

The Dreaded Monday Morning Sales Meeting Do They **GET TO GO** or **HAVE TO GO**?

For years as a speaker/trainer/coach, salespeople have approached me with feedback regarding their regular company sales meetings. This is what I hear:

- The meetings are boring with little to no direction
- The meetings turn into individual gripe sessions
- The meetings turn into complaint sessions by management
- The meetings tend to “bring down” the reps rather than “pump up” the reps
- The meetings tend to be filled with reports, data, stats, and rules
- The meetings never start on time
- The meetings never follow an agenda
- The meetings never end on time

Does any of this sound familiar to you? Do your people tend to “go through the motions” in your sales meetings? Do they complain about having to come to these meetings regularly? Do you sometimes agree with them?

A sales meeting is a great indication as to the culture of the company. The warriors that are fighting the battles out there in the field for you and your company have certain needs that must be met by the sales meeting. The purpose of having a sales meeting tends to get lost by companies and managers over time. Here are just a few *healthy* reasons to gather the troops regularly:

- ❑ To get the sales team well armed to sell every day
- ❑ To share successes with the rest of the team
- ❑ To create a “safe environment” for problem solving
- ❑ To provide encouragement and assistance towards goals (individual goals as well as company goals)
- ❑ To “tap into the experiences” of colleagues and peers with the guidance and facilitation of management
- ❑ Get management a “view from the front lines”
- ❑ To “sharpen the axes” of our salespeople and provide real-world *sales skill* training for their daily battles
- ❑ To help them avoid and overcome objections that they hear every day
- ❑ To guide them toward appropriate behavior and activity levels for success
- ❑ To cheer on successes and to brainstorm challenges

A sales manager’s job is not to grow sales! It is a sales manager’s job to consistently grow salespeople. The purpose of a sales meeting is to work on the minds, the hearts, and the bellies of our salespeople. Let’s take a look at that:

WORK ON THEIR MINDS

It is my belief that a sales meeting should never be run without specific time being scheduled in that meeting for skill enhancement and training. There are hundreds of topics that can be covered regularly to help your salespeople be better armed to get in there and fight the great fight! Too many times I have heard the sales manager say that all of the sales training has been completed. IT IS NEVER COMPLETED!! The best salespeople are continually looking to learn, to grow, and to improve. They need a forum in which to do that. By the way, even mediocre salespeople will eventually “take a drink from the fountain of continual growth” if they are led there often enough.

In what areas could you work on the minds of your salespeople?

Prospecting Strategies and Tactics (Can you imagine having a *process*?)

Cold Calling Strategies and Tactics (On the phone, in person, or both.)

Asking Questions in the Sales Process (What to ask, how to ask, why to ask, whom to ask, when to ask, etc.)

Using Questions to Lead the Customer (What is it that they want?)

Listening (Only the best focus on this area!)

Needs Analysis (What benefits do our customers get from the use of our product or service?)

Presentations Skills (Anchored Value Proposition vs. The Canned Pitch)

Avoiding Objections vs. Overcoming Objections (Can you read the road signs *before* you reach the dead end?)

Networking (The word “WORK” is in there-how do you design your WORK?)

Lead Pursuit (Where can we find all the opportunities that are hiding?)

Closing Techniques vs. Opening Strategies (Shift the focus to the customer and you’ll shift greater results to the bottom line)

Use of a Contact Manager (They are more than Electronic Rolodexes)

Goal Setting (How salespeople can use this as their greatest time management tool)

And so...so...so...many more!!

**A great source for finding out what it is that your salespeople need from you, in the form of additional skill enhancement, is to ASK THEM!!

It has been said that the more that you learn, the more that you can learn. You must take every opportunity you can to increase the ability and desire for your people to learn and grow. **The number one thing that salespeople need from their managers is a greater education which gives them the tools to help them win the battles in a marketplace that is ever increasing in its demands for differentiation and professionalism.**

WORK ON THEIR HEARTS

Without a doubt, many of you are reading this and shaking your head because you feel that your people will not be open to additional training and education. You may be right! But don’t shoot the student; take dead aim at the teacher. Perhaps past experience in lackluster, boring, no-direction, no-purpose sales meetings has tainted some of your people with negative expectations. It is because of this, that we need to work on the

hearts of our people as well. They need to “buy into” the premise that you are there to help them grow and reach their goals.

Attitude starts in the hearts of your people. Attitude is the little thing that makes a huge difference (wouldn't that make a great poster?) A gentleman named Don Bargen from Winnipeg, Manitoba once gave me a great analogy. Don is the epitome of a great manager. He has an attitude that lights up the room. What makes Don's attitude special is that you notice how radically different the room is *without him in it!* Don shared this with me during a recent CEO training session that I was running in Winnipeg:

“Knowledge is power to a sales professional just like wood is the power to a wood burning stove. The wood needs to be set on fire, however, before its power can heat the home. All the knowledge in the world won't produce results for sales professionals until Attitude sets it on fire!”

How do we work on the hearts (the Attitude) of our people? Here are a few keys to focus on:

The Attitude Principle of Reciprocity...you get what you give. It is no longer acceptable for a manager to come into a meeting and say something like “We need to start seeing some better attitudes around here.” You need to set the pace. You need to lead by example. Pessimism breeds pessimism. Negativity breeds negativity. Remember, they will do HALF of what you do right and TWICE what you do wrong.

Consistency. Do your best to not have a hyped up message about passion one week and a down-in-the-mouth message about reports not being turned in on time the next. Create consistency in your delivery, your agendas, your accountability, when you start the meeting, when you end the meeting, etc. Surprises lead to discomfort. Although some discomfort is all right, too much of it kills trust and belief in the message.

Hype and Noise is Not Attitude. Don't confuse getting passionate “buy-in” from your people with hyped up sessions that are platforms for a performance by you! This is about the salespeople and their issues, their goals and their challenges-not yours!

Have a Plan and Stick To It. Part of the reason that I feel that a lot of sales meetings don't make a big Attitudinal IMPACT is because they are not well thought out. If the salespeople are truly looked at as a sales manager's customers, wouldn't it make sense to have a game plan to win that customer's heart over *every time*?

Get Everyone Involved. Again, this is not the sales manager's show. Salespeople are notorious for wanting to tell what they know. Salespeople often want (and sometimes NEED) to be center-stage. Sales meetings are an opportunity to do so. This is a great opportunity to teach the value of solid preparation and research. It is also a fantastic way to get future “buy-in” from all who participate.

I have the great fortune to coach the salespeople from a fairly large organization in New York. Over the years, we have put some of the salespeople to the test of doing live “role practice sessions” in front of various people in the organization while being video taped. It is in these sessions that we discover the strengths and perceived weaknesses of each individual and thus, design and implement individual development plans for each. Part of the development process this year was to identify key weakness areas in the

presentation styles of each salesperson. Some individuals “dumped too much information too soon.” Some made the presentation too confusing for the prospect. Some used too much industry jargon. Others did not ask enough questions.

We ran a half-day session in which the salespeople that were the biggest offenders in some of these areas became the instructors. Those who did not ask enough *opening questions* ran a 20 minute tutorial on the importance of asking questions in the sales process. Those who practiced “info dumping” taught their associates the many benefits of a customer focused, “dumbed down” sales approach. After the day’s workshop was complete, the common consensus was overwhelmingly and passionately enthusiastic to do this again! We learn more from teaching than we do from listening to someone else teach. So, when we teach what we know, we are just re-learning what we already knew! It was a GREAT lesson learned.

Work on Their Bellies

The fire and passion found in the belly or (THE GUT!) is present in too few of our salespeople! The best of those managers who run regular sales meetings are acutely aware of the need to inspire that passion and turn on that enthusiasm in order to spark the **ACTIVITY** necessary for continued sales success. As a speaker, I see many people get fired up in my sessions. I see the spark in their eye actually change throughout the day as it grows and the passion becomes reality. It is then that I **KNOW** that they will go back to their offices and *begin* the process of change.

However, it is way too often that I find the results do not match up with the initial **ACTION**. Why? Because firing someone up is not a sometimes thing! Inspiration is fleeting and inconsistent. Regular challenges must be made to *pull* results out of our people and ourselves. I may inspire and challenge some short-term change in behavior for many in my workshops. But it is the salesperson with continual reinforcement, continual access to tools and information, continual support, and a continual “shot in the arm (or kick in the butt) that truly has the best shot for long term success. That needs to come from somewhere because there are not enough human beings out there with the ability to consistently do it for themselves.

So a few parting thoughts for you on your quest to build a better sales meeting process for your organization:

- ❑ Never have a meeting without a **PURPOSE!**
- ❑ Never “wing it!” Better prepare for these meetings than you ever did for any sales call in your past.
- ❑ Imagine your people are your customers (they are)! How will you get them to “buy” your message?
- ❑ Become a role model representing all that you wish to build in your people. Success breeds success.
- ❑ Never allow meetings to digress into negativity.
- ❑ Save the data for memos. Use your sales meetings to **INSPIRE, TEACH, AND GROW** your people into superstars!

- Have FUN! Lot's of FUN! The mind is most open to change and creativity when it is in a non-threatening, pleasurable, fun environment.

If you need some one-on-one coaching regarding your sales meetings or just want to bounce a few ideas off someone before rolling them out, feel free to give us a call (toll free 1-866-979-5296) or email us at rochelle@gerrylayo.com for our feedback.