

# MANAGER ENABLEMENT





# Manager Enablement

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The strength of a company is defined by the competency of its managers, the ones who lead a team of individual contributors. However, most managers have never been trained to develop their teams. This is a big problem. What we do not talk about enough is the importance of investing time to develop managers to help them learn to develop their people. We assume they are doing this. Rather than expecting our managers to pick up the slack and do the work of their teams, they need to be amazing at asking open-ended questions about activity, data, and process to change their mindsets, behaviors, and outcomes.

An effective manager creates a space to have a collaborative coaching conversation by giving their people the responsibility of ownership and accountability across every facet of their jobs. In contrast, ineffective coaching and talent management happens by micromanaging people, asking them closed-ended questions, not creating a space for a coaching conversation, and not holding them accountable to follow the process.

The goal of this chapter is to highlight the importance of prioritizing coaching and enabling your front-line managers.

This is something that is talked about a lot but never fully executed. Other priorities always take precedence.

## The ROI of Sales Coaching

Getting sales teams to be more productive and close more business faster is a top priority for many companies. The sales productivity conversation is making its way to the executive boardroom. There is general belief that better sales coaching will result in more revenue. Sales force enablement grew from 19.3 percent in 2013 to 32.7 percent in 2016. Quota attainment decreased from 63 percent in 2012 to 55.8 percent in 2016 from data reported by CSO Insights.

According to Tamara Schenk, sales enablement leader and analyst research director at CSO Insights, “Sales coaching is a leadership skill that develops each salesperson’s full potential. Sales managers use their domain expertise, along with social, communication, and questioning skills to facilitate conversations with their team members that allow them to discover areas for improvement and possibilities to break through to new levels of success.”<sup>11</sup>

It is amazing how many sales professionals are not hitting their revenue goals. According to the *SaaS Incentive Compensation Benchmark Report*, 79 percent of sales representatives miss quota, and 14 percent never achieve even 10 percent of quota. Across the entire SaaS data set, the average

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11 Tamara Schenk, “Sales Coaching: How to Get It Right,” tamaraschenk.com, Sept. 7, 2017, <http://blog.tamaraschenk.com/sales-coaching-how-to-get-it-right/>.

quota attainment is 58 percent. The data remained consistent regardless of tenure.<sup>12</sup>

Barry Rhein, founder of Selling Through Curiosity™ and Coaching Through Curiosity™, poses a thoughtful question: “What are the ways we can tweak our thinking and skills to create greatness in our people?”

Why aren’t companies doing more sales coaching? What are companies doing to help increase the number of salespeople who hit quota? How are we enabling our managers to be better coached?

Barry Rhein is a big proponent of helping managers apply curiosity to developing their teams. Barry has a profound metaphorical piece of advice: “Do you give your team a fish or teach them to fish?” What if managers could develop their teams so they can be stand-alone, closing business on their own? Great managers are able to develop their teams to setup their own deals to win. Great managers ask the right questions to help their teams fix and close their own deals.

## Why Is Coaching Hard for Managers?

Many front-line managers struggle with coaching and developing their teams although they are past top performers. Among the reasons are—

- They are not trained to coach and develop their teams.
- They lack the skills.
- They do not know how to give constructive feedback.
- They do not ask developing questions.

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12 SaaS Industry Incentive Compensation Benchmark Report published by Xactly Corporation in 2013.

- They do not believe they have the time to do effective coaching.
- They do not prioritize real coaching.
- They spend too much time working deals instead of coaching reps on executing the right behaviors on deals.

Great managers invest time to review their team's work. Great managers share real-time constructive feedback. Great managers use one-on-ones, deal reviews, and team huddles to accelerate coaching moments on industry knowledge, product mastery, sales execution, storytelling, and communication.

Inspired by Barry Rhein, here are some curiosity-based coaching techniques for managers to ask reps different types of open-ended questions.

**OPEN-ENDED DEVELOPING QUESTIONS WORK WELL FOR DEAL COACHING:**

- What questions are you planning to ask your customer?
- What did the customer actually say?
- That sounds like an assumption. How do we find out what the customer said?
- How will you prioritize what needs to be done?
- What do we do next?
- What concerns do you have about accomplishing your goals?
- How are you going to get this deal back on track?
- What can you do to make this a perfect deal?

- What are your action items based on what we talked about today?
- What else can you tell me about . . . ?
- What do you mean by . . . ?
- How did you come up with . . . ?
- How so?
- Why is that?
- What are your thoughts on . . . ?
- What are some more examples . . . ?
- How would you measure . . . ?

Successful managers give feedback to their teams in one-on-ones and team huddles daily, weekly, and monthly, not just at performance reviews or when results are not going so great.

## **Sales Manager Enablement Case Study**

Bruce Campbell from Sage Intacct is an amazing sales enablement professional who delivers results while keeping his enablement fun and engaging with skits, music, and game shows. He is leading the charge with manager coaching. In an interview we did together, Bruce shared: “It would be irresponsible to not include some sort of sales management enablement inside a general sales readiness foundation and scope.”<sup>13</sup>

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13 Go to the ten-minute mark of the video to hear Bruce discuss Sales Manager Enablement, “SalesHood Live! Bruce Campbell – Director of Sales Enablement at Sage Intacct,” YouTube, Mar. 9, 2018, <https://youtu.be/JplMNNWFg3U>.

Bruce started his sales manager enablement journey by including some third-party manager training in the area of coaching to help managers understand the difference between coaching and normal interactions with staff, as well as learning about the different kinds of coaching that exist. They took advantage of having all managers together during their annual sales kickoff and gave them this training in person. They were focused on building a coaching culture.

What's unique about the work Bruce is doing with his managers is that he and his senior leaders have set coaching goals for their managers. "Every manager all the way up to the senior vice president level has to have at least two coaching sessions a month with their employees." The results of this sales manager enablement initiative are positive. They track all the coaching sessions and activities, allowing for full visibility up the chain of command but keeping the coaching conversations and feedback confidential to that specific chain.

Managers have a coaching quota, and they are required to document their coaching conversations. The documented coaching conversations are then sent to their managers. Here are the questions the managers answer after every coaching conversation with their employees:

- What was the date of your coaching session?
- Who did you coach? Please input first and last name.
- What was the coaching situation?
- Which of the five coaching "hats" did you use?
- What was the outcome of your coaching session?

Managers are coaching managers on how they coach their employees. Since the managers are documenting their

coaching conversations, their managers get notified and play active roles in sales manager enablement.

Senior leadership is noticing huge improvements in managers' quality of coaching given by the sales managers and are enthusiastic about how this coaching culture is impacting field sales relationships and the maturity of the management staff.

## **Good Coaching versus Bad Coaching**

Matt Cameron is an experienced sales leader who leads an organization that enables and certifies managers on sales management best practices and skills. He says: "Every manager needs management training on how to coach and develop their teams. The tell-tale sign that manager coaching is needed is unpredictable revenue results and managers can't defend their forecast, that's a clear sign that there's a problem." Other indicators that managers need training include hiring goals not being met, team attrition, and variability in attainment with the team and you don't know why. Matt went on to share what bad coaching looks and feels like: "Bad coaching feels like scary interactions with my unpredictable boss, and I don't know what the outcome is going to be, resulting in employees walking into every meeting ready to defend, duck, and dive. Employees then close up and don't share, which means you can't coach properly."

Then I asked Matt what good coaching looks and feels like. He answered: "Employees feel like sitting down with a manager is going to be a growth opportunity. Every time they have a coaching session, employees learn something new and they are better for it and they develop, and at the end of it the relationships are strengthened."



In Matt's program he trains and certifies front-line managers in sales process and methodology, forecasting, high-performance coaching, sales culture, inspection and operations rigor, recruiting, sales enablement, feedback and difficult conversations, managing up, deal structures, and contract terms. The program is remarkable.<sup>14</sup>

I really like the discussion and guidance Matt provides on the five roles managers must play and why. Here are the five roles:

**Coach:** A manager coach is ultimately responsible for the performance, production, and engagement of reps. Use this role when you feel the rep needs to come up with ideas and fixes to get to the root of their issues and resolve them themselves.

**Leader:** A manager leader sets and defines the organizational and/or team vision. Use this role when you have an issue that impacts the team or alignment to the team's culture, chain of command, or mission statement.

**Manager:** A manager practices and implements policies and procedures that mitigate risk, and drives productivity to ensure goals are met. Use this role when pure productivity is the main issue and performance failure is the topic to handle.

**Mentor:** A manager mentor is someone who can advise based on their own personal and professional experience and expertise. Use this role when asked for advice or experiential opinions or when stories from your past can make a point.

**Trainer:** A manager trainer is someone who really knows the staff's job but just can't do it all themselves. Use this role

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14 You can learn more from Matt from this interview conducted on December 1, 2017: "SalesHood Live! Matt Cameron – Managing Partner at Sales Op Central," YouTube, Dec. 1, 2017, <https://youtu.be/TaRt-sHY34M>.

when training is required and you know exactly what they need and can own their improvement by your hand or by someone else's.

## **Evaluating Your Coaching Activities**

This section will help you evaluate the frequency, quality, and impact of coaching activity performed by you and your managers. It's a great guide to share with your front-line managers, too. Ask your managers how they are doing against these coaching best practices:

### **Make Every Moment a Coaching Moment**

Give feedback frequently. Be consistent. Do not wait. Use team meetings and one-on-ones to share feedback as it is happening.

### **Make Sales Coaching a Team Activity**

The best managers are consistently, frequently, and openly giving the team feedback. Turn coaching into a regular activity like pipeline reviews.

### **Explain the "Why"**

Communication is critical to changing behavior. The best sales managers are clear about expectations and value. They always kick off meetings and initiatives explaining the "what's in it for me" to the team.

### **Start Positive and Always Be Encouraging**

Begin a review or feedback session on a positive note. Highlight strengths and growth over time. Even constructive feedback should be positive.

## **Empathize and Appreciate**

Recognize how hard your team is working, and share accolades like “I know how hard it is to get our deals across the finish line.” Put yourself in their place when giving feedback. Lead by example. When a developmental growth area is identified, use phrasing like “Let’s see how we can work together.”

## **Share Specific Examples**

Giving feedback and coaching in generalities does not help reps and teams develop their skills and improve their work. For example, if a rep is behind on pipeline development, be specific about how much pipeline should be developed and how to develop it.

## **Tell the Truth, Even When Inconvenient**

Speak clearly and specifically. Make sure your team knows where they stand.

## **Help Open Mentorship Relationships**

When coaching and giving feedback, share best-practice examples from others. Be a connector within your team and in your broader work community to facilitate mentorships. For example, if your team is doing a pitch practice, highlight other pitches that would be good for folks to watch to improve their own.

## **Suggest Areas of Growth**

It is our job to get our teams to be their best. Even when someone is doing great, they always have areas where they can grow. Push people to think about ways to grow personally and professionally and to shoot for even higher goal achievement.

## **Be Human**

Be sure to thank teams for their hard work, and verbally appreciate extra effort, too. Use humor to put challenges into perspective. It is a best practice to smile and keep ongoing coaching feedback a bit light and fun.

Creating knowledge and reinforcing the practice is a skill that front-line managers need to have, but most haven't been trained, and many lack the tools and resources to be successful. Being prescriptive with managers of their role in territory planning, quarterly business reviews, deal reviews, and onboarding is a great step to help managers create a coaching culture.

## **The Role of Managers in Onboarding**

An important step that is often overlooked is including front-line managers in the onboarding process of their new hires. It starts by sending your managers reports and updates on the progress of their team members. They'll appreciate it. Encourage and expect your managers to review the pitches and presentations when they've completed onboarding their new hires. Have your managers share notes of support and encouragement along the way. Ghostwrite them if that helps ensure they get it done. Hold your managers accountable for coaching and supporting their own team members during their onboarding path.

Managers will see huge benefits if they follow the onboarding best practices described below.

## **Give Context**

Managers are the perfect ones to give their new hire context. Managers should simultaneously be taking their teams

through the onboarding journey alongside the coaches and enablement professionals. They will accelerate results and drive up productivity by sharing their lessons during their own personal onboarding. They are the most qualified to emphasize key topics, as they know what works, and they also know the personality and skills of the new hire.

### **Prioritize and Focus**

Managers are great at providing additional prioritization so the new hire isn't overwhelmed. When the new hire starts consuming content and meeting people, everyone gives what seems like great advice. A manager will help their new hires remember what is most important to their success path and remind them why they were hired, over and over again. Confidence building is critical in this learning phase. That's the role of the manager.

### **Schedule Daily One-on-Ones**

Managers with experience hiring and retaining new hires will also proactively schedule time with their new hires. The human touch is critical here, especially for building trust and a relationship with a new manager. A daily check-in by phone or in person is a great best practice. Suggest to your managers that they schedule a fifteen-minute call every day for the new hire's first four weeks on the job. A new hire will then have the advantage of seeing how much their manager cares about their success. And a manager gets the chance to be at the pulse of what their new team member is doing and thinking.

## Find Early Wins

Another tip that you can share is to remind the manager how important early wins are. Have the manager plan a project, assignment, or task that becomes an early win. The manager should help the new hire build their confidence and put these early points on the board. Once the job is successfully completed, the manager should celebrate the win broadly. The more the merrier when it comes to early wins and celebrating successes.

Managers are busy running their business and helping their team be successful. Bringing on a new hire takes time. Remind them of their role in the success of their new hires.

### KEY TAKEAWAYS

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Don't forget that your front-line managers need enablement too. You will get a lot of enablement leverage and scale if you put the right amount of focus on enabling your front-line managers. Make it a part of your enablement charter from day one to avoid falling behind. There is tremendous return on investment in enabling your managers to do better coaching. Here are four final tips to remember as you focus on manager enablement as a top priority:

- Coaching is hard and does not come natural for front-line managers. Remember, most were top performers who never received any kind of management coaching.
- Provide your managers with coaching guides and playbooks.

- Hold your managers accountable for coaching and developing their teams.
- Help your managers understand the difference between good coaching and bad coaching.