



WHAT IS SALES CULTURE?



A WHITEPAPER BY THE BROOKS GROUP

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For any company, the most important thing is generating revenue. Everything you do is ultimately in pursuit of that goal. So, since sales is the thing that generates revenue for your company, a lot of companies make the mistake of thinking that the sales team is its most important division. They focus all their efforts on the sales reps, sometimes at the expense of other departments.

It's true that sales should be your main goal. But in order to make those sales, you need to bring together the entire company. You need to establish a sales culture within your company. In a sales culture, making sales is not just a goal, it's a way of life—and, more importantly, it's a way of life that everyone in the company is a part of, and everyone works towards. All the different departments understand that they're part of a larger whole, and the entire company works towards improving sales in their own way. How do you accomplish this? Well, let's take a look at a few ways that you can promote a sales culture within your own organization.



Company-Wide Support for the Sales Team

One of the most basic and most important aspects of a sales culture is support from the rest of the company.

The sales team should know that the other departments are in their corner, have their back if anything goes wrong, and are willing to go the extra mile to help out.

But that's only the tip of the iceberg. As we've mentioned already, sales culture means getting the entire company involved in the sales process. This means that the entire company needs to support one another as they work towards a common goal.

So what does it mean to support one another?

It means everyone is working together, and everyone helps one another with what they need. Often, separate departments within an organization tend to be insular. If the sales team needs some personnel changes from HR, or some lead help from marketing, their request can sit unnoticed and without response for days or even weeks before someone does something about it. Support means everyone does what it takes to make sure each department, sales and otherwise, has what they need to perform their function to the best of their ability.

Education is key in this regard. In order to get everyone on board with this attitude of support, it's important that everyone understands how his or her contributions affect the ultimate goal of making sales for the company. Get everyone focused on that goal and help them to understand their part in it, as it relates to the whole, and you're on your way to a healthy sales culture within your company.



Top-Down Support for the Sales Team

So where does this support begin? It begins with you, the management. First of all, as we mentioned already, education is critical to support. It's up to you to make sure all your employees understand how their individual roles in the company contribute to sales. This can be done by implementing an education program that shows how everything fits together, as well as providing ongoing reminders from management to the employees of how their current individual task is helping to drive the overall sales culture.

If support for the sales team begins from the top down, it will be easier to ingrain it into the minds and routines of your employees.

Second of all, management itself needs to get on board with actively supporting the sales team—as well as the rest of the company, in their sales-driven roles. If you want to establish a sales culture, everyone, from the CEO, down to managers, supervisors, coaches/mentors, etc. needs to be united in fostering it. It's their job to make sure that employees are keeping sales in mind as they work and are supporting the sales team and sales culture with everything they do.

And, of course, they themselves also need to show the same support for the team, leading by example and making sure that sales are the prime focus in all of their actions and decisions. If support for the sales team begins from the top down, it will be easier to ingrain it into the minds and routines of your employees.

Focus on the Customer

Sales are a general goal for your employees to focus on, but, more specifically, they should be focused on the customer: who they are, what they want, and how to keep them happy. This should already be at the forefront of your sales reps' minds, but it's not as easy for someone in, say, IT, to think about how the customers are affected by what they do.

But your customers are the lifeblood of your company, and every sale begins and ends with them. Therefore, in order to maintain a sales culture, everyone must be focused on the customer's needs and ultimate welfare.



It's important to drive home to your employees that the numbers and figures that they deal with every day aren't just lines on a page, but are representative of actual people, with whom your company wants to build a working relationship. Everyone knows this in the back of their minds, but it's easy to forget, especially for those departments that never deal with the customers directly. By helping them focus not just on what they're doing, but who they're helping, it makes everyone personally responsible for the customers' wellbeing, and will make sure your customers have a pleasant and worthwhile experience dealing with your company, every step of the way.

A Clearly Defined Sales Process

What is your sales process? No doubt it's outlined in the handbook and talked about in training. But how many of your sales reps actually follow it? How many of them even remember what it is for more than a few months after being hired?

A lot of sales reps tend to use their own tactics to make sales, rather than follow proven company practices. They think their own talent and/or experience are all they need to drive sales. What they do may even work to some degree—but it's not supportive of sales culture.



Your sales process should not just be about making sales. It should be about forming relationships, delivering value and driving revenue. It should represent your company to the customer. Therefore, your sales process needs to be clearly defined and specifically designed to fit in with your company and the sales culture you're trying to foster. Then, that process needs to be enforced, making sure that all of your sales reps follow it with their customers.

So what if a sales rep does have some method or tactic of their own that's actually better or more effective than what's defined in your sales process? Rather than having them go off on their own, encourage them to bring it to you, and figure out how you can work that method into the sales process, so that everyone can do it going forward.

The goal isn't to stifle or limit your employees, but rather to help them meet their full potential within your company.

A lot of sales managers will look at a rep's low numbers and reprimand or discipline them, without taking the time to understand why their numbers might be low, or what they can do to help them.



Sales Managers Dedicated to Coaching

Sales managers are there to implement company policy, particularly with regards to your sales process. But more importantly, they're there to teach and train sales reps, helping them improve and bringing out the best in them. A lot of managers forget about that. They spend their days stuck behind a desk, dealing with their own clients, instead of working with the other sales reps.

The higher up the chain of command you go, the easier it is to lose touch with what's actually going on at the lower levels of the company. A lot of sales managers will look at a rep's low numbers and reprimand or discipline them, without taking the time to understand why their numbers might be low, or what they can do to help them.

In a sales culture, though, it's important for managers to be able to get out from behind their desks and help their sales reps.

Good sales managers take their coaching responsibilities seriously, and you can see it in their actions. They'll work with sales reps individually, providing not just company policy, but their own knowledge and expertise, to get those reps where they need to be.

Being in the thick of it with the sales reps will help them get a better handle on what reps are doing and how they work. This will help them to not only make the reps better at their jobs, but will also make the sales managers better at theirs as well.

Support from the Rest of the Team

It's not just the job of the sales manager to make sure their reps are performing well. It's also up to the reps themselves to keep each other on task. We've seen already how the different departments need to support one another, but within a single team, support is that much more important.



Specifically, sales reps shouldn't tolerate subpar performance from their teammates. They should encourage one another to do their best and be their best at all times. If someone needs help, their team members should be there to help them even before management gets involved. And if someone is simply being lazy and not performing the way they did in the past, or appears not to be taking things seriously, it's up to their team members to take them to task and get them to work harder.

Even when management is taking the time to get actively involved in helping their sales reps' performance, the other reps are still likely to be the ones who spot the problem first. Therefore, it's their job to help them overcome the problem, and get the whole team back to peak performance.

There are a number of great ways to get team members to care enough about one another's performance to help each other out. Team building exercises can help bring everyone closer together and foster a sense of camaraderie and caring. You can also provide group-based incentives. If everyone on the team does well, then everyone gets a particular reward. That way, if anyone is bringing the rest of the team down, the others will have incentive to help them. However you do it, though, it's important that your sales reps realize that they're not just individuals. It's called the sales team because everyone needs to work together.

Collaboration Between Marketing and Sales

While it's vital for all of your company's different departments to support one another and contribute to the sales culture, there are two in particular whose collaboration is even more essential: marketing and sales. However, it's no secret that the two groups don't generally see eye to eye. In fact, there may even be some resentment or animosity between them.

In many cases, marketing sees sales as lazy and entitled. The marketers do the heavy lifting of bringing in prospects, turning them into leads, and nurturing them until they're sales ready. Then they hand those leads off to a sales rep who spends a few minutes on the phone with them, and then takes full credit for the sale.



It's important that marketing and sales not just support each other, but respect each other. Sales can get involved earlier in the lead nurturing process, to help build up the relationship between the customer and the company. Marketing, in turn, can foster communication between their department and sales, helping them get a feel for individual leads and what their needs are, not just in terms of products you sell, but in terms of the person and what they're looking to do.

Resentment and animosity help no one. If you can't iron out the differences between your marketing and sales teams, and get them to come to some mutual understanding, then your sales culture is destined to fail.

Company-Wide Celebration of Success

So, everyone is working together as a team and supporting one another across departments. And now, through those efforts, you've managed to land the biggest client your company has ever had. Now it's time to celebrate. Everyone helped bring this to fruition, so everyone gets to share in the glory.

Confucius said that the key to a successful society is to punish the bad and reward the good. This is as true in sales culture as it is in regular culture—but, unfortunately, many managers and executives tend to forget about the second part.



You can show your employees how their actions all work together to help make sales, but in the end, do they actually care enough about the other departments, or even their own efforts, to work towards that goal? That's why you need to help them realize that one person's success is really everybody's success, so everyone gets to reap the benefits.

When the sales team does well, they get bonuses. But if everyone helped make those sales possible, shouldn't everyone get a bonus? Think of things you can do for your employees to reward them for the good work being made in sales, and to celebrate the effort that everyone put in. This will help get them more invested not only in their work, but in the results, and will help keep them driving towards more sales.

Commitment to Hiring Only the Best

Support, camaraderie, and celebration will help you a lot in your sales culture. But, even so, they mean little unless your team has the talent to back it up.

Your company needs to be committed to hiring only the best sales talent, and nurturing that talent to help it reach its full potential.

So, how do you find the best sales talent?

First, keep your ear to the ground. Look around at the sales reps in other companies and in other fields. Look at their track records, and listen to what others are saying about them. It's also important to have a rigorous hiring process that can weed out those who aren't of the caliber you're looking for.

An assessment can test on particular factors to reveal a candidate's strengths, motivators, and personality—giving you an idea of how well they will perform in your organization.



You can work with a placement firm to find you the best people for your team, but be careful. Some firms are more concerned with selling you on the candidate they're currently trying to place, than actually finding the best and most suitable sales rep for your team. It's a good idea to use an assessment product in conjunction with the placement firm. An assessment can test candidates on certain factors to give you an assessment of their abilities, as well as their personality, to give you an idea of how well they would do in your company. With an assessment product, you can take the candidates provided to you by the placement firm and test them on your own to see if they pass muster. Don't ever settle for less. In order to maintain a successful sales culture, you must have the very best people on your team.

Respect for Sales Intelligence

In any culture, it's important to be able to learn, grow, and develop. If it doesn't, it will stagnate and die. This is true of sales culture as well. Sales reps are out there on the front lines, in the marketplace, selling your product. The things they learn there are an invaluable resource to your company.

While it's true that you need to enforce company policy and make sure that your sales process is followed, you should always be flexible. If something isn't working, or could work better, management should be willing to listen. If a sales rep finds that customers aren't responding to a particular tactic, or are all having a similar response that wasn't previously anticipated, then it's evident that something needs to change.

Of course, there is a time and a place for these suggestions. They should always be done in a respectful way, rather than argumentatively. Have some specifically sanctioned channel, whether it be a suggestion box, an open forum, or something else, that allows sales reps to bring their intelligence in from the marketplace. Then, make sure that management actually listens to and respects this intelligence.

Whether it's ultimately implemented or not, make sure the reps know that their input is appreciated, and even encouraged.

When you're all working together, you can help each other to grow, both individually and as a team, to be the best that you can be.



Conclusion

Since sales is the pinnacle of what your company does, it should be the concern of everyone in the company. That's why, in a sales culture, every single employee, no matter what they do, from the CEO on down, is working in sales. Sales is the main concern of the company, and the focus of everything else that you do. Rather than having your employees work in a vacuum, each only concerned with the task in front of them, you need to have them all working towards a common goal. That goal will unite them, bind them, and give them the drive and incentive they need to achieve the goal together.

Without sales culture, you just have a company. With sales culture, you're a community. And together, your community can accomplish anything.

Unify your team and get everyone speaking the same sales language with the IMPACT Selling® sales process.

Learn more about IMPACT and how it can transform your team's sales effectiveness [here](#).





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Founded in 1977, The Brooks Group is an award-winning B2B sales training company focused on bringing practical, straightforward solutions to your sales force selection and training challenges.

The Brooks Group provides a suite of proven sales and sales management development programs, industry-leading reinforcement tools, and best-in-class assessments.

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.



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