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# Too Busy to Coach Your Reps? Maybe Your Team Can Help

Sales managers are busy people. They spend their days trying to balance supporting their reps, responding to leadership's information needs and dealing with customer issues and requests. Moreover, attending internal meetings, replying to emails and executing administrative tasks can suck up significant parts of their days. It's little wonder with everything on their plate, many sales managers admit they don't coach their sales reps as often or as effectively as they would like. When we ask them why, their answer is very simple and very consistent: "*I don't have time to coach.*"

Unfortunately, many sales reps agree with this assessment. In our Through the Eyes of the Rep survey, we ask sales reps about whether they need more time with their sales manager. According to survey results from hundreds of sales reps across numerous organizations, 36% of sales reps agree that they would "benefit from more one-on-one time with [their] manager." And the exact same percentage of sales reps (36%) also agree that their sales manager's "time is stretched too thin." The message is clear – a significant portion of sales reps need more time with their manager. With everything on their plate, what's a busy sales manager to do?

At EcSell Institute, we are always challenging sales managers with ideas and strategies they can use to increase the quality and quantity of their coaching. To be sure, finding ways to coach their reps more often and more effectively is first and foremost the responsibility of the sales manager. At the same time, there may be an additional resource a sales manager can leverage to augment their own coaching efforts and help their reps receive additional support – other sales reps.

One EcSell Institute client, Louri Kearns of 2-10 Home Buyers Warranty, has done this to great effect by partnering each sales rep with another sales rep from her organization in a mentoring relationship. On a regular basis, these "accountability partners" will have a phone call to support and coach each other on a variety of issues. Topics such as their execution of sales activities, questions about company products and strategies to address specific customer issues will be discussed.

Accountability partner relationships not only help fulfill sales reps' needs for more coaching and support from inside their organization, but they have the added benefit of giving reps' access to a different point of view. People who are currently a sales rep role, rather than a few years removed, simply have a different lens on current challenges that can provide a new, valuable perspective. Plus, peer information is seen as extremely credible, so hearing an idea or opinion from another sales rep can give added confidence in their advice. Moreover, sales reps may sometimes feel more comfortable discussing a certain issue with a peer and this can give them that safe channel to get their question addressed. Accountability partners allow reps to not only receive more coaching and support, but a different kind of coaching and support.

To set up your own accountability partners, take the following steps:

- 1. Determine who would be good accountability partners** – Consider the personalities, experience, strengths and weaknesses of the people you are pairing together to make sure they will be a good fit with one another. If you are in a larger sales organization, you may want to talk with other sales managers about setting up partnerships between reps in different regions or business areas. This can help expand your reps' thinking even further and help them build a relationship outside their immediate team.
- 2. Set expectations for the accountability partners** – Set a time frame for how often they should connect (bi-monthly or monthly should be sufficient.) Most importantly, provide the partners with a sense of what you are hoping they accomplish in their regular calls. Let them know this is a time for them to share challenges, address questions, and give advice and support for the sales goal they are each trying to reach.
- 3. Follow-up on the accountability partners** – In your one-to-one meetings with your sales reps, ask them whether they are connecting with their accountability partners regularly. Ask them how those calls are adding value. Ask them how the calls could be more effective. It's not important for you to delve into the details of what's being discussed. In fact, it's better you don't ask about details so your reps don't feel like you're playing big brother. Your role is simply to ensure that these accountability partner calls are happening and adding value.

As stated above, sales managers are busy people, but they must find ways to ensure that they are providing the amount of coaching and support their reps need to be effective. For many reps, the amount they're currently receiving isn't adequate and it's imperative for sales managers to figure out ways they can personally coach their teams more often. At the same time, they should not hesitate to also leverage additional resources to provide more coaching. The knowledge of sales reps can and should be maximized to help their fellow reps learn and grow, and accountability partnerships are an effective way to make this happen.



## About the Author



### SARAH WIRTH Vice President of Client Services

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.

