

UNDERSTANDING THE IMPORTANCE OF SALES COACHING



Putting [sales coaching](#) to best use is important if companies want to get the best possible performances out of their personnel. The first step in ensuring that these programs are functioning properly should consist of confirming that coaches have a firm grasp of what their purpose is and verifying that the business knows what it wants to accomplish by creating these resources.

Learn the process

Rick Maher, CEO of Effective Human Resources, said that it's best to set about the basics of sales coaching by grasping what

this term really means. Rather than just approaching sales coaching as an aspect of training, it's important to think about the broad spectrum of what employees need and how an expert can help deliver these lessons more effectively than traditional educational materials.

"Coaching is a beginning-to-end review of the sales process, the sales management, the salesperson's skills, what they're selling," Maher said in a recent interview. "The interaction with the sales coach is on a regular frequency, whether it's phone coaching, face-to-face coaching."

He stressed that coaching has to be centered around a few key concepts, including accountability and conversion. What's more, this process should begin as soon as a person is hired and continue throughout the lifetime a person shares with a corporation.

While training may deliver on the core concepts of what the sales team should strive for, it may not be clear to personnel how they're supposed to get there. In other cases, they might need more reassurance or refining in terms of how they communicate with clients. These pieces are all part of fine-tuning each employee's performance, something that can't be taught just by reading booklets or watching educational videos.

"The analogy I use in that situation is Weight Watchers," Maher explained during the interview. "Everyone knows at Weight Watchers, at the end of the week you've got to go weigh in. So part of your motivation is to not be embarrassed when you step on that scale. In coaching, having that accountability piece, if you decide that the job requires 50 cold calls, networking, whatever it is, the accountability piece requires the student, the team player ... to perform those functions because they're going to report at the end of the month."

Know the difference

What it boils down to in the end, Maher stated, is that coaching and training represent two parts of the sales performance scheme. They aren't the same at all, as some managers might think, grouping these two functions together into talent management and other areas of HR outside the scope of team activities. Instead, it's necessary to think about training as the informative or tactical part of the learning experience, whereas coaching is more focused on strategizing and engineering better outcomes. Basically, coaching takes the simulated and rote part of training and refines these skills into useful talents on the sales floor.

What's more, just as people never stop having new experiences, it's important to never stop offering sales coaching opportunities to personnel. If employees are supposed to be making 50 cold calls a month or just five, each of these interactions should teach the person more about how to handle clients. Without the proper litmus or guidance, these thoughts may not coalesce in the representative's head in a way that creates actionable outcomes.

As employees encounter new technology, different customers and gain new skills through sales training opportunities, coaching continues to remain an essential part of making these instances into useful experiences.