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## You Can Determine What You Value by Where You Spend Your Time

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*"Knowing you need to make a change isn't enough. You've got to find the guts to do it."* – Robert Kiyosaki

Poor sales management is at epidemic proportions in today's business environment. Sales reps don't quit a company; they quit the manager.

Recently, I had been prepping for a sales manager reinforcement training session with a client. This company's sales leadership and I had been imploring its sales managers to step up and coach their teams. Most sales managers, however, found themselves too busy with internal administrative tasks to spend time in the field with their individual contributors who were underperforming.

Even though all of the sales managers would state that their most important job was to coach their people, only a few actually demonstrated that behavior.

So when we look at sales managers, we bucket them into three categories regarding the perception of value they bring their sales reps. On the low end of the value chain, we have the Problem Solver/Administrator. This is the sales manager who is too busy with internal meetings and internal reports to spend time coaching his or her team. Some characteristics of Problem Solver/Administrator sales managers are:

- They spend a lot of time fixing commissions.
- They love dealing with HQ issues.
- They monitor performance/pipeline activity but are not solution oriented.
- They are no help in executing sales process because they do not actually coach.
- They are not adding value regarding diagnosing either sales effectiveness or sales productivity issues for their individual contributors.

The next level of sales managers' value is that of a Business Resource. These types of managers bring significantly more value to their team members. Their perception of value is increased as they understand the importance of their role in bringing out the best in their individual contributors. Some characteristics of Business Resource sales managers are:

- They help with customer acquisition (they are actually in the field with their team).
- They help a rep to be more productive.
- They hold their team accountable not only for results but to do the right activities.
- Expertise: They are up to speed with what works and what doesn't.
- They diagnose problems (sales productivity or sales effectiveness) and offer solutions to correct the behaviors.
- They leverage resources and know where to find them internally and externally.

Lastly, let's talk about the Strategic Coach. You can see the value and the impact of this manager by looking at the team's low attrition ratio, the career path of team members (more of Strategic Coach's people are promoted into higher levels), and the high employee engagement numbers. Some characteristics of Strategic Coach sales managers are:

- They understand reps' motivation/purpose for what they are doing.
- They have a vision for the team and help reps find their own vision.
- They make work meaningful for the reps.
- They take the time to understand the personal and business "lives" of the people who work for them. You could even say there is a sense of professional intimacy in the relationship.
- They understand the value of pushing their people out of their comfort zone as a way of enhancing enjoyment of their work and life.

If you are a sales manager reading this, I would ask you to look at your calendar for the last two months and determine where you are spending most of your time?

- Problem Solver/Administrator % time
- Business Resource % time
- Strategic Coach % time

How much time have you blocked off for one-to-one coaching with your lower performers based on your calendar?

Back to the client I introduced in the beginning. Regardless of our recommendations, the company's sales managers were still only spending approximately 20 to 25 percent of their time in the field coaching as a Business Resource. During a training session in which I was trying to encourage them to spend more time in the field coaching their teams, I wrote down the following statement: "You can determine what you value by where you spend your time."

If you think about it, it really is a truism! If I believe in coaching my sales team, I will spend time coaching. If I believe in staying healthy and in good shape, I will spend time exercising. If I believe in continuous improvement, I will spend time learning and reading up on new insights.

But the most important key I learned from writing that down was how impactful it was for me personally. You see, at the time of that reinforcement session, I was on a business trip, like I had been most of this year. My wife jokes that I have been home less than 25 percent of the time. Part of that is planned (I lived in Minnesota and preferred to be away as much in the winter as possible) and part of it was by necessity (numerous new clients needed my help).

In conclusion, just like my realization that I needed to spend more time at home, my hope is that somehow sales managers realize that their teams need them to step up. They need to spend more quality time coaching their teams to performance improvement. At a minimum, be that Business Resource.

Question: Are you spending your time on what your value most? Provide an example.

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