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Crushing Quota: Proven Sales Coaching Tactics for Breakthrough Performance

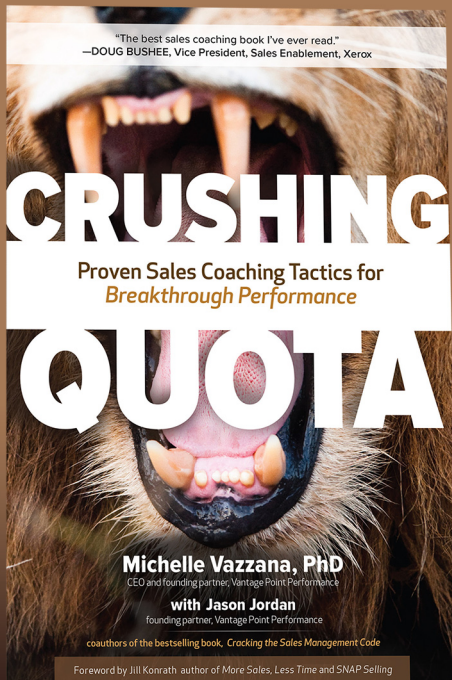
Jonathan Farrington Interviews Sales Coaching Expert
and author of *Crushing Quota*, Vantage Point CEO, Michelle Vazzana

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Jonathan Farrington
Interviews Sales Coaching
Expert and author of
Crushing Quota, Vantage
Point CEO, Michelle
Vazzana.



JF: I understand you've just published *Crushing Quota, Proven Sales Coaching Tactics for Breakthrough Performance*. Tell me how this relates to your prior bestselling book, *Cracking the Sales Management Code*.

MV: *Cracking the Sales Management Code* was our blueprint for how to use metrics to manage the sales force. We defined how to create clarity for salespeople and how to use data to manage performance. *Cracking the Sales Management Code* is not a coaching book. *Crushing Quota* is. It's an

operating manual for sales managers who want to coach in ways that get more salespeople to quota.

JF: How is *Crushing Quota* different from the multitude of other coaching books on the market?

MV: Firstly, it is the result of two multi-year research projects into the coaching practices of high-performing sales managers. It's based on science, not anecdote. We went into the research with an open mind and were quite surprised by some of our findings. I'll tell you more about that in a few minutes.

Secondly, *Crushing Quota* makes sales coaching tangible and executable. Many other sales coaching books either focus very narrowly on conducting better coaching conversations or are so broad that they attempt to cover all tasks within the sales managers purview. *Crushing Quota* does an incredibly deep dive into the critical decisions a sales manager must make to coach their salespeople to quota attainment.

JF: Michelle, in your opinion, what are the key things a sales manager must do to be a great coach?

MV: The most important thing is to create clarity of task for salespeople. Every salesperson wants to succeed, to hit quota, they just don't always know how. It is the sales managers job to ensure that every salesperson on their team is abundantly clear about which activities are most vital to success in their role. Activities are the only thing that a sales manager can directly manage, and our research revealed that coaching to activities is the only type of coaching that is directly related to quota attainment. Not all sales activities are equally impactful.

Next, managers must determine the best way to coach those activities that matter most. Managers have very little discretionary time and the way they

choose to spend their coaching time matters. In *Crushing Quota*, we share important research findings about the different types of sales coaching managers can provide. We help managers prioritize their coaching effort for maximum efficiency and effectiveness. We take the guesswork out of sales coaching.

JF: Why is getting sales managers to coach so challenging? Why are they not doing more of it?

MV: That is the thorny question everyone is trying to answer! Every manager coaches their salespeople to some degree. The most important distinctions between how top-performers coach compared to their lower-performing peers are not obvious or intuitive.

Conventional wisdom about sales coaching is one of the primary reasons managers don't coach as well as they could. For example, most sales managers believe that the most important type of coaching is attending sales calls with their salespeople - coaching in the field. Our research revealed that the lowest performing managers spend the most time in the field. The lowest performers also report coaching more often and for more hours per month than the high-performers. Managers are more pressed for time and distracted than ever before. They also manage more salespeople. Most of the circumstances in a sales manager's day-to-day environment are downright hostile to coaching.

Managers need a way to sort through the chaos of their job and create enough space to coach. The key is to help them prioritize in ways that dramatically improve their effectiveness without giving them more to do. No other coaching book helps simplify the life of a sales manager while dramatically improving their effectiveness. That's what *Crushing Quota* does.

JF: I am very interested to learn what were some of the biggest surprises that came out of your research?

MV: I've mentioned two of them already - the most

successful managers do not spend more time in the field or coach more than their lower-performing counterparts. This last point was extremely surprising.

In addition, we found that not all types of coaching benefit from formality. Management rhythms or cadences are the new best practice being bandied about. While it's true that many types of coaching benefit from a repeatable, predictable rhythm, not all do. Some types of coaching, specifically call planning, are more effective when done as-needed. This was initially surprising to us, but now it makes sense. Most sales calls are not planned months or weeks in advance. The best time to plan a sales call is close to when it is scheduled to occur. Other types of coaching, such as opportunity strategy and account planning tend to benefit more when done within a management rhythm.

JF: What are the most takeaways a manager can expect by reading *Crushing Quota*?

MV: Managers will learn a research-based method for providing direction for their salespeople to help improve their chances of making quota. They will learn how to help salespeople work smart, not just hard.

Second, they will learn how to prioritize their coaching effort on activities that matter most. They will learn what to coach. But we don't stop there. We share deep insights from our research on how to coach different sales activities, specific tactics that work. Finally, we share research on how to formalize the types of coaching that benefit from formalization. We help managers learn *when*, or *how often* to coach for maximum impact. We provide the details necessary for a manager to develop a coaching approach that has been proven to get more salespeople to quota. ■

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