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Retail Executive Dashboard Does Not Serve Front Line Sales Managers

By Steven Lipschitz

Retail Dashboards are pictures of spreadsheets used by executive managers to visually identify

around five key performance indicators. Dashboards have gauges, like the speedometer in a car, and graphs and colour, to draw attention to areas of strong and weak performance of each retail store and the organisation as a whole. They may display: sales per hour, items per sale, average sale, conversion rate, and wage to sales ratio - at the store, regional, and national level.

The purpose of the Dashboard is to enable executive managers to effectively communicate strategy and objectives to area managers who then reinterpret the strategy into actions for each store manager. Ultimately it is the Salespeople on the shop floor who carry out the activities that satisfy the objectives of the company.

Sophisticated Dashboards allow executives to produce 'what if' scenarios, save them, and send them down the line to their area managers. But mostly, there is an upward reporting of numbers and a downward communicating of strategy - meaning that the statistics are lost at the individual Salesperson level.

For example, an executive dashboard may show each store's 'sales per hour' KPI (Key Performance Indicator) compared to each other store but it does not show each Salesperson's 'sales per hour' compared to each other Salesperson within the store. Therefore it is impossible for the executive to know - at the individual Salesperson level - how to improve sales performance.

Particular to the retail industry sales are made on the shop floor. Not by telephone or meetings, or online purchase. While branded merchandise and store design attracts customers to the shop it is almost always the Salesperson who makes the sale. But in almost all cases Salespeople have no individual daily sales target because there is no system in place to generate objectives, goals, targets at the individual sales level.

This represents a problem because area managers, who have been tasked by executive managers to improve sales performance, have no further information about the KPI activities within that store.

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Once the merchandise and store displays have been checked by the area manager, the next logical step is to look at the POS (Point of Sale) reports to identify poor areas of performance. And here comes the surprise! – Not a single POS system is able to tell managers which Salespeople performed better than others. Why, simply they do not have a time sheet (roster) attached to Sales Targets so have no way of calculating predicted or actual individual sales goals.

Some attempts use spreadsheets to figure out individual sales goals but spreadsheets fall over. They inaccurately produce goals as they do not weight fast and slow periods of the day. They are not connected to a dynamic time sheet - meaning if the roster changes the goals do not, but should. Spreadsheets take time to copy, past, edit, modify, and correct mistakes. And there is no feedback system for comparing actual performance - compared to everyone on the shift.

While an executive manager can see that a particular store is underperforming, because a KPI is lower than the other stores, they cannot determine who in the store is underperforming on the same KPI.

So what's the big deal? If you cannot determine low KPI's at the individual Salesperson level in retail then you cannot improve individual sales performance based on statistics - and dashboards are pretty pictures about statistics – which we interpret as instructions for changing behaviors. Dashboards cause executive managers to want to change behaviors across the organisation but, as you can see, they do not help front line store managers change behaviors at the individual staff level.

Effectively increasing sales in retail - by focusing on the sales skills and behaviors of each individual salesperson, requires a sophisticated, easy to use, web-enabled system, that communicates the objectives of the organisation to each individual salesperson - on a level playing field. Such a system will report both up and down the organisation so that staff at every level can understand the objectives of the organisation clearly, statistically, and fairly.

Steven Lipschitz has a 12 year track record in Internet enabled applications and today specializes in Retail Software. He is the developer of Retail Performer – software that translates Retail Sales Objectives into an easy to use desktop and web service application. For further information visit Retail Performer:

<http://www.retailperformer.com>

Retail Sales Training Essential To Increase Retail Sales Performance

By Steven Lipschitz

Retail Sales Coaching should be designed to work on behalf of each individual Salesperson who wants to succeed for them, while being part of an environment that nurtures and speeds their growth.

Retail Sales Training is for each person who cared to show up today to express themselves in a retail sales environment and who demands more of themselves. Retail Sales Training is for people who want to feel they have done their best with what they knew, today.

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Retail Sales Coaching's purpose is to clarify, in a realistic, truthful and meaningful way, precisely how each person can perform better. It must do this by connecting people with the objectives of the company within the framework of their own need to succeed and be recognized. Retail Sales Training Software must work by identifying the absolute area of selling skill, the one out of five key performance indicators (KPIs), which if the Salesperson were to focus on exclusively, would become their best performance enhancer - their best chance at optimum improvement.

Retail Sales Coaching Software should be about helping your company and its people become richer by revealing the truth about their performance, on an individual basis, so your Salespeople can focus on making their most significant improvements in the shortest period of time.

The result of implementing the right solution is that each Salesperson's performance is increasing at optimum speed, so you can expect your retail store as a whole to increase sales by anywhere from ten to thirty percent.

Any Retail Sales Training system of appraisal and reporting should make sales people accountable for their time by measuring their performance according to key KPI's, against each other, and against the store average. Unless measurements are taken on a regular basis and compared with the rest of the people on the shift it would be impossible to know the area in which to train.

Today, most POS software programs generate KPIs such as average sale, items per sale, sales per hour. However, they do not allow store managers to set sales goals and divide them up proportionally between salespeople so effectively POS sales reports are useless.

While door counters are useful unless they integrate with an effective Retail Training software program they cannot generate Conversion Rate KPIs - one of the fundamental KPI's used in Sales Training.

There are software programs available to compliment your POS that will do the job including breaking down slow and fast periods of the day by weightings.

Here are some things to look for in a Retail Sales Training Software Program:

- Store Information Register to record specific information about the store.
- Staff Information Register and Coaching Log to record specific information and availability and coaching history of each sales person.
- Weekly Sales Goals Planner that automatically divides the store sales goal fairly between the salespeople on duty, including taking into account slow and fast periods of the day.
- Weekly Staff Roster to allocate staff to a time and attendance schedule within the framework of the store's wage budgets, warning when over rostering and helping to improve wage to sales ratio efficiency.
- Actual Performance Score Card that tracks individual actual sales performance against individual

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sales goals to identify areas of weakness and strength so that managers can coach behaviors.

- Optimally, coaching tips should be integrated so managers can quickly get information about coaching on specific deficient selling skills.

The objectives of Retail Sales Training Software Programs are to:

- Increase profits, decrease costs, motivate staff
- Bring Retailers in line with industry Best Practice
- Filter company sales objectives down to Individual Salespeople on the shop floor
- Focus Store Managers on the two operational expenses within their control: Wages and Individual Sales Performance
- Make Salespeople accountable for their time
- Reduce payroll by Rostering within set wage parameters
- Identify each individual Salesperson's deficient selling skills each week
- Show sales trends for each individual salesperson and store
- Integrate self-based coaching to give front line store managers' tips on demand
- Motivate employees by instilling a performance based team culture
- Identify best performers allowing Store Managers to roster those staff more often – yielding a higher wage to sales ratio or ROI
- Reduce attrition rates, retain good staff
- Introduce a system of setting standards, tracking, measuring and reporting results, identifying under performance and coaching for success
- Integrate with POS to produce instant information at Salespeople's fingertips.

Retail competition is fierce and times are tough. If you want to increase retail sales performance then coaching sales people is vital to success. Successful retailers put into place best practice retail training software programs to help them immediately identify skill areas requiring coaching attention.

Without the help of retail performance metrics you may be wasting valuable training time and missing the point for each individual salesperson.

Steven Lipschitz has a 12 year track record in Internet enabled applications and today specializes in Retail Sales Performance Management Solutions. His company developed the acclaimed Retail Performer Software

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