



THE BROOKS GROUP

10 OF THE
**BEST SALES
LEADERSHIP
PRACTICES**

The best sales leaders we've seen follow these 10 practices.

Great sales leaders know there's more to the job than meets the eye. Success in such a complicated – and high-pressure – leadership position requires a lot. In our thirty-five years of experience working with some of the best sales leaders in the world, we have identified these 10 best practices.

1 They seek input from salespeople about their quotas (and they never institute unachievable quotas for marginal performers).

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, great sales leaders get support and suggestions from their 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.

2 Their pay plans are never (a) confusing nor are they (b) designed to reduce a salesperson's income from its current level without 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 of 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!





3 They provide organized sales skills training for salespeople, regardless of experience.

Unfortunately, many managers believe that people who have a few years of selling under their belts don't need any training. Another mistake is to believe that the uninitiated can just learn from their more experienced mentors. That's wrong. Dead 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 “old pros” who really know the least. In many cases they have built their book of business in spite of themselves and could really benefit from sharpening their skill sets for contemporary selling. Too often, they simply rely on 20th Century selling techniques when they really need to turn to 21st Century sales strategies.



4 They focus on “in-process measurement” rather than waiting for “end-process assessment” 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.

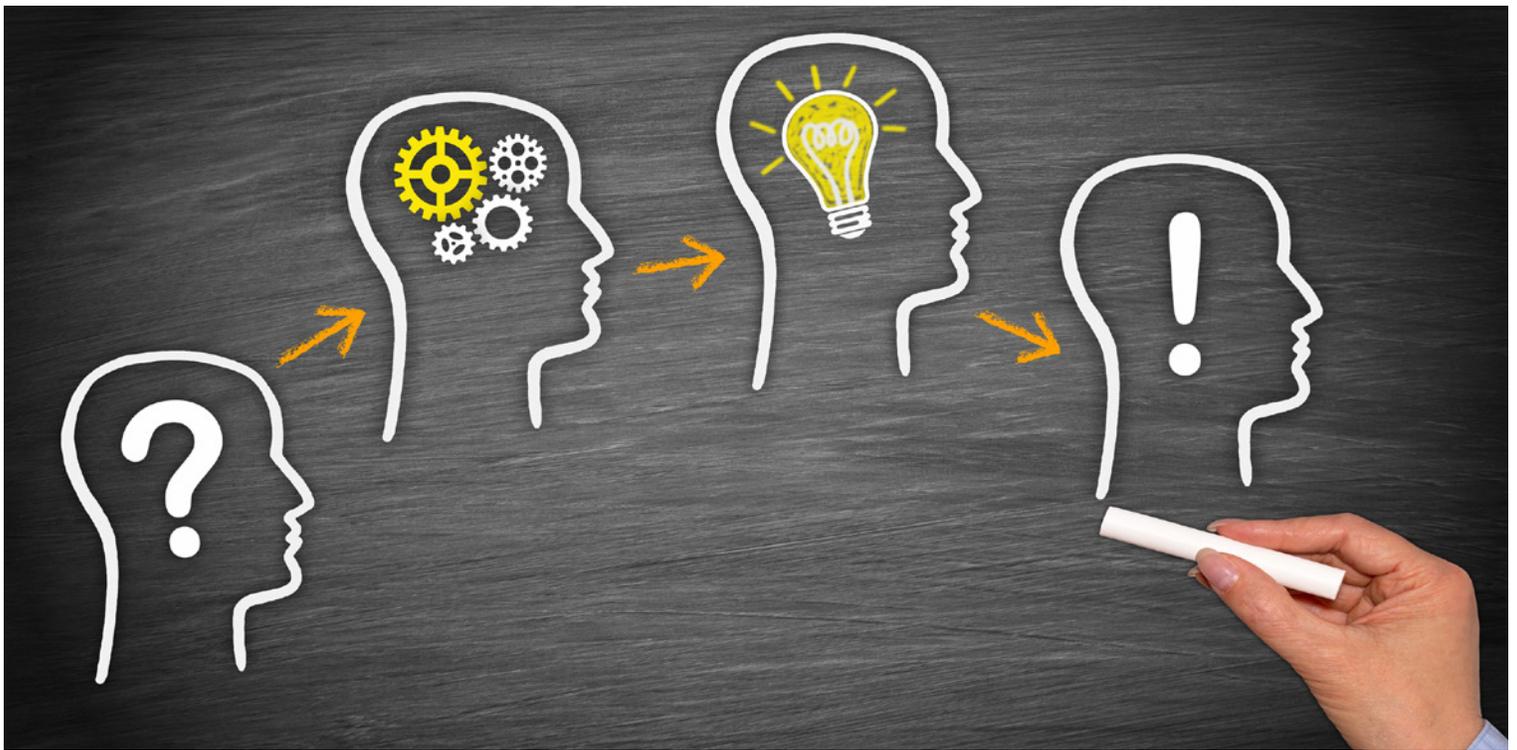
Every member of your team is better in some steps of a sale than in others. By more thoroughly understanding where those skill sets lie (and where they don't) you can more effectively coach your team in-process and see benefits through your end-process assessment. In other words, if you focus on specific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

5 They (and their front-line managers) free their salespeople to finalize their own transactions.

The best sales leaders recognize the importance of “teaching a man to sell so he can eat for a lifetime.” However, others 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.

Not allowing this freedom is akin to 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.





6 They institute a sales platform and coach within that system.

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 “play it by ear.” What’s worse is that some sales leaders agree and even encourage it. Unfortunately, when salespeople try to “play it by ear,” they end up playing it by “mouth.” Then, they just talk themselves right out of a sale!

The best sales leaders understand that salespeople who want to consistently make more sales with less effort, follow a linked, sequential system that leads to completely resistance-free sales.

A sales platform is essential across the entire sales team. When everyone on a sales team follows the same process, wonderful things occur. For example, it leads to the ability to have consistent handling of prospects, the capacity to seamlessly transfer accounts or salespeople and the existence of a “common language.”



7 They pay attention to every member of their sales organization. Not just the sub-par performers.

In many organizations, sales leaders find themselves spending all of their time working with sub-par performers and ignoring top-tier contributors. 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" and "D" players.

8 They understand the importance of selling AND leading.

Sales leaders know they can't teach what they don't know and they can't lead where they won't go.

They have to spend time "in the trenches" with members of their teams. Without that credibility, leaders find themselves in positions of weakness. In other words, sales teams might take advantage of the situation, rendering an inactive sales leader much less effective.

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 assisting a sale every now and then, you will accomplish two things. First, you will gain credibility with your team. Second, you will have a better idea about the challenges facing your team.

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



9 They always provide 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. Great sales leaders ensure their team has sufficient knowledge about 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.

10 They understand and encourage the individual differences within sales teams.

People are unique. You know that. 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.



Key Takeaways:

- They provide organized sales skills training for salespeople, regardless of experience.
- They focus on “in-process measurement” rather than waiting for “end-process assessment” when evaluating salespeople.
- They (and their front-line managers) free their salespeople to finalize their own transactions.
- They institute a sales platform and coach within that system.
- They always provide adequate training for new product/service releases.
- They understand and encourage the individual differences within sales teams.

About The Brooks Group

With nearly 40 years of industry experience, The Brooks Group achieves sustainable sales culture transformation for clients by delivering targeted training that becomes operationalized by threading into an organization’s existing systems.

The Brooks Group takes a holistic approach to practical culture shifts and focuses on customized “street smart” sales and sales management programs, with a high level of relevance and practicality for the individual learner. Training gets reinforced with an industry-leading cloud-based sales and sales management coaching platform.

For more information

The Brooks Group can be reached by phone at (800) 633-7762, by email at Contact@TheBrooksGroup.com or online at TheBrooksGroup.com.

