

A Special Report

5 Sales Coaching Essentials



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TopLine
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Custom Sales & Sales Management Training

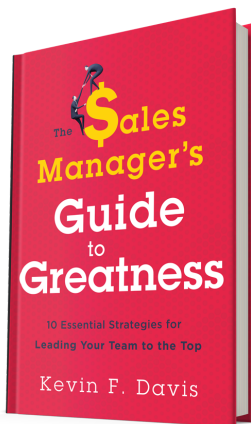
About the Author



Kevin F. Davis is the author of *[The Sales Manager's Guide to Greatness: 10 Essential Strategies for Leading Your Team to the Top](#)*, which describes methods for everything from leading, coaching, and managing priorities, to hiring, forecasting, and driving rep accountability.

Kevin is the founder and president of TopLine Leadership, Inc., which specializes in sales management development and sales training.

For more information visit [TopLine Leadership, Inc.](#)



Kevin Davis' latest book, *The Sales Manager's Guide to Greatness*

If your sales team isn't producing the results expected, the pressure is on you to fix the situation fast. One option is to replace salespeople. A better option is for you to optimize your performance as a sales leader. In *The Sales Manager's Guide to Greatness*, sales management consultant Kevin F. Davis offers 10 proven and distinctly practical strategies, skills, and tools for overcoming the most challenging obstacles sales managers face and moving your team ahead of the pack.

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5 Sales Coaching Essentials

As you read this special report, ask yourself what you need to START doing and what you need to STOP doing in order to improve in each of these areas. There's a table for your convenience at the end of this document for you take notes, if you want. Above all, be sure to act on those ideas to accelerate team success!

1. Communicate Expected Performance Standards

Here's a quick exercise: send out an email to your sales team and ask, "In the first meeting with a new prospect, what specific behaviors should you perform and in what sequence?" How many different answers will you get back from your sales team? The odds are pretty good that you get back as many different answers as you have salespeople.

Now ask your salespeople if they know *how* you will be judging their performance. And you'll get the same kind of disparity in answers.

An essential roles of a sales coach is to clearly communicate to salespeople the specific behaviors and activities that you both want and need for sales success. They need to know how you will be judging them, including how you will evaluate their overall performance, their sales skills, and their willingness to learn and improve.

2. Manage Behaviors and Activities, Not Results

The fundamental mistake that sales managers make — that is perhaps the worst culprit in terms of demotivating their sales force—is managing only results instead of the behaviors and activities that lead to the results.

A sales "result" is what comes about as a consequence of the process of sales activities that preceded it. Sales managers who manage by results – by which I mean a sales manager who waits until a poor result is produced and then confronts the salesperson about the poor production – is like a "Monday morning quarterback." They are criticizing what happened *after* it happened, and much too late to do any good.

To be a great sales coach you need to define the behaviors and activities your sales force needs to know and do to achieve maximum sales success. Put those in a document titled "Standards for Excellence." Have your salespeople practice new skills and approaches while you observe so you can give them tips and role-play better approaches.

In short, be a proactive sales coach. Don't wait to get blindsided by a salesperson who badly misses forecasts. Instead, get involved earlier in the sales opportunity by asking your salespeople specific qualifying questions, like: "Where is this customer in their [buying process](#)? What actions has the customer taken, or what has the customer said that led you to that assessment?"

3. Develop a Sales Playbook

An essential that helps you communicate expectations and manage behaviors is to have one source of information that describes best sales practices.

A Sales Playbook is a situation-specific tool that describes your company's sales best practices. How should a new salesperson about to meet with a Director of Marketing perform diagnostic questioning in order to identify and develop customer needs? What if they are meeting with a Director of Operations?

A Sales Playbook should describe the specific problems that your company can solve for each type of decision-maker that your sales reps encounter. It needs to include suggested questions to ask to uncover the issues and concerns that relate to the customer problems your solution can solve.

Capturing information like this for the entire sales process means the Sales Playbook provides the right information to the salesperson at specific points in the buying process. Some Sales Playbooks can also include best practices for sales managers, such as specific milestones for managers to involve themselves so as to coach the salesperson through.

4. Adopt a Sales Leadership Mindset

Have you ever considered what made you successful when you were a salesperson? You were, and still likely are, action-oriented, decisive, and adept at problem solving. These sales attributes were rewarded as a salesperson. And then you got promoted and everything changed... except – perhaps – you.

Now consider: are the keen sales attributes that made you a successful salesperson creating a stumbling block to effective sales management?

A sales manager who is still "action-oriented, decisive and adept at problem-solving" is likely to jump in to rescue salespeople and help them close deals. Sound familiar? Does it really help your salespeople when you jump in?

Way back in 451BC Confucius said, "What I hear I forget, what I see I may remember, but what I do I understand." When you jump in and take over, close deals or solve other people's problems, you eliminate the "doing" part for them—they don't have the chance to learn and to develop the kind of judgment that comes from experience. And

guess what? You get more of other people's problems to solve and more deals to try and save at the last-minute. That's not sales coaching.

What matters is not how effective your salespeople are when *you* are "carrying their load." What matters is how strong *their* skill and will to sell are when you are not working with them. Your goal should be to build more independent, self sufficient sales reps. But that independence should be earned through a sales rep's commitment to ongoing development. And you need to enable this development through continuous sales coaching.

The leadership mindset for effective sales management is to become an observer. Stop doing and start leading. Stop solving everybody's problems! Re-train and re-strain your "inner-salesperson." Instead of jumping in and taking over, sit back and watch your people perform. Observation is the first step in the coaching process. How can we be effective sales coaches if we don't first observe?

5. Make Sales Coaching Your #1 Priority

A VP of Sales asked her sales managers this question: "When you arrive at your office on a typical day what would you say is your #1 priority?" Some answers she received were:

Reacting to my boss i.e. answering questions, following directives, etc.

Prioritizing my day according to voice mail and email.

Reviewing the opportunities on our CRM "dashboard."

Trying to generate more revenue.

These answers are typical of what we hear from sales managers across all industries and sectors. And that's not the answers they would be giving if were more effective leaders. The answer **should** be that a sales managers' #1 priority is coaching and developing their salespeople.

It is the daily commitment to the development of skill and will in the hearts and minds of the salespeople that should be the sales manager's # 1 priority.

At the end of your month you want to ask yourself, "Is my sales team better off and more competitive today than they were a month ago?" If you expect to answer "yes" to that question, then you also need to challenge yourself: What should I *not* do today so that I can spend more time coaching? What do you need to stop doing today to make time for more coaching? What is on your "to don't" list is often more important than a "to do" list if you want to become a better sales coach and manager.

My plan for becoming a more effective sales coach

	What I need to STOP doing	What I need to START doing
1. Communicate expected performance standards		
2. Manage behaviors and activity, not results		
3. Develop a Sales Playbook		
4. Adopt a sales leadership mindset		
5. Make sales coaching your #1 priority		