

Sales Coaching Through Questions: Post-Call Feedback

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One of the most frequent questions we hear from front-line sales managers is: “How can I give better feedback to my reps?” This question is a smart place for any sales manager to begin their journey to becoming a better sales coach. After surveying thousands of sales reps, the research indicates that managers who are able to effectively deliver feedback to their reps on their sales skills are much more likely to be on target to achieving their sales goals. There is no question that becoming proficient at delivering feedback can help your reps improve their sales skills and, consequently, improve their ability to hit their sales target. The real question is how to deliver feedback most effectively. Interestingly, the answer to that may be to ask more questions.

One of the most important sales techniques we teach our new sales reps is how to ask good questions. There are so many reasons why questions are important in the sales process. They help us uncover customers’ needs. They help us learn about customers’ businesses. They help customers self-diagnose their issues and how we can help solve them. And a great questioning process can create customer buy-in for a solution before we even suggest it. Simply stated, knowing how to ask questions and follow-up accordingly is one of the most important lessons a salesperson can learn. So why do we so quickly forget that lesson when we move into sales management?

So many sales managers coach their team members by telling them what to do, rather than using an effective questioning process. Just imagine if we talked to our customers the way we talked to our reps. They would probably hang up the phone a few minutes into a conversation with us. And they’d be justified in doing so because we would be talking at them, assuming what the issue was, assuming that we had the right solution for them, and ultimately, just telling them what to do. Now, obviously we have a different relationship with reps than customers. But at the end of the day, they are people too. They want their opinion to matter. They don’t like people to make assumptions about why they did what they did. They bristle at being criticized without context. And they want to learn rather than just be told what to do. This is why asking questions is just as important when coaching reps as it is when selling to customers.

One of the best opportunities to coach with questions is when you’re doing a post-call debrief with a sales rep. Many of us start a post-call coaching session with the most basic question of “how do you think the call went?” But after the rep gives their initial response, we often quickly transition into giving our assessment of the call and what we think they could’ve done better.

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Next time you are doing post-call feedback, consider asking your rep a lot more questions, such as the following:

- *Why did you choose your strategy for the sales call?*
- *How were you hoping the customer would respond to your strategy?*
- *How well did you accomplish your goal?*
- *What could you have done differently to achieve your goal?*
- *Which aspects of the call do you want to replicate?*

Asking open-ended questions like these encourages the rep to really consider the reasons behind their actions during the sales call. When you are able to get them talking about their ideas and beliefs underlying their actions, then you are better able to coach them. This is because you will be dealing with the root cause of their behavior, whether it is positive or negative. Then you can reinforce the thinking and subsequent behavior that is on the right track or coach the thinking and subsequent behavior that is on the wrong track. You will also be helping them self-diagnose any issues, which is helpful in getting them to buy into the need to make a change. Above all, you will be showing how much you value their thinking and view them as a true partner in their success. This will create a much more positive and collaborative relationship between the two of you, and ultimately, help them in their development and performance.

About the Author



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With over 17 years of experience in employee assessment, leadership coaching, and customer service, Sarah has helped hundreds of executives develop professionally and assist them with implementing programs directed toward increasing sales results and profitability. Her expertise in coaching and leadership, combined with her fact based, common sense approach to their application make her a sought after presenter at any event.

Under Sarah's leadership, EcSell Institute's client retention has grown to over 94%.

EcSell Institute provides strategies for continuous improvement by showing our clients how to apply the latest research, technology, and best practices in leadership and sales coaching, and by involving them in a network of the top sales management minds. Why? Because we know that improving a sales manager's ability to coach and lead has the biggest impact on sales team results. [Contact us](#) to learn more.