so on.

6. PROVIDE ACCURATE FEEDBACK

If you were a football coach, after the game you would be able to use video footage of the individual's play as a means of providing accurate feedback on their performance. In an ideal sales world it would be great to be able to record sales interviews and use the recorded discussions as a tool to provide feedback. But this kind of accurate feedback tool is not readily available for the vast majority of managers leading a team of salespeople. But the principle still remains.

Your salespeople must get accurate feedback on their performance on the job. They need someone to hold up a mirror to their work. If this means going out with them as an observer more often, or having them buddy up with someone who can act as an outside observer, then this is what is required.

Another method is to debrief a sales call carefully after the event. You can do this by asking probing questions as to who said what, when. As an example, "So when Bob said that we were too expensive, what was your response?",

"And then how did he respond to your answer?", "And then what did you say?", "And how did he respond after that?" etc. Keep drilling down until you get an accurate account of who said what. Then you can offer feedback.

Changing behaviour is a process, not an event

Due to time and resource pressures, most managers tend to treat behavioural change or soft sales skill development as an event, a one-time exercise. Intuitively, we know that this

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approach is faulty. Yet we continue to approach skill development in this haphazard way. Changing behaviour takes time, effort and practice.

Lasting skill development is a process that is successful when you:

- ✓ Invest the time to assess an individual salesperson's current skill level accurately
- ✓ Help them create a compelling vision of what's possible if they change
- ✓ Set realistic change goals
- ✓ Have them practise their new skill in a safe environment — and do it often
- ✓ Make sure they take baby steps by breaking the skill down and building their skill level brick by brick
- ✓ Hold up a feedback mirror for them to see what's working and what is not working.

Choose one behaviour. Select one skill that you believe will have the greatest impact on the salesperson's sales efforts and go to work only on that one. If you work hard improving one skill per month, by the end of a full sales year you will have completely transformed your sales team and their sales results.



Most salespeople believe that they are better at selling than they really are!

About The Author



As one of Australia's leading sales strategists and authorities on sales and sales management, Ian Segail has been involved in the training and development of salespeople and sales managers for over two decades.

Ian is the author of "Bullet Proof Your Sales Team", which is regarded as Australia's number one book written to enable sales management to get more sales, faster and with higher margins. Ian has a gift for rapidly figuring out what this clients need to do to very quickly to generate sales revenue and hit their targets.

Drawing on his real-world experience in sales, sales management, Human Resource Management and C-level management, Ian works as a Sales Strategist with both experienced and novice sales managers and business owners across a wide variety of industries and selling disciplines, including: Microsoft, St George Bank, Chubb Fire & Security, AMP, Astra Zeneca, Rebel Sport, JVC, just to name a few.

Ian has successfully helped numerous sales organizations generate millions of dollars worth of sales with his systematic sales management 'sales boost system' that motivates sales teams to achieve more sales, faster and at higher margins, in 180 days or less. Ian takes you by the hand and shows you exactly how to implement his proven sales management tools and systems into your business to get you the sales numbers you need and give you that competitive edge.

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