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**Keeping Your Sales Team Motivated**

**By Frank J. Rumbauskas, Jr.**

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Sales managers frequently approach me for advice on how to keep salespeople motivated, especially when sales reps get into a rut – and seem to keep slipping deeper into it. Telling managers what not to do usually solves the problem. Most managers do things to de-motivate salespeople without even knowing it.

Let's take the idea of funnels and forecasts, for instance. Funnels and forecasts are important aspects of running any sales operation. Both salespeople and managers need to know where they stand in terms of potential opportunities, and funnels serve to track those opportunities. No successful business can operate and properly plan for the future without accurate forecasting. In theory, these are absolutely essential to the success of any operation. In reality, however, few words strike terror in the hearts of salespeople like "funnel" and "forecast."

For most salespeople, the term "funnel review" equates to micromanagement, probation and performance improvement plans. Just hearing the term is enough to shift a sales rep's frame of mind from positive to negative. He or she suddenly loses enthusiasm and doesn't know why. Many managers increase funnel reviews as performance slips, which causes performance to slip further, and in the end nobody wins. Endless funnel reviews, especially if they're not positive, only serve to reinforce salespeople's self-doubts and limiting beliefs.

Forecasts are a similar problem, but in different ways. Few salespeople forecast accurately. Nobody wants to fall short on their forecast, so they embellish, exaggerate and make sure the numbers add up to where they should be rather than where they really are. This results in managers who expect those numbers, and salespeople who dodge managers because they know they aren't going to perform as forecasted. Then there are salespeople like myself who do the exact opposite – since I hated nothing more than having a manager constantly ask me, "When is this one going to close? When is that one going to close?," I intentionally left good deals off my forecast. While it eliminated the problem of constantly being asked when all those deals would sign, it created another form of stress in having to deal with the consequences of a funnel that fell short of expectations.

## Keeping Your Sales Team Motivated

Another word that instantly de-motivates salespeople is "activity." Unfortunately, in the absence of any other viable advice, most managers simply blurt out, "You need to increase your activity" to anyone who isn't at quota. This accomplishes nothing other than setting up the rep to believe that a series of funnel reviews and performance improvement plans are soon to follow.

Finally, I see entirely too many managers pushing too hard to spend extra time with salespeople who are falling short. While it's necessary to spend time with these people, it's not a good idea to keep asking them what they need help with and to insist on riding along with them. This only turns up the heat another notch on an already stressed-out rep. Nobody who is having trouble likes to be singled out, especially when the extra attention easily can be mistaken for micromanagement.

To keep a struggling salesperson motivated:

1. Keep the talk of funnels, forecasts and activity to a minimum.
2. Offer help without being overbearing.
3. Put your trust and confidence in that salesperson.

Stick with these guidelines and you'll not only do a better job of helping those who are having difficulties, but you'll see an overall increase in your sales team's motivation and enthusiasm.

Frank Rumbauskas is the author of *Cold Calling Is a Waste of Time: Sales Success in the Information Age*. He is the founder of FJR Advisors LLC, which publishes training materials on generating business without cold calling. He also owns a nationwide insurance agency. For more information, please visit <http://www.nevercoldcall.com>

## **Four Easy Steps To More Motivated Employees**

**By Trevor Marshall**

There is no particular set of rules that one should follow in motivating employees. We each have our own driving force when it comes to doing an excellent job at work. A working mother could be motivated by her children, who serve as her inspiration to succeed. A trainee who is fresh out of college is motivated by the compulsion to learn and climb to the top. A long-time company employee will get motivated to perform well so that he or she can be promoted. Others are motivated by financial rewards. As a manager, team leader, department head or supervisor, you need to determine the individual driving forces of those who are in your team so that you can create a motivated workforce.

1. Goals For Employee Motivation:

– Increase employee performance at work – Spice up team spirit and build a cohesive team – Eliminate individual differences and avoid conflicts – Have an open communication between peers – Set and achieve a common goal

### 2. Lead By Example

There is one joke where it says that the new definition of a boss is one who is always early when you are late and who is always late when you are not. Do not let this apply to you. Be consistent. The simple gesture of arriving before or as the same time as your employees will show them how much you value their time and yours. This is also a good way of showing employees that you respect the company that pays you for your time at work. If you do come in late, apologize to those who are under you and explain why you are late. This is so that they would not think that the no-late policy does not apply to the boss, showing them that you are equals when it comes to company rules and policies.

### 2. Keep Communication Lines Open

Some employees are afraid to talk to, or even look at superiors who exude the touch-me-not aura. This is not a good way to motivate your employees. When you come to work, do not just go straight to your office and deal with your paper works. Mingle with the employees and ask them about their previous day, on what they have accomplished so far. Then you can tell them about the output that you expect by the end of the day. This way, you would know what to expect from the employees and vice-versa. It will not only help you set a goal for the day but with this, you are also optimizing your interaction with the employees by mingling with them on a more casual basis.

### 3. Share What You Know

Do not be selfish. Sometimes, a company does not grow because there are employees who know something advanced about the industry or a certain aspect of the company, and they are not willing to share their knowledge to others. They think that this would make them invaluable to the company, especially if they are the only ones who know about a particular process or idea. This attitude would not help your company succeed. There should always be a sharing of knowledge. When an employee is asked to train abroad, they are often asked to sign a contract that they should not resign for the next year or two. Why do you think this is so? Imagine what would happen if the employee who trained abroad or attended an exclusive seminar about an advanced technology on the industry just up and

leaves right after the training. A company would not spend thousands of dollars to train an employee for nothing. They want you to share and impart the knowledge to your fellow employees. If you share a new technology to your entire team, who knows what newer and better ideas the knowledge would bring? Do not stutter the company's growth by keeping your ideas to yourself.

### 4. Implement Your Ideas

What good would a new idea or technology do if you do not apply it? After sharing the knowledge, gather the team and think of ways to improve the company's operation with what you all have learned. As a leader, you should be a people person. You must know how to adopt to the things that motivate your team members and use this knowledge to your advantage. Without a good and solid workforce behind you, you will not accomplish anything. You may have ten or a hundred employees, but if you apply these steps to motivate your team, you can bring out the best in them and contribute towards your company's growth and success.

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