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Sales Management and Leadership - They aren't the same!©

By Bill Truax

Today Sales Managers usually have two roles. First, they have to manage and administer the sales team. Second, they are also expected to demonstrate Leadership of the sales team. These are two different roles.

Most Sales Managers are trained in the management and administration skills, but few are taught Leadership. They are simply expected to Lead - a very poor and risky strategy.

I want to discuss General Leadership development first.

Leadership - Setting Visions/Goals and then empowering and motivating others to accomplish those Visions/Goals.

Some people demonstrate Leadership skills naturally. We saw them as we were growing up. They were the student council leaders, athletic team captains, club presidents, etc.

Most managers will need training in Leadership and that takes a commitment from the corporation because it will take time and dedication. But the rewards can be phenomenal. The company will have to:

- Commit to the development of people.
- Commit to developmental programs – the key word for training is developmental.
- Commitment to the long haul, unfortunately, nothing good ever seems to happen quickly. So the corporation must keep driving people development regardless of other initiatives, programs, and events.

From our experience, it takes a minimum of 6- 12 months and you shouldn't rush it. This is not an

event.

There are 3 stages of development.

- Bring the "Leadership vision" into the culture - make it part of the organization and start to get "buy in" from all the future participants. Create anticipation.
- Conduct the development programs company wide - bring in all the departments. This will create Leaders throughout the organization as well as enhance the overall working environment.
- Re-enforce training, support it, and use it. Make the training part of regular personnel assessments, reviews, etc. You get what you inspect.

Leadership is not just the CEO or president; it must be in all levels of a corporation.

Imagine how your company's bottom line would be affected if all your managers could fulfill a Leadership role when needed and therefore improved performance by just 3% – 8% or more?

Now, Sales Team Leadership can do that and much more.

The Sales Team Leader needs to do two things - develop the teams' skills and then lead them to success.

- First, the Leader must know the skills and knowledge base that each team member needs to do their job.
- Second, the Leader must rate each team member's competency in each skill and knowledge base.
- Third, train and enhance skills and knowledge where needed.

Why is this necessary?

We can't simply allow people to develop on their own. If you want your people to perform the skills and use the knowledge base competently you must teach them the skills and knowledge base you want them to use. If you leave it up to them, they will learn something. Hoping it is what you want is really risky.

No one has a "skill vacuum." If they aren't taught, they will create it themselves. Just like children, if you don't teach them your values, they will create their own. If the need is there, it will be met, somehow.

Now the Leadership role grows. Once the goals for the sales team are set every Leader does the following in some form.

1. Create a Vision for each of the tasks
2. Create the Team to develop and achieve the GPS – that is, the Goal, Plan, and Steps to accomplish the Vision

3. Empower the Team
4. Produce Short Term successes to keep the GPS alive
5. Stick with it for the Long Haul

5 may be the most important step. How many of you have been in companies who get all excited about a new program, push it hard for a few weeks, and then get all excited about another program? The first program never has success because it was not given time to develop.

In conclusion, Leadership offers many benefits and most organizations will need to specifically develop this skill for its managers. It takes Leadership to bring it in, however.

The rewards will be well worth the effort.

Sell Well and Often,

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Seeing the Talents of Effective Leaders

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An organization of any size, from the family to the department store, the neighborhood grocery store to the largest international corporations, is a reflection of its leadership.

And leadership is only as good as its leaders. What is this thing called leader"? What constitutes an unusually good or great leader?

Professor John Adair, of Surrey University in England, shared his thoughts on the special talents that set a bona fide leader apart.

"Few leaders," he stated in *International Management*, "do more than merely coordinate efforts. But the most effective leaders create a sense of esprit de corps, a team spirit that makes even the most arduous or the most humdrum work exciting."

The gist of his piece is that the unusual or great leader has great organizational talents. He also has the ability to inspire others to expend much greater efforts than they would have expended had they been left to their own devices. Both are needed in any true definition of leadership.

Now, if you are a manager, supervisor, or employer, take a good, long look at what you're doing at work.

I encourage to evaluate your performance periodically by answering these questions:

The answers to these questions are the open doors to where you are and what you have to do to improve your leadership talents. (You may want to take it a step further by having subordinate rate you periodically using these and/or supplementary questions.

However, you can assess your leadership qualities simply by looking at the success of the projects you handle and at the teamwork you have created. Therein lies your answer to your effective leadership.

Etienne A. Gibbs, MSW, Management Consultant and Trainer, conducts seminars, lectures, and writes articles on his theme: "... *helping you maximize your potential.*" For more information visit

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