

The Sales
Manager's
Guide
to
Greatness

10 Essential Strategies for
Leading Your Team to the Top

Kevin F. Davis



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Acknowledgments xvii

Introduction 1

 The Impact of Effective Sales Coaching

 What's in This Book

 Rising to the Challenge

Section 1: Self-Leadership

Overview 11

Chapter 1: Embrace a Leadership Mindset 15

 War #1: Player vs. Observer

 War #2: Closing vs. Coaching

 War #3: Tasks vs. People

 War #4: Results vs. Inputs

 Developing Your Leadership Mindsets

 What Contributions Do You Value in Yourself?

Chapter 2: Take Control of Your Time and Priorities 29

 Skill 1: Escaping the Reactive Trap

 Skill 2: Focusing on Priority #1

 Skill 3: Become a Master of Time Management

 Now, About Your Leadership Destiny . . .

Section 2: Elements of Excellence

Overview 53

Chapter 3: Drive Rep Accountability for Breakthrough
 Sales Performance 55

 Raising the Bar

 Defining Skills for Excellence

 Defining "Wills" for Excellence

 Creating and Using a Success Profile

 Accountability for the Future

Chapter 4: Hire Smarter	71
Asking the Right Questions	
Evaluating Cultural Fit	
The Importance of Wills and Coachability	
The Hiring Process	
Making the Call	
Getting the Right People on Your Bus	
Chapter 5: Insert the Customer in Your Sales Process	89
Staying with Tradition: A Selling-Focused Sales Model	
A More Effective Approach: Buying-Focused Models	
A More Effective Sales Playbook	
A Buying-Focused CRM	
The Improved Predictability of a Buying-Focused Funnel	
The Benefits of a Buying Focus	

Section 3: Priority #1: Coach and Develop Your Team

Overview	113
Chapter 6: Become a More Strategic Coach	115
Strategic Coaching	
The Ballad of Willy Sellmore (or why it's a bad idea to "never give up")	
Finding the Right Balance with Top Performers	
Triaging Your Coaching Time	
The Strategy of Effective Coaching	
Chapter 7: Commit to Consistent Coaching	131
The C.O.A.C.H. Model	
C .O.A.C.H. = Commit	
C. O .A.C.H. = Observe	
C.O. A .C.H. = Assess	

C.O.A.**C**.H. = Consult

C.O.A.C.**H**. = Help

A Model of Consistent Coaching

Chapter 8: Motivate the Demotivated 151

Motivators and Demotivators

Lessons from the Wrong End of Poor Coaching

Scenario 1: Re-energizing a Good Rep Gone Stale

Scenario 2: Dealing with the “Uncoachable” Prima Donna

Scenario 3: Encouraging a Disillusioned Beginner

Scenario 4: Confronting Continuing Problems

Your Own Moment of Truth

Chapter 9: Increase Win Rates with Buying-Cycle Coaching 175

Creating a Buying Perspective

Early-Cycle Sales Coaching

Changing the Coaching Conversations

Improving Your One-on-One Monthly Reviews

What Happens When a Deal Is Lost?

Getting in Sync with Buying and Selling

Section 4: Taking Action

Overview 199

Chapter 10: Shape a Championship Strategy 201

Setting a Breakthrough Goal

Focus and Urgency

Planning: Turning Dreams into Actions

Measuring Progress

The Three Questions that Matter Most

Index 217

About Kevin F. Davis 221

Introduction

Every sales manager's job is to drive consistent sales growth. That means maximizing their team's performance. But from what I see, many sales managers aren't going about meeting this challenge in the most effective way. Let me explain.

A few years ago, a major office equipment company conducted a survey of its 1,500 business-to-business salespeople, asking them to rate how well their sales managers did in 80 categories. Here are the skills that the sales managers ranked the best and worst at:

- **Best** (#1 of 80): Wants me to succeed
- **Worst** (#80 of 80): Views one of their priorities as developing my individual skills

As you can see, sales managers at this company *wanted* their salespeople to be successful but were dead last in providing the hands-on sales coaching and teaching that salespeople needed to actually get better.

This pattern is all too familiar to me. I talked recently with a young sales manager, Nick, who'd only been managing for about 18 months after spending a number of years as a sales rep. Nick told me that at first he loved the 14-hour days, loved interacting with salespeople and being seen as the go-to person for advice, and loved getting involved

in all of the big deals. Lately, though, he confessed, “I feel like I’m holding on for dear life, overwhelmed by an avalanche of stuff to do.”

Then he added, “Between hiring the new rep last year, trying to keep track of everyone’s numbers, and dealing with the barrage of emails and calls and meeting requests I get every single day—it just feels overwhelming. I’d like to spend more time with each rep, but that just isn’t possible.”

I work all the time with sales managers like Nick who want their people to succeed (like the #1 item on the survey). Almost all were hired (or more likely promoted) into the position so they could share their talents, skills, and positive attitude with their salespeople. But somewhere along the way, that “avalanche of stuff” overwhelms them: fires to fight, meetings to attend, voice mails and emails to answer. So they don’t get around to doing much teaching or coaching (item #80 on the survey). That’s why so many sales managers need a way to conquer the “stuff,” to become more strategic in the use of their time and coaching investment, and to find more effective ways to optimize their team. That is the best path toward maximizing sales results.

Closing the gap between the intent of wanting people to succeed and actions needed to *actually* accomplish that is the goal of *The Sales Manager’s Guide to Greatness*.

The Impact of Effective Sales Coaching

I can empathize with all of the Nicks out there. Many organizations do a lot to prepare their salespeople to *sell* but very little to prepare their sales managers to *lead and manage* a sales team. They regularly invest in sales training and provide reps with a wide variety of resources on how to do their jobs (books, seminars, methodologies, tools). Yet sales managers get just a fraction of the training investment that their teams do. As a consequence, they know how to sell but often don’t know how to make their sales teams great.

The disparity between how much companies invest in their salespeople vs. their sales managers doesn't make sense to me. It's simple math: Improve *one* sales manager's skills and you improve an *entire team's* performance and results. This isn't just my opinion. A research report from the Sales Management Association (SMA) published in late 2015¹ concluded that **coaching improvement is high-yield**. The firms included in the research that were able to help their managers deliver high-quality coaching to salespeople **realized annual revenue growth nearly 17 percent higher** than those that did not do any coaching development for managers.

The SMA report also confirms that effective sales coaching is a matter of both time (quantity) and quality. Overall, **less than 8 percent** of a sales manager's workload in the studied firms was allocated to coaching. Moreover, we have to question how that 8 percent is being used. While sales managers often tell me they are doing a lot of "coaching," when I ask them to describe what they do, it turns out they are only reviewing past performance (the numbers) and activity, and discussing impending deals. That kind of activity is what I label **performance management**.

This kind of review of outcomes is an important aspect of managing a sales team. But to have a team that continually improves, you also need to do **developmental coaching**, work that helps your reps improve their sales skills and mental attitude.

One of the most effective ways I've found to illustrate the difference between performance management and developmental coaching is this:

When you play golf, you write your score for each hole on the scorecard. At the end of the round, the scorecard will tell you which holes you did well on and which

1 "Research Brief: Support Sales Coaching," The Sales Management Association (November, 2015).

ones you didn't. But the scorecard doesn't tell you why. Your performance was not determined by the number you wrote down for how many strokes you made. Your score was the result of the good and bad swings (and decisions) you made while playing.

If you gave a golf coach your scorecard and asked them to get you back on track, they can't really help you. All they can see is the aftermath of what you did and offer their assessment based on incomplete information.

To help you improve, your golf coach would need to observe you and work with you to set improvement goals, identify gaps in your skills, and create a plan for filling those gaps. That's developmental coaching. That approach increases the odds that changes and improvements will happen. All of us are more motivated to implement advice when it is specific and thoughtful.

The scorecard metaphor is directly applicable to sales performance management where sales managers such as Nick review individual reps' activity levels and sales results and then offer their assessments accordingly. I'm not disparaging performance management. Salespeople need regular feedback from managers on how they are doing; they need to know that they are being held accountable for fulfilling their job responsibilities.

But for far too many sales managers who are overwhelmed like Nick, performance management is the only form of feedback they have time to provide. That means sales teams suffer from a lack of developmental coaching advice; reps never get to learn the lessons that experienced former reps like Nick could teach them.

It's time to swing the pendulum more toward developmental coaching. A great sales coach is one who combines performance

management with the necessary commitment to observe and teach that is so crucial to helping salespeople get better.

The purpose of this book is to provide you with a plan and methodology for doing exactly that so you can realize the kinds of growth rates that the high-coaching-level companies in the SMA survey saw.

What's in This Book

One of the clearest lessons I've learned in the past 20 years is that getting sales managers to coach more effectively is not simply a matter of teaching them coaching skills. They also need practical solutions to handle the barriers that *prevent* them from doing more coaching in the first place. That's why the book starts with two sections that address common factors that limit coaching time and effectiveness; they are followed by a section that covers coaching directly. Each section has an introduction that sets up the individual chapters; here is a quick overview of the theme of each section.

Section 1: Self-Leadership

In the discussions I've had with a multitude of sales VPs and directors, the single biggest frustration that I've heard over and over again is, "We promoted our top salesperson to sales manager, and it didn't work out like we thought it would." By which they mean that the sales manager was not able to achieve what the company wanted, which was to consistently exceed team quota, increase the number of reps on the team at or above plan (a.k.a. "team health"), and reduce sales rep turnover.

The two chapters in this section discuss the fundamental leadership mindsets that are characteristic of people who have made the mental transition from successful salesperson to great sales manager.

Section 2: Elements of Excellence

Many factors go into determining how well a sales team performs. This section talks about three of the most important elements that create a solid foundation for breakthrough performance: improving accountability for higher standards, getting the right people on the team, and teaching reps how to better match their *selling* to customer *buying*.

Section 3: Coach and Develop Your Team

Without the mindset and skills represented in the first two sections, sales managers won't have the appropriate priorities or focus when it comes to coaching their teams. Where those priorities should be placed is the subject of the four chapters in this section, which discuss developmental coaching and sales performance management from different perspectives.

Section 4: Taking Action

Sales managers who create great sales teams think about how to increase sales **not just for this quarter but over the long-term**. They know how to transform a sales team from where it is now to where it needs to be to meet those much higher quotas 6, 9, or 12 months from now. Great sales managers know how to move the needle quickly on the two most critical metrics: number of opportunities and win rates. There is just one chapter in this section, which talks about how to select your priorities and develop action plans.

Rising to the Challenge

Several years into my career as a sales rep in the office equipment business, my boss's boss, Mr. Kieran May, informed me he wanted to go on a field ride—spend a day working with me on sales calls. I

was 27 at the time, making more money than I had ever imagined I could. I had independence and was loving life.

After the day working, we went out for a beer. Midway through the evening's conversation, Mr. May leaned toward me and said, "Kevin, congrats on your sales success. I have a question for you . . . do you plan to be a salesman for the rest of your life?"

He went on to say, "Anybody can learn how to sell. That's easy. But a much larger question is, *can you hire a team of salespeople and teach them how to sell like you do?* Kevin, I believe you have within you the ability to do great things. Will you decide to rise to this challenge?"

Looking back, I can say that learning to be an effective sales manager has definitely been a challenge, one made all the more difficult because of the lack of resources available at the time. My goal is to help all of the Nicks out there—all the sales managers who are now in the position I was once in. *The Sales Manager's Guide to Greatness* will help you think more strategically about your job, better manage your time and priorities so you can do more coaching and skill development for your team, and make sure you are getting maximum value out of every coaching conversation you have.

Section 1

Self-Leadership



Overview

By coincidence, just as I was finishing this book, I reconnected with an old client via LinkedIn. It was a sales manager I'd first trained 20 years ago. In the course of our exchanged messages, he mentioned there was one thing I'd told him back then that had really stuck with him: the need for sales managers to take ownership of everything that happens on a team, good *and bad*. "I learned that if I have the mental attitude that a problem is 'out there,' then *that's* the real problem," he recalled. "I always have to think about what I can do to make a situation better."

There was a double coincidence associated with this exchange because I'd just read a book called *Extreme Ownership*² about leadership in the Navy SEALs. The book was written by Leif Babin and Jocko Willink, two combat-proven US Navy SEAL officers who led the most highly decorated special operations unit of the Iraq War. (One of the soldiers on Babin and Willink's team was Chris Kyle, author of *The New York Times* best-seller *American Sniper*, which was the inspiration for the movie of the same name.)

Given what I'd been teaching for the past two decades, it was natural that I'd see connections between sales management and how SEALs train and prepare their leaders, mold and develop teams, and lead in combat.

2 Leif Babin and Jocko Willink, *Extreme Ownership: How U.S. Navy SEALs Lead and Win* (St. Martin's Press, 2015).

The authors point out that most leaders have a mindset that they are doing everything right. So when things go wrong, instead of looking at themselves, they blame others.

I've seen this a lot with sales managers. Suppose a team misses quota. The manager thinks they're doing everything right, so their only option is to lay the blame on things that others are doing unsatisfactorily: sales reps have too many cold or unqualified leads; marketing isn't asking the right questions; there's not enough technical staff to support trials; the new product hasn't been adequately tested. Whatever. These sales managers are thinking to themselves, "Well, I'm just going to do the best I can with what I have. A lot of these problems are out of my control."

Unfortunately, this attitude bleeds over to the sales rep. They have a problem and what do they say? "A lot of these problems are out of my control."

The exchange with my old acquaintance and the lessons from *Extreme Ownership* reminded me that the most important factor for success is the mentality of the sales manager leading a team. If that person thinks the problem is "out there," sustained success and continued improvement will be very hard to come by. But if the sales manager has the mindset of a leader and is committed to doing everything possible to help their team achieve what matters most, then anything is possible.

The chapters in this section of the book are devoted to helping you understand what it means to be the *leader* of a sales team, not just its *manager*.

Chapter 1: Embrace a Leadership Mindset discusses how to identify sales instincts that may be holding you back as a manager and how to replace them with more powerful leadership mindsets. Whether trained or untrained, novice or experienced, all sales managers run the risk of falling back on old habits and acting more like a super-salesperson than a leader.

Chapter 2: Take Control of Your Time and Priorities addresses what is, without question, the single most common complaint I hear from sales managers: They “don’t have time” to coach. This chapter provides practical ideas for how sales managers can identify and focus on their priorities, including suggestions for how to act on the classic advice to separate the merely urgent from the truly important.

Chapter 1

Embrace a Leadership Mindset

I have two lists of attributes to show you:

List 1

- Speaks clearly and fluently
- Shows confidence in their abilities and ideas
- Provides value on a sales call
- Understands the needs of customers

List 2

- Assigns accounts fairly and equitably
- Ensures that new personnel receive the training and support they need
- Works with reporting employees to create a plan for their development
- Deals effectively with employees who do not meet their commitments

What's your impression of the difference between these lists? People usually tell me that List 1 sounds like the characteristics of a top sales performer while the items in List 2 are the things that good sales managers should be doing. Do you agree?

Here's the twist: Both lists include items from the survey I mentioned in the Introduction (p. 1) of 1,500 business-to-business salespeople who were asked to rate their managers on 80 categories. List 1 contains the items that filled out the rest of the top 5 things that salespeople think their managers do really well. List 2 is the rest of the bottom 5 items, meaning the things these managers did very poorly. Notice the pattern? According to salespeople, sales managers have great selling skills and not so great management skills.

These results confirm an observation I made many years ago: Sales managers find it too easy to fall back into their comfort zone, doing what they are already good at—namely, selling—and have a hard time making the switch to managing a sales team.

Why does this occur? Almost every sales manager I know was, at one point in their career, a peak-performing sales professional, the top dog on the team. Their organization then recognized their contributions and promoted them into a sales management role—and everything changed. Everything except perhaps them.

This presents a problem. Why? **Because managing and leading a sales team requires a completely different mindset from selling.** Yet what sales managers have to rely on are the instincts and competencies they developed when they were selling. Those instincts are part of their DNA; they stick around regardless of how long a former sales rep has been in a manager's role, whether 1 year, 10 years, or 20 years. With the dozens of decisions that sales managers face every day, they have no option but to go with what feels right in the moment, and for the most part what "feels right" will be informed by their sales instincts.

Overcoming these instincts is difficult for successful-reps-turned-managers. It simply doesn't occur to them that they will need to change something that has made them successful. Noted leadership consultant Ram Charan and his colleagues discuss this concept in their book *The Leadership Pipeline*: "The highest-performing people, especially, are reluctant to change; they want to keep doing the activities that made them successful."³ And thus we learn that Sun Tzu was right when he said, "Eventually your strengths will become a weakness."

That's why, beyond any specific techniques you learn, you need to re-frame your thinking around a leadership mindset. Your decisions can't be based on what "feels right" from a salesperson's perspective; they have to be driven by what's good for your team. So challenge yourself with this question: *Are the competencies that made me a top salesperson inhibiting my effectiveness as a sales team leader?*

The answer is always yes. The odds are high that you are constantly fighting a subconscious war of instincts. (See sidebar, p. 18) Many times each day you are confronted by various issues and challenges. From what mindset—the salesperson or the sales team leader—are you making your daily decisions? Most of us just do what we instinctively feel is right.

Let's examine several ways in which this struggle plays out every day. I'll explain how some of the instincts possessed by great salespeople are the polar opposite of the mindset needed to become a more effective leader of a great sales team.

3 Ram Charan, Steve Drotter, and Jim Noel, *The Leadership Pipeline* (San Francisco, Jossey-Bass Inc., 2001), 17.

An example of instinct vs. leadership mindset struggles

When my son, Kyle, was seven years old, he signed up to play Little League baseball. His first year was difficult because he was unskilled. So I worked with him in the off-season to improve his throwing, hitting, and catching. In his second season, I volunteered to be assistant coach on his team. When the team met for the initial practices, I was sure that Kyle was at least the third-best player on the team. Yet when the team's season began, the head coach had Kyle batting last in the line-up and playing out in right field. (In Little League, right field is where you place your weakest player—something I know because I played right field when I was Kyle's age!)

Midway through the season, the head coach called and asked me to manage the team for the next game because he was sick. Naturally, I moved Kyle to second base and batted him leadoff. Were my instincts correct? Kyle struck out in every at bat and made five errors. I'll never forget watching my son boot another ground ball while listening to the parents complain about the new second baseman.

This isn't a story of Kyle's skill (or lack thereof). Kyle's performance that fateful day proved to me that, in my subconscious, I had been assessing Kyle from my instincts as a father rather than as a coach interested in having the whole team succeed. The same kind of struggle between what comes naturally and what is best for the team plagues sales managers every day.

War #1: Player vs. Observer

Every great salesperson I've known wanted to be in on the action, down on the field, making the plays. That strong drive is what made them great and brought them stellar results.

But sales managers are not put in the job to keep selling. They are put in the job so they can help *others* become the best salespeople they can be. Great sales managers see themselves as **observers** and **coaches**, not players.

Based on my own experience as a salesperson and manager and my observations (as a consultant) of sales managers over the past two decades, I can state unequivocally that this switch from player (sales rep) to observer (sales manager) is the hardest change all sales managers face. It takes a strong will to keep yourself from doing what you know you do better than everyone else on your team, and even the most experienced sales managers are prone to backslide to their sales instincts if they aren't vigilant.

My first year in sales, many years ago, I was awkward—and a slow learner. (Remember, I was a right fielder!) But my first sales manager, Guy Campbell, must have seen some potential because he invested a lot of time in coaching me. When Guy joined me on a customer meeting, I noticed he had a habit of pulling out a coin and placing it in the palm of his hand.

I didn't think anything of it until about three years later when I was promoted to sales manager in another office. Soon after, I ran into Guy at a corporate meeting and asked him why he always put a coin in his hand when he was out in the field with me. He responded, "Well, Kevin, when you were starting out, you were not very good. But I knew that in order for you to learn and improve I needed to keep my mouth shut. I couldn't jump in and take over every time you got in trouble. The only way I could keep silent was to squeeze that coin. The worse and worse you did, the harder and harder I squeezed. I needed to create a point of personal pain that was greater than the pain I felt watching you screw up a meeting!"

I've carried Guy's wisdom with me for many years and, mentally at least, squeezed a lot of coins in my day. And while I'm doing that squeezing, I'm taking note of the issues I want to talk over with the sales rep *after* the meeting. It's only by observing that I can properly evaluate what the problem is and offer suggestions that will lead to lasting improvements.

War #2: Closing vs. Coaching

What really catches the attention of a top sales rep is the opportunity for a big sale. Nothing gets our blood up like the chase! But that instinct for the chase and closing deals can lead us awry once we're in management.

Here's an example: A client of mine, Jackie, spent years developing into a stellar sales rep for her employer, a tech company. She had a well-earned reputation for producing results far beyond expectations. They duly rewarded her hard work by promoting her to the position of sales manager. Jackie later told me she was working harder than ever before—and yet her team's results were mediocre at best.

When Jackie was a sales rep, she was keenly focused on closing deals and getting results. As a sales manager, that instinct caused her to pay the most attention to her reps when their deals approached the close. It is what I call the “super-closer” syndrome.

I don't want to sound too critical of Jackie. As I've just discussed, it's natural to rely on the skills that got you somewhere in the first place, especially when, like Jackie, you were very good at what you did. But she had gotten into the habit of inserting herself into the sales process any time a big opportunity was on the horizon, barging in as if to say “move over, Rover, let the great one take over.” Or she would turn her attention to a rep who was way under quota, swooping in at the last minute to try to help them close deals.

Neither of these approaches represents the best use of Jackie's time. The biggest deals are likely coming from her most experienced,

highest-producing sales reps. While she's helping them do something they can likely do on their own, everyone else on the team is left to flounder. If she's focused on rescuing struggling reps, she's saving opportunities that probably aren't that great (if the rep had done a good job of identifying needs, the deal might not be in trouble in the first place—and if the customer doesn't think they have big needs, they won't agree to a big deal). Plus, the rep doesn't learn anything that will help them avoid a crisis the next time around. In both cases, the rest of the team has to struggle through on their own.

In her previous life as a rep, the biggest value Jackie provided to her company was closing sales. But that was no longer the case once she became a manager. My task was to help her see that **the biggest value she can provide her company now is to make sure her team continues to improve.**

The most important aspect of this change in mindset is learning to insert yourself earlier in the sales cycle to provide more effective coaching when it will do most the most good. If you look at an opportunity from the customer's perspective, a deal's size is largely determined very early on in the sales process, when the customer is recognizing the extent of their needs and determining their buying requirements. When Jackie coaches her sales reps in the early stage of a deal, she can help them ensure that the customer recognizes big, urgent needs and that their buying requirements are slanted in her company's favor. This kind of early-sales-cycle intervention will have the biggest impact on sales reps' results in both the short- and long-term.

Switching her focus from "being in on the close" to "coaching reps early on" will have many benefits for Jackie. For one thing, if a sales rep makes a mistake, Jackie will recognize it sooner, while there is still time to put the deal back on track. Ultimately, she'll start to see an increase in better qualified deals in her team's pipeline. When Jackie sees her team's results start to improve, she'll know that she has won this particular war with herself.

War #3: Tasks vs. People

Effective salespeople are high energy. They like to do stuff; they like to complete tasks. That drive contributes to their success as salespeople. “Getting things done” sounds like a good attribute for a sales manager, too, doesn’t it?

Not so fast. A sales manager who is overly task oriented can spend too much time making sure mundane to-do items get done while ignoring the development needs of their salespeople.

This point came home to me when I read a story about Beth Comstock, once the chief marketing officer for General Electric and, as of 2016, a vice chair with the company. Comstock had started her career at NBC where everything was deadline driven—get it done by the six o’clock news. She admits to being very task oriented and wrote on LinkedIn⁴ about an incident not long after she started at General Electric. She was in the middle of a phone conversation with her then-boss, Jack Welch, one of the most famous and influential CEOs of his day. Suddenly, the line went dead. She called Welch’s assistant and said she and Jack had been disconnected. The assistant told Comstock that Jack had hung up on her. “He wants you to know that’s what it’s like to be in a meeting with you,” the assistant said.

Welch later called Comstock into his office and told her she was “too efficient.” Comstock’s drive to complete her task list made her come across to others as “cold and abrupt.” Welch told her that she needed to take more time to get to know her people and what is important to them.

Comstock says she heard, “loud and clear,” the lesson that Jack Welch was teaching her and that, years later, she is still working on

4 Beth Comstock, “Best Advice: What I Learned from Jack Welch Hanging Up on Me,” LinkedIn, February 26, 2013, <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/20130226113021-19748378-best-advice-what-i-learned-from-jack-welch-hanging-up-on-me>

implementing that lesson. She has to continually remind herself that paying attention to people is a priority and that she needs to become more people-oriented and less task-driven.

Sales management is a contact sport. It's about spending time to get to know the strengths and weaknesses of each salesperson, about the relationships you develop with them. It's about knowing what you can do to get the most out of each rep. So, instead of focusing only on completing tasks, focus on your people. That means filling your time with coaching and helping your reps create their personal development plans. It means figuring out what motivates and demotivates each of your reps. It means making sure your team has the training and support they need to continually get better.

War #4: Results vs. Inputs

The sales profession is results-oriented. Every month you and your salespeople get judged and paid on sales results. So a company culture that is focused on results is healthy and necessary.

The dilemma for sales managers, however, is that a constant push to reach a sales number can keep them and their teams so focused on end goals that they miss opportunities to identify problems with skills and processes so they can improve future results.

Consider this analogy: Imagine that you are a factory manager instead of a sales manager. If your plant isn't meeting its production quota, what would you do? Would you go to the shipping dock and criticize what was being loaded on the trucks? Not likely. You would visit the production lines in the factory and try to pinpoint where the production process was falling apart. Where are the bottlenecks? Where are the mistakes being made?

Too many sales managers I meet don't think like factory managers. They inspect only the final outcome of their sales production line (performance management) rather than what's going on throughout

the process. Where were they when the salesperson was making the mistakes that created the poor numbers or the need for a rescue?

When you focus on the inputs to the process, your role as a manager becomes helping your salespeople master *all* of the steps of selling, not just the close. What kinds of inputs are important to sales process results?

- How well sales reps identify customer needs and prioritize the customer's solution criteria
- How well sales reps understand and can explain your solution's competitive advantages
- Whether sales reps can shape a proposal or presentation that presents the best possible case to the customer

To determine if a too-narrow focus on results is an issue for you, ask yourself, "How often am I surprised by a rep's poor performance?" If the answer is "often," then you're looking too much at outcomes and too little at the inputs that produce the outcomes.

Developing Your Leadership Mindsets

How many of these instinct wars did you identify with? I've met very few sales managers who had problems with *all* of the sales instincts I've just covered, but I have also met almost no one who has *none* of these issues. As the classic cartoon character Pogo once said, "We have met the enemy and he is us." So the secret is finding out which one or two sales instincts pose the biggest problem for you and developing a better leadership mindset.

I tell people to think about these instincts like a set of dominoes. Acting on one sales instinct can trigger improvement in all of the other instincts as well. If you can stop that first domino from falling

by resisting the temptation to act on a sales instinct, you can prevent a chain reaction of sales behaviors that destroy your leadership opportunity.

To help you get started, I've provided a graphic in Table A where you can rate yourself on each of the instincts covered in this chapter. Simply mark on the lines where you fall between the sales instinct and the leadership mindset.

Table A: Rating Your Instincts

Where do you fall on the spectrum?	
Sales Instinct	Leadership Mindset
Be a player	Be an observer
Close deals	Early-cycle sales coaching
Getting tasks done	Developing my people
Pay attention only to results	Also pay attention to inputs

After you've rated yourself, pick the mark that falls closest to the left. Chances are that's the sales instinct you are strongest in. Your

challenge on the job and as you read through the rest of this book will be developing concrete steps you can take to shift your mentality to the right, toward the better leadership mindset.

What Contributions Do You Value in Yourself?

Here is one of my favorite quotes about leadership:

“Leadership is a lot like investing in the stock market. If your hope is to make a fortune in a day, you’re not going to be successful.

There are no successful day traders in leadership.”

—John C. Maxwell, *The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership*⁵

How about you? Are you a day trader type of sales manager trying to make a big killing in one day? Or are you a long-term investor who is willing to build sustained results? A long-term investor values different things than a day trader, something I hinted at in the discussion of the “closing deals vs. sales coaching” instinct war when I said that Jackie’s value used to be in making sales but now had to be in helping others continually improve their sales skills. **The type of contributions you value in yourself as a manager cannot be what you valued in yourself as a salesperson.**

To become a better sales manager, you have to recognize that the best way for you to contribute to your company is not by selling but by developing your ability to assess your sales reps’ performances, to pass along your skills through coaching, and to generate continuous improvement in your team.

5 John C. Maxwell, *The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership: Follow Them and People Will Follow You* (Thomas Nelson, 2007).

The message I want to drive home is that acting on your finely honed *sales* instincts may feel right in the moment, but it's bad in the long run for your team. There is an old Chinese proverb that is often translated as “a man who chases two rabbits catches neither.” You will only continue to put yourself under great stress if you keep trying to sell as well as manage. And the more you continue to sell, the more you'll undermine the confidence of your team. Your salespeople won't get the coaching and support they need. And ultimately you'll see morale go down, turnover go up, and results fall off.

To be a great sales manager, you need to make a commitment to becoming as good (or better) at leadership as you are at selling. Without that commitment, the lessons in this book will be worthless because it's all about *how* you can be a more effective manager and leader. When you come to work every day, focus on what you need to be doing so that your *team* can continually improve—not on how you can win a sale. That's the mindset and commitment of a great sales manager.