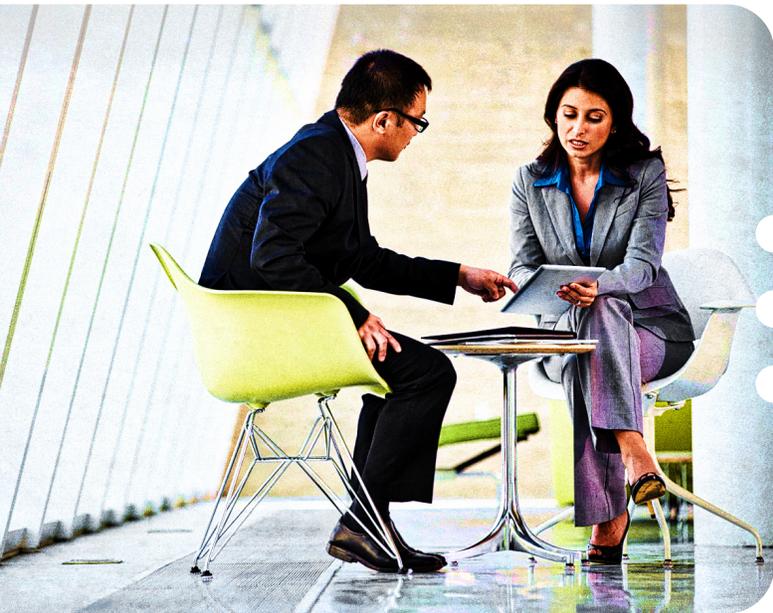


Coaching: It's Driving Strong Results. What About You?



Do you value coaching to help your sales teams perform better and more reliably? Then why are you doing so little of it? Pardon my presumption, but new research shows that most sales leaders believe in coaching — and most don't do it.



According to a survey of more than 200 sales leaders, conducted by the Sales Management Association and Integrity Solutions, three-quarters of those surveyed say that coaching is important. And just about the same percentage — 76% — say they don't coach much or at all.

Perhaps more importantly, organizations that are effective at coaching reap incredible benefits — including an increase in sales of 15% over firms that don't coach. The last point is key, because even if firms were coaching, only 46% of those surveyed thought they were effective at it.

If coaching is so important — and so valued — why don't more sales leaders coach? The top reason cited: They have no time. Though they'd like to coach, they're simply too busy. When we double-

click on that, we discover that most sales leaders lack confidence in their ability to coach effectively.

Why's that? Our research showed that managers often don't know what coaching is — many organizations lack a proper definition of coaching. To go further, more than half of the sales leaders surveyed were never trained how to coach — and were never coached themselves.

We define coaching as building people and helping them become their very best. But too often, sales leaders see coaching as a performance appraisal — exploring specific numbers and targets, or coaching to specific deals.

To differentiate between managing and coaching, think about where everyone sits at the table. If salespeople are being managed, per se, it's as if they're across the table from their manager being grilled about their performance. But if the conversation involves coaching, it's as if they're on the same side of the table and the focus is “how do we achieve important goals”.

About Coaching Proficiency

Coaching proficiency is best understood across a spectrum—most organizations fall somewhere between novice and advanced. How can you know where you are, and how can you shift your organization to greater coaching effectiveness? Rate your organization according to these four levels:

Novice: Organizations at this level do bare-bones coaching, if they do it at all. Mostly, coaching is not on the radar screen of senior leadership at novice

organizations. In fact, leaders see coaching as a waste of time, holding the view that salespeople need to “be out there” selling, pure and simple. Managers decide whether or not to coach.

Beginner: Senior leadership is aware that coaching happens in scattered pockets, but they do not see it as critical to personal or firm success. Managers consider themselves too busy to coach more than quarterly. If salespeople ask for coaching, they may or may not get it. If managers are required to coach their people, they decide what “coaching” is and go from there.

Mature: Senior leadership in organizations typically see coaching as important. They encourage it and hold managers accountable to coach. Managers see coaching as a good use of time. Coaching is built into the talent management system. Often, managers are selected based on their coaching abilities, and they’re rewarded, in part, on their success in developing people.

Advanced: These organizations see the benefits of coaching across the board. Senior leadership views sales coaching as critical to success. They hold managers accountable and put them in a position to succeed at coaching. Additionally, managers have a high degree of coaching confidence: They know coaching delivers results and frees up time for them to focus strategically.

Seven Insights for Building a Coaching Culture

It doesn’t happen overnight and requires focus, but here’s how to build towards greater coaching effectiveness:

- 1. Define coaching:** What it is and most importantly, what it isn’t. Coaching is about building people and developing them so they can perform at a higher level. It’s not performance evaluation.
- 2. Implement a coaching system:** A simple, structured approach to coaching anyone can

use—so they’ll actually make time to do it— and that yields concrete results.

- 3. Build accountability:** Senior leaders need to be coaching managers and holding them accountable to coach. It should be part of everyone’s performance evaluation.
- 4. Coach to Achievement Drive.** Overall, many sales leaders don’t seem to grasp the importance of motivation (what we call Achievement Drive) as an outcome of coaching, although it is one of the most important coaching topics.
- 5. Include high performers.** The biggest lift can come from coaching salespeople who are already good at what they do. Our research supports that: When presented with seven scenarios, respondents selected “high performers” as least likely to receive coaching (36%). And yet, of those seven scenarios, high performers receiving coaching is one of the two yielding the biggest bump in sales performance objective achievement (10%).
- 6. Coach your managers.** 55% of managers report they’ve never had any training in coaching. As important as it is to train managers on how to coach, it is equally if not more important to provide sales managers with coaching.
- 7. Know that not everyone is coachable.** If there’s someone on your team you don’t trust or who is not willing to take responsibility for his/her results or career through the coaching process, then you won’t get good results from coaching this person. You will be wasting your and your sales rep’s time.

Bottom line: When an organization trains all managers on a structured coaching process and holds them accountable to coach, sales and productivity increase. ■

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