

Profile of a
**Professional
Sales
Manager**

by Dave Kahle

The Profile of a Professional Sales Manager.

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2 different companies, in two distinct industries and selling situations.

He's a high energy, intense, world-class speaker who has presented in
11 countries
5 Canadian provinces, and
47 US states.

He has been in practice for **30** years, and in that time, has authored
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and [10 Secrets of Time Management for Salespeople](#).

His books have been translated into
8 languages and are available in
20 countries.

He has spoken to meetings and conventions of
89 associations, and has trained or consulted for
429 individual companies.

He writes and publishes an [Ezine](#) for salespeople and managers called "Sell Better,"
which is distributed **48** times a year to over
30,000 opt-in subscribers.

His [articles](#) have been published over
1,000 times.

He has trained and certified more than
2.300 sales managers in the [Kahle Way® Sales Management System](#), and has trained
TENS OF THOUSANDS of [B2B salespeople](#) to be more
productive in the Information Age.

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Section One: The Profile of a Professional Sales Manager

Chapter One

I was in the depths of a major depression. As a third-year sales person with a good company, I was doing well, and was on my way to becoming the top sales person in the nation for that company. But business had slowed down a little, and I didn't have my usual number of proposals out for consideration. So, I wasn't as busy as usual. As my activity slowed, I began to worry about my territory. My doubts and concerns increased to the point where I had thought myself into a real depression, stuck on the question of "What's the use of trying?" The more negative my thoughts became, the less energy I had. My lack of energy led to fewer and fewer sales calls, which of course, led to less activity. And that led to more depressing thoughts. I was caught in a powerful downward spiral.

It was then that I caught a glimpse of what a professional sales manager is like.

Ned Shaheen was my boss -- a sales manager of the highest caliber. He could see the symptoms of my sour state spilling over into everything I was doing. So, Ned intervened. He arranged to have lunch with me and listened patiently as I rambled on and on about my problems, my doubts, my concerns, and my lack of activity. Finally, after I had dumped all my depression and negative thoughts on him, he looked me straight in the eye and said, with all the authority and resolve of someone who is absolutely sure of what they are saying, "Kahle, that's enough."



I was stunned. I was expecting empathy, an understanding shoulder to cry on. Instead, I got a simple, straightforward mandate. Ned knew me well enough to cut through all the fluff and come right to the heart of the matter. He said, "That's enough. That's enough feeling sorry for yourself. That's enough thinking all these negative thoughts.

That's enough laying back and not working as hard as you're used to working. Stop it. You're better than all this. Stop it right now, today, and get your back to work."

He saw my situation clearly. And he provided me the direction I needed. That conversation turned me around. I left my depression and negativity at that lunch table and started back into my job with a renewed sense of the possible. A year later I was the number one sales person in the nation for that company.

What made the difference in my performance was the skillful intervention of an astute and professional sales manager. He made the difference in my job performance, and that made a difference in my standing with that company. And that made a difference in my career. And that lead me to my current practice. It's entirely possible that I would not be doing what I do now, speaking and consulting with sales forces around the world, if it weren't for his timely intervention.

All of us have become what we are, at least in part, to the impact other people have had on us -- some positive and some negative. A professional sales manager is gifted with a rare and precious opportunity -- the opportunity to play a pivotal role in the lives of his charges. I so value the role that Ned played in my career, that the last paragraph on the "Acknowledgment" page of my first book reads, "Finally, I must make special, posthumous acknowledgement of the

contribution made by Ned Shaheen, the best manager I ever worked for. It was Ned who, years ago, urged me to 'write the book...'"

So, what does this have to do with being a "Professional Sales Manager?" During my 25+ years of sales experience and 25+ years of experience as a sales consultant and sales trainer, I've encountered many sales managers. Some of them have been good, many mediocre. But Ned was the best sales manager I ever met, much less worked for. He serves as a model for me. We can learn several lessons from him.

Chapter Two

First, Ned knew the difference between the job of a sales person and that of a sales manager. He had been a great sales person -- like many sales managers around the world -- and had been promoted to sales manager. Yet he knew the job of sales manager and sales person are completely different. A sales person is responsible for building accounts and making sales. A sales manager, while ultimately responsible for the same results, understands that his/her job is to achieve those means through other people. A sales manager builds people, who in turn build the business. Sales people focus on selling; sales managers focus on building sales people. I am reminded of this fundamental way of looking at the job of the sales manager by a quote from Tony Dungy, the great NFL coach:

Your only job is to help your players play better.

In a similar way, the heart of a sales manager's job is to help his sales people sell better.

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As a sales person, I could comfortably take Ned into any account, secure in the knowledge that he wouldn't try to take over the presentation or usurp my relationship with the customer. I knew Ned was more concerned with me than he was about any one sale.

Unfortunately, that isn't always the case with less professional sales managers. At one point in my sales career, I labored under a sales manager of

lesser competence. He thought of himself as a super sales person, whose job it was to take over the sales call. We, the sales people who worked for him, thought of him as a "bull in a china shop". He was so intent on showing us what a great sales person he was that he pressured our customers to the point of making them very uncomfortable, causing tremendous damage in every account he encountered. We sales people would talk on the phone together in the evenings, devising and comparing strategies to keep him out of those accounts which were important to us.

Ned knew that a sales person was essentially a loner, an individual who did most of his/her most important work by themselves, while a sales manager was a coach, whose only success derived from the success of his team. A sales manager's best work is always done, not with the customers, but with the people he/she supervises.

He also clearly understood that a sales manager is a manager. As such, his relationship with the executive management of his company is different from that of a sales person. A sales person can sometimes get away with taking an independent attitude, regularly criticizing his company's decisions and performance. A sales manager is part of that management of which he formerly could have been so critical. He must be more loyal to the company, more sensitive to the direction provided by his superiors, and more supportive of the company's efforts to do things that may not be immediately beneficial to the individual sales people.

Even though Ned respected my relationships in my accounts, he also understood that a sales manager has a responsibility to know and be known by each of the major accounts. He represents "management" to those accounts and needs to be on a first name basis with the key customers. Ned, like every good sales manager, was able to manage that without detracting from my standing in the account.

One of the responsibilities of the professional sales manager is to know and be known by all the key customers within the accounts of all his/her sales people. The visit by a sales manager is almost always seen positively by customers. It flatters them, makes them feel important, and gives them a contact in case they have a problem with a sales person, or in case the territory is vacant for a while.

Not only did Ned understand the difference between sales and sales management, he also understood that there was a great difference between being an average sales manager and an excellent one, and he knew what it took to excel at his position.

Chapter Three

Ultimately, a sales manager is measured by the results achieved by his people. Sales, gross profits, market share, key product selling -- all these typical measurements of sales performance



are also the rulers by which a sales manager is measured. But there is more. In addition to the traditional sales measurements, a sales manager generally has broader responsibilities, and more sophisticated measurements. For example, he may have a budget for which he/she is responsible, some goals for sales person turnover, or other more sophisticated directions for his company.

So, an excellent sales manager, like a great soccer coach, is ultimately measured by his numbers. It doesn't matter how empathetic he is, nor how his players respect or like him, if year after year he produces a losing team. So, it is with a sales manager. Ultimately, an excellent sales manager produces excellent numbers for his company. In the five years that I worked for Ned, my own territory grew by US \$1 million a year, and the branch for which he was responsible grew from about US \$6 million to about US \$30 million.

While that is one of the ultimate measurements of success for a sales manager, there are other indicators that can be of equal importance. It's not unusual for a sales manager to operate in a market that is shrinking, or preside over a geographical area or market segment where the company doesn't

measure up, and sales increases are extremely difficult, if not impossible to achieve. With that in mind, the way in which the sales manager creates those numbers and the impact he/she has along the way are both powerful measures of the sales manager's achievements.

Ned was excellent at one of the key competencies of the professional sales manager -- he had an eye for talent. He knew how to hire good people. After all, he hired me! Over the years, I watched him take his time, allowing a sales territory to go vacant for months, if necessary, while he waited for the right person to bubble up through his pipeline. Only one of his hires didn't work out -- which gave him an incredible winning percentage.

A professional sales manager understands the importance of making the right hire, is always recruiting to keep the pipeline of prospective sales people full and spares no expense to make sure the person he hires meets all the necessary criteria. When I was hired, I went through four interviews, and a full 10-hour day of tests with an industrial psychologist.

With all the time he took to make sure he was hiring the right person, Ned confided in me one day that, "It is more important to fire well than it is to hire well." He went on to explain that hiring sales people is an extremely difficult task, and that even the best sales managers fail at it frequently. Therefore, it was important to recognize your mistake quickly, and act decisively to fix it.



A professional sales manager, then, understands that when it is clear that a sales person is not right for the job, he acts quickly, kindly, and decisively to terminate the individual, allowing both the individual and the company an opportunity to find a better match. Acting quickly to terminate a sales person who isn't working out is both good business as well as good ethics. To allow a

mediocre situation to fester to the detriment of the company, the sales person, and the customers is to persist in a dishonesty.

Understanding that he works only through his sales people, and that he has the opportunity to make a great impact on his people, a professional sales manager makes it his business to know his people. Ned spent days with me in the field, talking not only about business, but also working at understanding the person I was, as well. He'd arrange to meet me for breakfast or lunch regularly, even if he wasn't spending the day with me. He wanted to get to know my wife as well and paid close attention to her opinions. Several times over the five years, we went to dinner with him and his current girlfriend. I could never stop in the office without being expected to sit in his office and talk about things. And, of course, there was the annual pig roast at his house, where all his sales people and their families were invited to spend a fun day while the pig roasted over the spit. I was always a person to Ned, never just a "sales person."

Because he took the time to get to know me, he was equipped with the knowledge of exactly how to best manage me. And he always saw the potential in me and was ready to correct me when necessary. In the first year of my employment, I was earning the reputation among the inside customer support and purchasing people of being difficult and demanding. I was a hot-shot superstar who didn't take their feelings into consideration and came into the office and dumped work on them. Ned let me know that my ways needed to change. At first, I didn't pay much attention. My numbers were too good for anybody to be concerned. So, Ned let me know a second time that I was going to have to change. The situation was so acute, that the operations manager was lobbying to get me fired! Guided by his firm hand, I swallowed my pride, adopted a humbler attitude, and bought all the customer service reps a six pack of premium beer as a gift. My stock inside the company sprung up dramatically, my ways corrected, and my future assured.

A professional sales manager guides and corrects his charges to help them achieve their potential.

Ned never stopped learning. He would often tell me about seminars he'd attended, books he'd read, or ideas he'd picked up by talking with other people. He knew that he never "knew it all." So, it is with every professional sales manager. A real professional never stops learning. He understands that the world is changing rapidly, continually demanding new skills, new ideas, and new competencies from him. At the same time, his sales people and their customers are changing also. So, he understands that he has a challenge to continuously grow and improve, to learn more and become better at his job. Sales management isn't just a job, it's a challenge of a lifetime of improvement.

One more observation. Understanding that a professional sales manager is only successful when his charges are successful, an excellent sales manager supports, encourages and gives his sales people the credit.

Understanding that a professional sales manager is only successful when his charges are successful, an excellent sales manager supports, encourages and gives his sales people the credit.

It was the fourth year of my tenure, and Ned was lobbying for me to be awarded the "Sales person of the year" award. It was given not only for sales performance, but for more subjective things - supporting the company's objectives and ethics, getting along with other people in the company, etc. The award was a great honor, and extremely difficult to win. Each sales manager nominated their favorite sales person and lobbied for one of their charges with the company's executives, who made the final choice.

The annual awards banquet was held at an exclusive country club, where the men wore tuxedos and the women formal evening gowns. When dinner was done, the speeches were finished, and the lesser awards announced, it came time for the big one, the one I wanted.

The climate was tense and expectant. The entire room silent as the time approached for the announcement. Then, as the company president announced my name, it was Ned who thrust his fist in the air and shouted "YES!"

The photograph that hangs on my bedroom wall shows me shaking hands with the president and accepting the award. Look carefully and you'll see Ned standing proudly in the background.

There is a song that I find particularly moving. Perhaps you know the words made popular by Bette Midler. It goes like this,

"It must have been lonely there in my shadow...

Without the sun upon your face

I was the one with all the glory

You were the one with all the strength.

I can fly higher than an eagle

Because you are the wind beneath my wings."

Want to excel as a sales manager? Want to be a true professional? Look at your job as a unique opportunity to impact others, to select, correct, support and encourage your sales people, to achieve your company's objectives by becoming a positive force in their lives. It's not a job, it's a mission. Be the wind beneath their wings.

And perhaps, one day, fifteen years from now, someone will write about you.

To read more of the author's insights into sales management, visit <https://www.davekahle.com/>



Section Two: The Three Most Common Mistakes Sales Managers Make

Chapter Four

In most organizations, sales managers are the essential bridge between the company's sales goals and the realization of those goals. The gritty day-to-day interactions between the sales people and their customers are frequently filtered through the perspective of the sales manager on their way up the ladder. The aspirations and strategies of the company's management must be imprinted by the realism of the sales manager as they come down from above. Sales managers are the conductors who carefully orchestrate the tentative entanglement of the sales people with their management.

It's an incredibly important and difficult job. Unfortunately, it is often the most under-trained job in the entire organization. Instead of providing information on the best practices and processes of the job, most companies hope their sales managers will have learned enough during their days as a field sales person to provide some roadmap as to how to do this job well.

Alas, only a small percentage of untrained sales managers ever really figure it out, arriving by trial and error and after hours of study at the best practices of an effective sales manager. The overwhelming majority find themselves caught up in the urgencies of the moment, the tempting details of all

the transactions, and the continuing onslaught of crises, and are never able to set in place a systematic blueprint for their success.

The overwhelming majority of sales leaders find themselves caught up in the urgencies of the moment, the tempting details of all the transactions, and the continuing onslaught of crises, and are never able to set in place a systematic blueprint for their success.

The net result? Few sales people are effectively managed. All parties, executive management, sales manager and sales people, bounce from one frustration to another. Company objectives are met frequently by happenstance, sales people are not developed to their fullest potential and sales managers lurch from one crisis to another.

The result? Company objectives are met frequently by happenstance, sales people are not developed to their fullest potential and sales managers lurch from one crisis to another.

Certain common mistakes often arise out of this unhealthy situation. As a long time consultant and educator of sales people and sales managers, I frequently see these three most common maladies suffered by sales managers.

1. Lack of an intentional sales structure.

This is such a foreign concept to many companies that the term itself is unfamiliar. The structure of a sales force consists of all the articulated and unspoken rules, policies and procedures that shape the behavior of the sales person. It consists of such things as:

- * the way sales territories are defined
- * the way sales people go about their jobs
- * the way markets and customers are targeted
- * the way sales people are compensated

- * the methods the manager uses to communicate with the sales people
- * the expectations for the sales force
- * the training and development system of the company
- * the expectation for information collecting by the sales people
- * the frequency and agenda for sales meetings
- * the sales tools used by the sales people
- * and countless other such things.

A highly focused, strategically-designed sales structure can be one of the company's greatest assets, as it ultimately shapes the behavior of the sales force.

Most sales structures, however, haven't come under the critical review of the company's management. Typically, the structure slowly takes shape over time. Decisions are often made with heavy input from the sales people, almost always in response to a single event. These decisions slowly become codified into the company's written and unwritten structure.

As a result, many sales structures are vestiges of years gone by, the legacy of sales people who may not even be with the company today.

Why do you have the sales compensation plan that you have, for example? Is it because you crafted a strategic plan that directly compensates the sales force for achieving the company's objective? Or, is it because it's the plan you inherited?

Why do some sales people come into the office every week? Is it because you have determined that this is the most valuable use of their time? Or, is it because that's just the way some of them like to do it?

Why is it that some of your sales people are highly organized, with well-designed file systems and effective ways to track their interactions with their customers, while others continue to get by with scraps of paper and yellow pads? Is it because you have invested in a system that helps them become well-

organized and information-savvy? Or, is it because that's just how it's worked out?

Can you see the point? Many of these structural issues – spoken and unspoken rules about how the sales person does the job – have evolved by the sales people in response to their own specific situations.

And most sales managers are oblivious to the impact of these decisions on the productivity and effectiveness of the sales person.

I recently had lunch with a friend -- an entrepreneur who had successfully started and run a number of businesses. As we were discussing the pros and cons of organizing a sales force for his latest venture, he remarked that he has learned how easy it is to gradually cede control of the company to the sales force. One decision at a time, made in response to the passionate pleas of an individual sales person, would form, over time, the structure that governed the sales side of the business.

I was impressed with his insight. That very observation described the number one mistake that sales managers make – they accept the historically evolved status quo for the structure, and don't invest time in focusing it to provide the environment for sales success. To read more about this, visit <https://www.davekahle.com/fd-2-tsbeb/> and download the E-book "*Sell Better! How to Grow Your Sales More Rapidly and Predictably by Creating and Refining An Effective Sales System.*"

Mistake # 1. Lack of an intentional sales structure.

2. Lack of regular and systematic direction and feedback for the sales people.

The relentless attraction of the urgent, and the demanding shouts of the transaction, like the pleading of a toddler, have a tendency to overwhelm the time and attention of most sales managers.

Sales managers often have the best of intentions. For example, they may need to do a set of performance reviews by the end of the year. But there is a big presentation in one account to which they need to attend. Another account wants to complain about some issue to the sales manager. Yet another needs the manager's touch to smooth some feathers, etc. And they really do need to spend some time in the field with the new sales person. And, and, and....the demands of the urgent once again force regular face-to-face discussions about expectations and results to the bottom of the "to do" list.

As a result, most sales people are left directionless and provided with little feedback on how they are doing. Of course, we publish sales numbers, but there are lots of reasons why a set of numbers can be up, down or sideways above and beyond the impact of the sales person.

What do you expect of this sales person? And how well is he/she doing?

In most surveys of what sales people really want from their managers, "direction and feedback" are often at the very top of the list. It is one thing to talk about some account or some deal, it's quite another to speak to the core issues of "my performance."

Sales is an isolated job. It is not unusual for a sales person to spend as much as 70% of the work week by himself. All that isolation often leads to anxiety and self-doubt which often expresses itself through complaints and finding fault with the company.

All this negative energy can be prevented by providing the sales person with regular direction, specific expectations, and regular feedback.

The old saying, "Out of sight, out of mind," is too often the operational description of the typical sales manager. The sales people are out there somewhere, doing their thing, while the tyranny of the urgent often occupies the manager's time.

As a result, sales people are not nearly as focused as they could be, they default to unhealthy thoughts, and they spend too much time expressing negative energy.

Mistake #2. Lack of regular and systematic direction and feedback for the sales people.

3. Lack of an organized training and development system.

No profession in the world expects the serious practitioners of that profession to figure it out by themselves. Quite the contrary. Every profession has determined some minimal acceptable course of study, and typically has some event which signals the entry into that profession. It is for this reason that teachers, emergency medical technicians, and ministers are licensed; and why attorneys must pass the bar exam, accountants must pass their certification exam, etc.

Unfortunately, that is rarely true of sales people. In only the leading companies is there some required course of study for entry level sales people, and some event which signifies the successful completion of that study and their entry into the profession.

To even think this way is so outside of the reality of most sales managers that I can almost hear half of the readers of this article snickering over their coffee. "Some standard for allowing people into the job?" Incredible thought. But if you don't insist on it, you'll continue to labor with a hit-or-miss sales force where every hire is ultimately a shot in the dark.

No profession in the world expects that, once someone has become qualified to enter the profession, they then no longer need to invest in their own development. And every profession has expectations of the practitioners' regular need to systematically improve himself or herself. Can you imagine a teacher

who never attends an in-service training? A nurse who never invests in continuing development? A minister who never goes back to school? A doctor who never attends a conference?

Even if such lackadaisical professionals could keep their jobs, you would not want them to have anything to do with your family. You would never put your health in the hands of a doctor who hadn't updated himself since med school. You would not want your children taught by the teacher who hadn't learned anything since graduation. You would never put your lawsuit in the hands of an attorney who had never bothered to keep current.

The examples can go on and on. But you get the idea. The professional who doesn't regularly invest in his own continuous development is relegated to the dregs of the market.

So, why is it that the overwhelming majority of sales managers do not require regular and systematic involvement in continuous development events for their charges? It may be that they don't see their sales people (or themselves) as professionals. Or, it may be that they have never thought about it that way.

Regardless of the reason, the reality of this malady is that the quality of the sales force is not nearly what it could be, if only the sales managers required some minimum standard for their entry level people, and then regular and continuous development of those who were on the inside. The wise sales manager will assemble a system for the education and development of his sales people.

Mistake # 3. Lack of an organized training and development system.

While there are as many other management miscues as there are sales managers, these three are the most common. Address them, and you'll be well on your way to outstanding success in sales management.

Self-Assessment

Directions: Respond to each statement, and then reply by putting a number in the space which corresponds to each of the following replies:

You're kidding. What's that? = -2

We're thinking about it. = 0

We've looked at it. No action yet. = 2

Yes, we're in good shape. = 6

Total your score and compare the total to the standard described below.

Total number	Your situation
-20 to 0	See, I told you these were common. You're in trouble. Set aside serious time to rectify this situation. Top priority!
1 to 20	Not bad. There's hope. Fix the issues that are weak and you'll be in good shape.
21 – 60	Congratulations! You're in good shape. Do some fine-tuning and watch your sales grow.

1. We have strategically reviewed the way sales territories are defined. _____
2. We have strategically designed the way markets and customers are targeted. _____
3. We have strategically designed the way sales people are compensated. _____
4. We have strategically designed the methods the manager uses to communicate with the sales people. _____
5. We have a specific set of expectations for each sales person. _____
6. We regularly and systematically communicate those expectations with each individual sales person. _____
7. We regularly and systematically provide feedback to each individual sales person on how well they are meeting our expectations. _____
8. We have a minimal set of qualifications that an entry-level sales person must meet in order to be allowed to represent our company. _____
9. We have a process to evaluate the entry-level sales person's skills. _____
10. We regularly inject our sales people into learning events and expect that they will continually improve themselves. _____

Total _____

Section Three: "How Do You Get 'em to do What You Want 'em to?"

Chapter Five

"How do I get 'em to do what I want 'em to?"

That's probably the question I'm asked more than any other. Frustrated CEOs, CSO's and sales managers express that thought over and over, in one way or another. They're talking about their sales people, of course. They harbor a feeling that some of their sales people just aren't doing what they want them to do, and they don't know what to do about it.

If that thought occasionally passes through your mind, read on.

"What do you want them to do?" I often reply.

At this point, you're probably thinking, "What an obvious question. We want them to sell a lot, of course."

But that response is too vague and coarse to hold any real meaning in today's world. A few years ago, it was OK to direct your sales people to "Go forth and sell a lot," but today that direction is not enough. Sales people are capable of more than that. And, the world in which your company operates has changed significantly in the last few years. Our economy has grown increasingly complex, many markets are maturing, the demands and expectations of your customers are growing, your customers' choices of ways to satisfy their needs are multiplying, and information technology is growing more powerful and user friendly. All that means that you need to more finely direct your sales force than at any time in the past. Successful sales management in the 21st Century requires a more sophisticated answer from you than just "Go forth and sell."

I learned that lesson the hard way in my days as a sales rep. I was doing a great job selling in my largest account. That one customer accounted for about

30% of my total volume. Sales were increasing monthly, and my visibility and influence in the account was growing. If my boss wanted me to "Go forth and sell a lot," I was doing it!

Then, one dismal Monday afternoon, I was sheepishly greeted by my primary contact person, and informed that I was to see the Director of Purchasing. The news from the director was short and to the point. The Vice President of Administration had signed a prime vendor contract with my arch-competitor. Over the next 90 days, they would be phasing out all of my business and turning it over to my competitor. All of my contact people were disappointed and not in favor of this move, but it had been negotiated by people in higher places.

The moral of the story?

I was doing a great job of "going forth and selling a lot." But I should have been getting to know the administrative people and my contact's bosses. If I had been directed to do that, instead of being focused on getting the easiest sales, I may have been able to ward off the end-around by the competition.

I realize that a case could be made that I should have known to do that on my own. After all, don't good sales people know to do those kinds of things? No. I didn't, and I was a heavy hitter, high-income, straight commission sales person. But I was driven by a straight commission compensation program that rewarded me for gross profits in the short term, and I never thought to cover all my bases by calling on my customers' bosses.

But that's just one example. Here's another. One of my clients owns a small but rapidly growing equipment distributorship. Every month his sales

Successful sales management in the 21st Century requires a more sophisticated answer from you than just "Go forth and sell."

people must count certain pieces of equipment in their territories. Each month he elects a piece of equipment, and requires his sales force to count how many of

those there are, where they are, how old they are, what brand they are, and when they are scheduled to be replaced.

He uses that information to make territory and product line forecasts, as well as a basis for developing more sophisticated joint marketing plans with his partner-vendors. I'm sure you'll agree -- that's good information to have. But don't the sales people do those kinds of things on their own? Do they really need that kind of precise direction from management?

Take a little self-test. Consider each of your sales people, one at a time. Ask yourself, "Is ..(sales person's name).. systematically collecting that kind of market information on his or her own?"

If your answer is a 100% "yes," will you please write to me so that I can note your sales force as the single national exception?

Those two examples illustrate just two of hundreds of possible behaviors you could expect from your sales force. In each case, the company's long-term strategic interests were best served by directing the sales force to behaviors that probably wouldn't happen in the absence of that direction.

In each case, the company's long-term strategic interests were best served by directing the sales force to behaviors that probably wouldn't happen in the absence of that direction.

So, the first step in getting your sales people "to do what you want 'em to," is to decide "what you want 'em to do."

Ideally, those things proceed directly from your strategic plan. For example, if your strategic plan says that you want to penetrate a new market segment, then you should expect your sales people to make X calls per month on that segment, or create X new customers within that segment, or do X amount of sales with that segment, or achieve X amount of gross profit with that segment.

The first step is to develop your strategic plan, and then to create expectations for your sales force that directly supports that strategic plan.

What, you don't have a strategic plan? That's too bad. You are definitely at a disadvantage. But, you're not disqualified. Just start at step two and create precise expectations for your sales force. Develop a list of the three to ten most important things you want them to do.

Bringing in a certain amount of sales or gross profits should be one of them, but only one of them.

Next, make sure that your list of expectations is easily, accurately and fairly measurable. This can be difficult. Much of your ability to manage your sales force depends on your ability to measure sales behaviors.

If you're highly automated and use effective sales force software, it'll be a snap. If you're not effectively automated, it'll be much more difficult. For example, one of my clients wanted his sales force to call on new prospects. His business was growing, and his sales people were happy. But he was sure that there was additional market share to be had in accounts that were not being cultivated. He felt his straight commissioned sales people were content to call on their friends and weren't doing the harder work of calling on new prospects. He wasn't automated and didn't believe his veteran sales force would accurately and thoroughly complete weekly call reports.

His sales cycle (capital equipment) was long, and he didn't want to wait until he saw actual sales numbers. Those sales could occur 12 to 18 months after the first sales call. He determined to measure his sales forces' *activity*, (calling on new prospects) not the *results* (sales to new prospects).

We struggled with a way to easily, fairly and accurately measure the activity of calling on new prospects. As we discussed the possibilities, we realized that every customer's name was on the database. We also noted that every quote was produced by a sales assistant in the office, who typed each quote individually for all the sales people. Bingo! Suppose we had the sales assistant keep track of quotes made to companies not on the database?

We couldn't measure sales calls made to prospects, but we could measure the next best thing -- quotes made to new prospects. The system would be easy, accurate, and fair.

Having decided that, it was an easy step to give each sales person a quarterly expectation for the number of "quotes made to new prospects." Our strategic initiative, "Gain market share," turned into a measurable expectation for each sales person, "Generate X quotes per month to prospects not on the database."

Let's review: Step one, develop a strategic plan. Step two, create a set of the most important sales behaviors. Step three, fine-tune them until they are easily, fairly and accurately measurable.

Step one, develop a strategic plan. Step two, create a set of the most important sales behaviors. Step three, fine-tune them until they are easily, fairly and accurately measurable.

Here's step four: Measure and reward the behavior you want. That can mean anything from publishing and posting those numbers every month, to revising your compensation formula, to making their pay dependent on performance of those activities. For example, you could measure the performance of the entire sales force each month and post it conspicuously for everyone to see. In my business, we measure five sales activities, combine the individual numbers, and post the composites for everyone to see. We post monthly totals, year to date, this year's goals, and last year's monthly totals, year to date, this year's goals, and last year's numbers.

As an alternative, you may measure and post each sales person's performance individually. You can report each sales person's performance to him/her alone and talk about it in monthly conferences.

Another technique is to make those numbers a topic for discussion at monthly sales meetings.

But if you really want to add some power, refine your sales compensation plan to make each person's pay dependent on performance on those numbers. This is not an article on sales force compensation. That's an entire series of articles on its own. However, it's been my observation that most sales

compensation plans do not reward the behavior that they say they want. The company's executives say they want sales people to do one thing, but their compensation plan rewards them for doing something else.

For example, you may be paying your sales people straight commission based on gross profits. Yet, you may be expecting them to open new accounts, promote certain product lines, or emphasize certain accounts. When you pay them purely by commission, you reward them for the easiest, richest sales. So, your compensation plan says one thing, while you say something else. No wonder it's frustrating.

To encourage your sales people to do what "you want 'em to," line your sales compensation plan up directly with your strategic plan. Directly reward those three to ten behaviors that you developed earlier. Consider a performance-based plan that pays them for implementing the company's strategies.

Step Four: Measure and reward the behavior you want.

Finally, step five is the single most powerful way to manage your people once you've done all this homework. Hold "accountability-holding, goal-setting, strategy-developing, resource-identifying" quarterly or monthly conferences with each of your sales people. I call them "Kahle Way® Conferences."

At these tune-up conferences do these things, in this sequence:

1. Hold them accountable for doing what they said they were going to do. Simply ask, "Did you do what you said you were going to do?" "Why or Why not?" "What did you learn?" "What are you going to do differently next time?"
2. Help them set goals. Ask, "In light of the compensation plan, the company's expectations, and your situation, what will you be trying to accomplish in the next quarter (month)?"
3. Help them create a strategy. Ask, "How are you going to do that?" Make them answer in detail and have them commit that answer to writing.

4. Finally, ask "How can I help?" and "What do you need to help you do it?" Hold these meetings regularly and you'll see most of your sales force moving in the direction in which you want it to move.

There are some fringe benefits to this approach. First, the sales people who are not performing to expectation will begin to clearly understand that they aren't doing what you want and may not be capable of it. It will be much clearer to you, and them, who needs to be replaced.

Your conversations with your sales force will take on an entirely new attitude. It will no longer be "me versus you." You will no longer be the authority figure who doesn't understand the sales person and who projects arbitrary dissatisfaction to him/her. Rather, the numbers become "the authority." Your role changes. You are now a resource and a helper, looking at the numbers with your sales person, and asking how you can help. Managing becomes easier.

Finally, the amount of internal political maneuvering on the part of your sales force decreases dramatically. In light of the numbers, it no longer matters who "butters you up," or who you like better than someone else. When political maneuvering wanes, your sales force is free to focus on the important issues.

Step Five: Hold regular Kahle Way® Conferences with each sales person.

This five-step process will make your life easier, increase the productivity of your sales force, and provide an ongoing solution to the problem of "getting 'em to do what you want 'em to."

Kahle Way® Conferences are the heart of our Kahle Way Sales Management System. Learn more at <https://www.thesalesresourcecenter.com/kahle-way-sales-management-system-course/>.

Self-Analysis

Answer "Yes" or "No" to each of the following questions.

1. Do you have a strategic plan?
2. Have you created 3 - 10 expectations for your sales force which directly support that plan?
3. Are each of those expectations easily, fairly, and accurately measured?
4. Do you systematically publish the sales force's performance on those numbers?
5. Do you regularly make the numbers a subject of conversation at sales meetings?
6. Does your compensation plan directly reward the three to ten expectations?
7. Do you hold regular "accountability, goal setting, strategy developing, resource identifying" quarterly or monthly conferences with each of your sales people?

If you answered "Yes" to all of the questions, you shouldn't have read this chapter -- you're doing everything right. If you have some "No's," each of them represents an area on which to focus in order to strengthen your sales management.



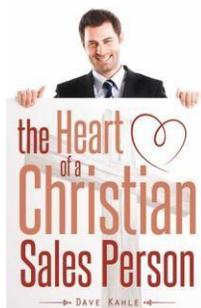
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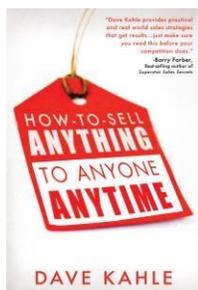
Contact Dave personally here: info@davekahle.com

Books for Sales People and Sales Leaders



[The Heart of a Christian Sales Person](#)

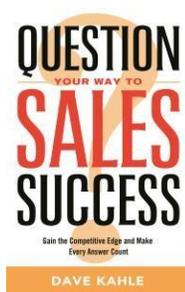
As a Christian, Dave Kahle shares his personal journey in the sales profession from the very first sales job he had while he was in college. He speaks from the heart about his own experiences – the successes he achieved as well as the disappointments he encountered and the struggles/challenges he faced along the way, and how God brought him through them all, and led him to where he is today. If you are a Christian in the sales profession, you will surely benefit from and be encouraged from reading Dave's story, *The Heart of a Christian Salesperson*, and the spiritual lessons contained therein. Learn more at <https://www.davekahle.com/heart-christian-sales-pereson/>.



[How to Sell Anything to Anyone Anytime](#)

Get what you need to boost your sales

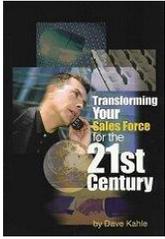
This is not your typical book on "selling strategies". This book is about employing a well-structured approach to providing your customers with a credible, value-enhancing business relationship. Learn more at <https://www.davekahle.com/sell-anything-anyone-anytime/>



[Question Your Way to Sales Success](#)

Gain the Competitive Edge and Make Every Answer Count

How can a sales person gain better results from every sales call? By mastering the art of asking questions. This book shows you how to ask better sales questions at every step of the sales process. Learn more at <https://www.davekahle.com/question-way-sales-success/>.



[Transforming Your Sales Force for the 21st Century](https://www.davekahle.com/transforming-sales-force-21st-century/)

Distribution companies, by their nature, should be sales-oriented companies. But, most distributors don't do sales very well. That's the premise behind this book. Written for sales managers and executives in the distribution industry, the book provides a blue print for executives to transform their sales forces into highly directable, effective, focused performers. Learn more at <https://www.davekahle.com/transforming-sales-force-21st-century/>