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7 Tips to Make You a Legendary Sales Coach

Every team needs a coach: someone to lead, mentor, and inspire every member to do their best. While we typically think of teams and coaches in terms of sports and competition, you can view your sales organization the same way.

While sales coaching is an often-overlooked element of a lucrative sales strategy, it helps to build relationships between managers and reps and foster a culture of learning and growth. And teams who devote themselves to a well-established coaching approach see serious results—improving win rates by up to 29%.

It's up to you, as sales manager and coach, to lead your team to success and leave a lasting impression. These tips will help get you started.

1. Establish a formal process

Rather than coaching here and there when you have time, or only coaching reps on an ad-hoc basis when they need help with a certain account or deal, a structured coaching approach means mentoring each rep equally and regularly. You can be more effective in the long term with regular one-on-one check-ins and assessments. Put a cadence in place and on your calendars so sessions aren't pushed off due to scheduling conflicts.

2. Build trust

If you want to effect real change across your team, you've got to ensure its members trust and respect you. And that starts with getting to know the reps you're coaching. Beyond learning where they're from and the names of their family members, take time to understand how they like to learn and communicate and what makes them tick. But don't expect them to open up to you with no reciprocation—share some of your own personal and professional stories—and not just triumphant ones—to show some vulnerability, empathy, and understanding of the challenges sellers face.

3. Promote self-evaluation

Lecturing or barking orders at reps is sure to not only put them off, but will also do little to boost skills, knowledge, and behaviors. Instead, have them evaluate their own performance. By acknowledging they have room for improvement, they are more likely to take the steps needed to get there. If you're struggling to get a particular rep to open up, ask open-ended questions to keep the session conversational and productive. That would include questions like:

- What was your biggest achievement over the last week/month/quarter?
- What was your biggest challenge over the last week/month/quarter?
- What have you learned over the last week/month/quarter?

4. Balance positive and negative feedback

The best sellers are confident sellers, and listening to negative feedback from a manager for 30 minutes straight is not exactly a confidence booster. Prior to meeting with a rep, outline your feedback and mix in specific behaviors or skills you think they do well. Starting with the self-evaluation questions above can help this happen naturally. When discussing a salesperson's shortcomings, be sure that you offer specific action items for improvement.

5. Use real sales conversations as teaching tools

Conversation intelligence technology enables managers and coaches to get unmatched insights into rep performance in the field. From keyword tracking to talking-listening ratios, you can identify patterns and see where reps are succeeding and lacking. You can then take these calls and address specific behaviors during coaching sessions, set clear goals based on what you've observed within the calls, and use successful calls as training material for your team.

6. Work with reps to set goals

Now that you've gotten to know who your salespeople are and where their competencies lie, you can work together to develop individual goals. You can offer some guidance based on their self-evaluation and what you observe from listening to calls, but ultimately reps will feel more motivated to hit goals when they've helped set them. Once you've nailed down a goal for a rep, have them create their own action plan, with incremental objectives to achieve along the way.

7. Hold people accountable

You've worked with reps to set goals and they've built plans for achieving them. But it's all a waste of time and resources if you don't hold them to their plans. Being too lax and letting things slide will do little to improve competencies—and you'll lose the respect of your team in the process. Regular coaching sessions help to evaluate progress, but you can also track activities via a sales readiness platform: view pipelines, training completions, and content use, and easily assign tasks to keep sellers responsible for their own success.

Galvanize your team to cross the finish line, score the touchdown, stick the landing—whatever you want to call it. With passion, authenticity, attention, collaboration, and motivation, you can go down in history as a legendary sales coach.