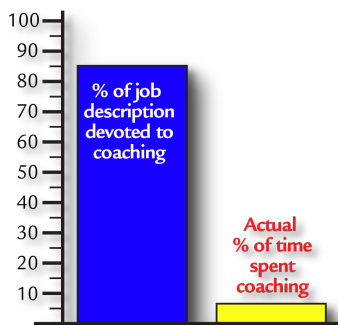




## 5 Things Proactive Sales Managers Do Differently

I recently reviewed the sales manager job description for a Fortune 500 company and learned that about 85% of the responsibilities they assigned to their sales managers were related to sales coaching. Then my partner and I conducted in-person interviews with four of their regional sales managers, and asked, “What percentage of your time do you actually spend one-on-one, coaching a salesperson?” Not one of the sales managers gave a figure of greater than 5% of their time.



So, for this company, only 5% of a sales manager’s day was actually spent on tasks associated with achieving 85% of what the company expected a sales manager to accomplish. It was no wonder that this company’s recent “climate survey” had measured low sales morale, an unacceptably high sales turnover rate, and poor ramp-up to quota for new hires.

There are two types of sales managers: **proactive** and **reactive**. A sales manager who is reactive is one who is constantly fighting fires. And these fires are likely the same problems they were struggling with last month, too.

Reactive managers get trapped into fighting fires because they have a flawed mindset that, “I am 100% responsible for solving all team problems.” If that’s the way your manager felt, you’d do what the salespeople in this company did: hand off their problems to their manager! Problems in customer service, order entry, you name it. They all get dumped in the sales

manager's lap. In extreme cases, a sales manager can take on the role of an administrative assistant to the team.

I often ask sales managers: "Do you ever wonder what your salespeople are doing after they give you their problems?" Here's a hint: they're likely *not* making more sales calls!

What do proactive sales managers do differently? Simply put, they manage *themselves* more effectively. They don't say, "Sure, I'll take care of that problem for you." Instead, they focus on their own priorities, not someone else's. Instead of solving everybody else's problems, a sales manager should hold people accountable for solving their own problems. This, then, frees sales managers up for more productive leadership tasks – like coaching and sales opportunity management.

Some additional steps that proactive sales leaders/managers take include:



### **1. Focus on Prevention and Accountability**

Great sales managers have a defined process for preventing common sales rep problems and share them with their team. They hold reps accountable for resolving these problems. This helps prevent problems from recurring and reinforces the workflows & procedures they have put in place for their team to follow.

### **2. Organize Meetings and Development Sessions**

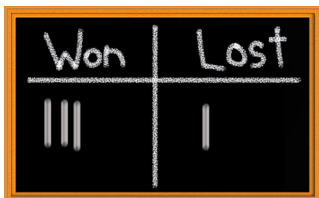
A proactive sales manager holds well-organized sales meetings not only with the entire team but one-on-one with specific reps. These strategy and skill sessions are designed to identify any potential problems the sales rep might be having that month and troubleshoot them together.

If you are the leader of the team, it's important to set an example of good time management skills so the team can follow your lead. Help your reps get set up with all the tools they might need for success. Tread lightly here, some reps have a certain way of doing things and if it's interpreted as micro-managing you might run into other issues. If they are having issues with a

certain aspect of their job and realize they aren't on track to hit their numbers, they are going to be much more willing to listen to your advice.

### **3. Drive Best Practices**

A proactive sales manager creates a Sales Playbook that describes best practices and solution options to common problems. Sales Playbooks are a great tool for passing on the expertise of your more experienced reps to new or struggling reps. They help bring new reps up to speed very quickly. For more on creating a sales playbook of your own, [check out our free guide](#).

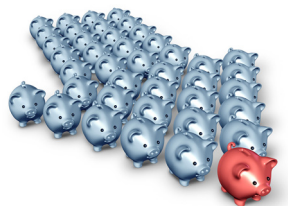


### **4. Document Wins and Losses**

Every rep has good and bad days. You as a sales manager have been there yourself. A proactive manager solicits these stories, good and bad, from their team and uses them as teaching resources.

Hearing the horror stories their colleagues have faced — and that they may face themselves some day — equips reps with sound bites or methods of breaking through common problems. That is key to increasing sales rep confidence, product knowledge and problem-solving skills.

Great managers also make sure to showcase the other side of the equation as well. Wins are a huge morale boost and can also teach team members valuable best practices and tips.



### **5. Clearly Communicate Team Vision**

A proactive sales manager takes their role as a leader of a team very seriously. They strive to be an effective, consistent communicator who provides a clear vision. If your reps are on board with your vision, they will be far more motivated to go the extra mile when it's necessary. Having a cohesive vision on what the company stands for and what its goals are can really bring a team together and make them easier to manage.

To implement an effective sales coaching culture in your company, we've found that teaching sales coaching skills to your managers is not enough. You must also solve the problems that sales managers have that *prevent* them from being effective sales coaches. Teach your sales managers how to become more proactive and your company will enjoy all the benefits of effective sales coaching, including improved sales morale, lower sales rep turnover and a faster ramp-up to quota for your new-hires. That's what proactive sales managers can achieve!



### **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.

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