



Scott Anderson

Co-author, 'Reignite: How to Rekindle Your Passion for Selling'

“I Have A Seasoned Sales Team”

Posted: 01/31/2017 7:08 am

“To aim is not enough; you must hit.”—German Proverb

“I have a seasoned team.” I’ve heard this numerous times, especially when companies do not want to invest dollars in training their team. These same organizations tend to have high attrition rates because many times they have a sink-or-swim mentality.

Remember, there are three ways to get the skills needed for effective contributors to a team.

1. Don’t train your people; just throw them in the field and let them learn through osmosis what works and what doesn’t. If they lose enough times, you hope they will begin to be aware enough to take corrective action to start winning.
2. Provide a road map or sales process along with training and enablement tools. This is your organization’s best practice. This is not just about training but learning actual strategy and tactics to apply to the sales process. Too many times organizations buy a sales methodology and experience great methodology but no execution—thus no return on investment.
3. Lastly, buy the “seasoned” talent on the open market. Usually from my experience, companies are recycling moderate performers because they have “industry experience.” What is really happening is the manager feels it will be less painful to bring someone on board who knows the industry. The manager prefers quick up-time with the hope of good performance. The result: shorter time to production but average performance (unless you have actively recruited a top performer/a known entity).

What these executives and companies don’t understand is that they are making some type of investment—regardless of the approach they take. Not training your people is called opportunity cost of lost deals. This is hoping salespeople will learn what is or is not working by losing deals. The impact of this approach is that the prospect will not take future meetings based on poor past experiences with your company.

In the long run, a company might be better off just providing a road map/sales process and the tools to enable success.

The point is, all methods have a cost or investment. The question is what works the best?

Let’s take a look at making a training investment in your sales team.

Part of the problem is actual business results. Too many times there is no quantifiable data that show someone has improved based on the investment in training. Too many times all the anecdotal information comes from the people who are already performing at a high level.

Philosophically speaking, I do not believe all training is created equal. I believe there is a lot of wasted dollars and no real behavioral change taking place (numerous studies support this). How often has your training partner stepped up and put some of his or her dollars at risk based on performance improvement? Most trainers will say we don’t control hiring, product, service, or pricing. However, they will talk a big game about improvement across the board.

If the training you invest in is good and provides both strategy and tactics, most likely top performers will get better from my experience. The reason is they want to get better already (it is in their best interests). They usually have the right attributes such as attitude, motivation, and accountability and will take the ball and run with it. They also have the ability to try strategies in the field because they tend to be more risk takers.

I hope you noticed that I said “top” performers and not “seasoned” performers. See the previous section on seasoned performers. Very little return on investment.

So should you make an investment in your “seasoned” team? Absolutely. But there are some key points to consider.

- 1) Awareness: You will never get someone to improve unless you can help them understand they need to improve. You need to show them past performance and help them identify areas of development (sales productivity or sales effectiveness). If you are to lose weight, you must step on the scale first.
- 2) Accountability: Set goals for improvement. Have isolated development plans and business goals tied to development. Make sure you have the past performance documented to ensure progress against goals.
- 3) Development of attributes (motivation, attitude, accountability): This is the missing link in most development strategies. Engaged employees apply training!
- 4) Field training and execution: Have the training take place on “live” deals. Training should happen in the field, not the classroom.
- 5) Sales managers: Provide them with the tools and skills to effectively diagnose under-performance and identify what corrective action is to be taken. Have a coaching strategy tool already in place to enable effective coaching (symptoms, barriers, and coaching strategy).

Lastly, everyone needs training in some form or another. Think of sports teams that spend most of their time in training (practice and preparing to win) vs. playing the game. Training implemented correctly creates a common language and allows for individual team members to step back and reassess their approach and sharpen their skills.

Question: Can your team get better business results? If so, what is the best way to achieve those results?

Scott Anderson is a founding principal at Diamond Performance Solutions LLC and RevenueForce LLC. He is co-author of the book Reignite: How to Rekindle Your Passion for Selling. Scott spent his entire career-more than twenty-five years selling, managing salespeople, and providing sales consulting, training, and coaching to some of the biggest and best sales organizations in the world. He has worked with leading organizations including 3M, IBM, Cargill, UnitedHealth Group, Carlson Companies, Andersen Windows, Wells Fargo and The Hartford. He has authored numerous articles on sales effectiveness. He resides in Dallas, Texas. Office Number 612-961-1778 email: sanderson@diamonddpg.com