



The 10 Most Common Sales Management Mistakes



THE BROOKS GROUP

Just like sales, sales management requires training. It's an uphill battle to walk into such a complicated role and see success without any help.

Unfortunately, far too many organizations take their top performing sellers and turn them into a sales manager. Other organizations just hire someone for the Sales Manager position and say, "go do it!" That simply doesn't work. It doesn't work because in most cases we see sales managers (veterans and rookies alike) making mistakes.

In this white paper you'll learn the ten most common mistakes sales managers typically make. Review the list to ensure you're on track to avoid those pitfalls. Also check out our [Sales Leadership Accelerator](#) training course. This program will teach you actionable, mission-critical sales management skills and best practices you can apply with your team immediately.

1

Failing to provide organized sales skills training regardless of salesperson's experience.

Unfortunately, many managers believe that people who have a few years of selling under their belts don't need any [sales training](#). Another mistake is to believe that the uninitiated can just learn from their more experienced mentors. That's 100% wrong.

The truth is that everyone – regardless of experience or age – needs a refresher course every now and then. Sales skills require constant refinement and are always evolving.

Ironically, it is often the experienced sales veterans who really know the least. In many cases they have built their book of business and have faltered in skill sets essential for winning business in today's selling environment. Too often, they simply rely on outdated selling techniques when they really need to turn to contemporary sales strategies.

2

Relying on “end-process” metrics rather than “in-process” measurement when evaluating salespeople.

Measuring performance based on pure sales results doesn't tell you where a salesperson needs to improve or what drove the numbers. That's an important distinction to make. It's harder to measure performance throughout the sales process but it gives you a great deal more insight into your team's ability. It will tell you exactly where improvement needs to be made and allow you to course correct.

Every member of your team is better in some steps of a sale than in others. By more thoroughly understanding where those skill sets lie (and where they don't) you can more effectively [coach your team](#) in-process and see benefits through your end-process assessment. In other words, if you focus on specific weaknesses in the middle of the sales cycle, your team will see better end-results.

3

Focusing solely on deal coaching rather than skills coaching.

Some sales managers don't permit their salespeople to complete transactions. Salespeople are professionals and should be treated that way. They must have the ability to usher a sale from beginning to end.

This mistake is like a football coach who has one player carrying the ball up and down the field and then gives the ball to another to score from the 1-yard line. In our sports analogy – and in the world of sales – that leads to complete frustration, a lack of fulfillment and a failure to continue seeking the goal.

Simply put, learn [how to manage \(and coach\)](#) from the field and determine the point at which salespeople must carry the ball themselves.

4

Lacking a sales process, and subsequently not coaching sellers effectively.

Too many salespeople believe that “The Gift of Gab” or the ability to connect or “close” is enough and they can go in front of a prospect and “wing it.” What’s worse is that some sales managers agree and even encourage it. That’s wrong.

If salespeople want to consistently make more sales with less effort, they must follow a linked, sequential system that leads to completely resistance-free sales.

A [sales process is essential](#) across the entire sales team. When everyone on a sales team follows the same process, many benefits exist. For example, it leads to the ability to have consistent handling of prospects, the capacity to easily transfer accounts or salespeople and the existence of a “common language.”

5

Not providing adequate training for new product/service releases.

There's nothing worse than being a salesperson caught flatfooted in front of a prospect while presenting a new product or service. You've got to make sure your team has sufficient knowledge about your new offerings so that they can successfully present them to potential customers.

If not done correctly, this has the potential to be a tremendously expensive disaster. Years of research and hundreds of thousands of dollars may go into new product or service development. However, it may all be for naught if the sales team is not appropriately brought up to speed. After all, they're the ones hitting the streets. They're the ones in front of the customers explaining this exciting new widget. Your job as sales manager is to ensure they have total product or service mastery before they find themselves in front of their first customer.

6

Not allowing for individual differences within sales teams.

People are unique. We know that's true – we've been hearing it since we were knee high to a grasshopper, right? Treat your team that way. We all have individual strengths, and we all have individual weaknesses. Capitalize on the former to cover for the latter.

A team is strong because of the individuals that make it up. The best sales organizations we've seen are the ones that understand the different skills and abilities members of their teams bring to the table and then call on those skills when they're needed.

7

Unilaterally raising quotas on star performers... or making quotas impossible for marginal performers to achieve.

The quickest way to upset any sales team anywhere is to mess with pay plans. Most salespeople –though not all – are driven by income. That’s what turns them on. At the very least, an abrupt change in a pay plan places an emotional barrier on a sense of accomplishment. Don’t ever diminish that. If you decide one day to adjust, reduce, make changes, or otherwise alter a pay plan, problems will arise.

Instead of making unannounced changes, get support from the team. Plant a seed of change by asking for input. Don’t ignore your team when it comes to their pay, they may have some great ideas.

8

Spending too much time with low-performing sellers.

In many cases, sales managers find themselves spending all of their time working with sub-par performers and ignoring top-tier sales professionals. It's easy to get dragged down into the muck of helping the poorest performers, but the highest returns come from [working with the best on your team.](#)

Top performers want your attention. They want to be told they're successful and coached to improve. They need you to help them get better. You will see greater impact from your efforts spent coaching your "A" and "B" players than you will with your "C" players.

9

Having pay plans that are (a) confusing or (b) designed to reduce a salesperson's income from its current level without an astronomical growth.

It's not overkill to say something so fundamentally important twice: The quickest way to upset any sales team anywhere is to mess with pay plans. Here's the caveat. If your pay plan is so confusing that your sales team spends all their time focused on how they get paid instead of making money with it, you've got a problem. It's important to maintain a simple, easy-to-understand pay plan that works with – and for – your sales effort.

No matter what you do, salespeople will spend a chunk of their time calculating commissions. You might as well make it simple for them to do – that way they won't waste as much time on it!

10

Selling and not managing or managing without selling.

You can't teach what you don't know, and you can't lead where you won't go.

You've got to spend time "in the trenches" with your team. If you don't, you'll find yourself in a position of weakness – your sales team will take advantage of you and you will become much less effective as a manager.

It becomes difficult not getting bogged-down in administrative or managerial paperwork, but it is essential that you keep one foot in the fire. By continuing to chase the occasional lead or making a sale every now and then, you will accomplish two things. First, you will have more credibility with your team. Second, you will have a better idea about the challenges facing your team.



THE 10 MOST COMMON SALES MANAGEMENT MISTAKES

You must also fulfill your role as Sales Manager, don't forsake it. After all, it is what you were hired to do! For many salespeople-turned-managers, this is the biggest challenge. The requirements for successful sales management are completely different from those for success in sales. Before accepting a position as manager, it is important for all candidates to seriously consider the complete change in function.

Top 5 Tips for Being an Effective Sales Manager

1. Invest in sales skills training regularly; sales skills require constant refinement and are always evolving.
2. Spend more time coaching your "A" and "B" players.
3. Provide adequate training for new product/service releases.
4. Implement a sales process so the entire team speaks the same language.
5. Make sure quotas are clear and attainable.



About The Brooks Group

We simplify the sales process to generate breakthrough results.

For the past 45+ years, we've taken a practical approach to improving sales performance by delivering training and development programs that are actionable, relevant, engaging, and targeted to each client's needs.

At the core of all our training programs are tested and proven strategies designed to increase sales effectiveness regardless of the product or service being sold.

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