

# The **7 deadly sins** of Sales Leadership

By Jim Backhouse

Are your sales managers Saints or Sinners?







Most CEOs would agree that they want their sales teams to be engaged, accountable and performing to the best of their ability in order to drive the business





However, it is surprising that so many of today's sales leaders are acting in a way that drives the opposite

Here are some of the common mistakes that sales managers can make to switch off their teams and turn down sales performance

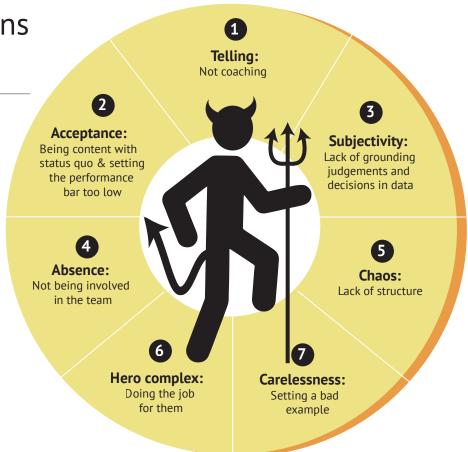


# The seven deadly sins of sales leaders

All sales leaders want to deliver results. They are presented with choices about how to do this through their teams

> Here are the seven deadly sins that you may see your sales leaders making in leading their teams

There may be many reasons why sales managers sometimes make bad choices, often it is due to a lack of experience, lack of leadership skills, or simply poor self awareness that leads them to making poor choices







Sales leaders not coaching their teams is perhaps the most common, and costly, mistake that they can make.



The absence of coaching sales executives results in demotivation, reduced engagement and underperformance in the short term, and limits executives fulfilling their potential leading to further disengagement and reduced long term organisational performance & leadership capability

#### Here are telltale signs that your sales leaders are not coaching their teams:

- They don't schedule and conduct regular 1:1 meetings with their team members
- They only give "corrective" feedback rather than ongoing, constructive and positive "feedforward"
- They micromanage their teams
- They spend most of their time telling their team members what to do rather than helping them with the how to do it
- They cannot articulate the needs of their team members
- They do not stimulate a learning and training culture
- They do not engage in coaching sales people



#### Why do these occur?

Some sales leaders believe they know best as they delivered superior performance as a sales rep. Great sales reps don't always make great leaders and coaching does not come naturally to everyone

#### What to do?

Give objective feedback | Outline the change you want | Invest in coaching THEM





\* Note - Stretch targets MUST be achievable (see 3 Subjectivity)

"If you're standing still, you're going backwards" - so the saying goes. Some sales leaders are happy to accept the status quo and not challenge the current paradigm, and some simply don't challenge their teams to improve. Here are some warning signs that your sales managers may be setting the bar too low...

- When challenged about their performance they immediately turn to explaining why things are not or can't happen
- They regularly make excuses their presentations begin with "how difficult things are out there"
- They don't set stretch targets (above budget) with their teams\*
- They don't invest in training / demand training for their teams
- They focus on what is happening today rather than how they can do better tomorrow
- They don't challenge processes & they don't focus on how they can make processes work better
- They don't hold themselves or their teams accountable for performance



#### Why do these occur?

Often stems from a lack of confidence and can be associated with a lack of experience. May indicate need for sales effectiveness intervention

#### What to do?





# **Subjectivity**

Not using data & objective assessment to underpin judgement & decision making



Most sales leaders will review the high level sales performance metric (sales versus target) regularly, but what about lead indicators such as activity levels, sales opportunity conversion, sales pipeline strength, customer engagement, utilisation of the sales process?



Many sales leaders slip into subjective assessments of individual and team performance because of a lack of focus on lead indicators. Here are some watch outs around subjectivity:



 They set targets without considering market or competitive intelligence that can result in unachievable targets. This can be a major de-motivator for sales reps & teams and can dramatically effect engagement and, ultimately, performance



- They cannot articulate the reasons for difference in performance between individuals or teams which can manifest in them having favourites in their teams without substance
- They reference past performance rather than current or future potential



Many sales leaders slip into subjective assessments of individual and team performance because of a lack of focus on lead indicators



 They do not use the sales performance dashboard and lead indicators of performance - rather go with gut feel and make arbitrary decisions



 They do not capture, or care, about customer feedback



 They cannot articulate observed performance of their team members because they do not conduct and record regular activity & performance reviews with their team members



#### Why do these occur?

Often stems from a lack of experience. May indicate the need for sales effectiveness intervention and sales leadership training

#### What to do?





### **Absence**

Not being involved in the team

Sales executives need support from their leaders, they want to know that they understand their challenges and issues and that they care



The sales role can be a lonely one (particularly for field sales people), they need to know that their sales manager is supporting them.

#### Warning signs that your sales leaders are absent:

• They only care about results - adopting a "hit your target or else" approach - without providing any support to the team to help them hit these targets



• They are often out of the office on their own assignments (This in itself is not an issue but needs to be balanced with the availability to support their team managers)

- They are often out of contact from their teams / the office and even when in the office, they limit the time spent with their sales professionals to an absolute minimum
- They focus too much on admin and internal matters they worry more about spending time with their peer group or senior leadership than with their sales representatives





#### Warning signs that your sales leaders are absent



 They take all the credit in sales leadership meetings - and focus on what they themselves are doing / achieving



 They don't conduct sufficient meetings with their teams and do not spend enough time co-traveling with their team members



 They don't listen to their teams - rather they spend most of their time giving direction and telling them what to do



 Their teams don't believe their leaders care about them (or the business!)



#### Why do these occur?

Misunderstanding of leadership vs management - They don't appreciate that they will only succeed if their team(s) succeed

#### What to do?





# **Chaos**

#### Lack of organisation & structure

The most successful sales organisations have a clear sales process that their teams follow making training and business continuity a strength. Successful sales leaders employ a structured approach to planning and review of execution through scheduled planning and performance review meetings

#### Here are examples of:

- They do not employ a standard sales process
- They have an ad hoc approach to sales meetings
- They do not commit to regular sales performance review meetings
- They don't commit to, and execute, regular performance management reviews with their team members
- They don't have regular cross divisional meetings that map how teams and divisions can work together to support sales development



#### Why do these occur?

Lack of experience and lack of awareness of sales effectiveness principles and processes and what a difference they can make in the short and long term

#### What to do?





Many sales leaders gained their status and role on the back of superior sales performance in more junior roles and haven't always benefited from sales leadership training and development

If they take over routinely then performance of the team is always going to be limited to the performance levels of the leader. This limits the development potential of sales talent and can impact long term sales performance of the organisation

leader may have a hero complex:

- They take the credit for their team's work the team's results are their own results
- They take the lead in managing all the major sales opportunities
- They interrupt sales people in customer meetings rather than let the sales person work on the solution themselves they take over rather than support their team members
- They don't put the customer at the centre of planning & execution



#### Why do these occur?

Some sales leaders believe they know best as they delivered superior performance as a sales rep. Great sales reps don't always make great leaders

#### What to do?





# **Carelessness**

#### Setting a bad example

There may be many ways that your sales leaders may be setting a bad example of professional behaviour for their sales reps, here are just some:

- They are often late for appointments and meetings
- They lack preparation for meetings & presentations
- They lack clarity in communications
- They adopt an aggressive communication style
- They don't put the customer at centre of planning & execution
- They are perceived as not applying themselves sufficiently
- They flout organisation rules or norms
- They focus on outcome measures only and ignore lead performance indicators
- They are poor at collaborating with peers (e.g. with other sales leaders / other divisions)



#### Why do these occur?

Often, it's a lack of personal awareness - can be addressed through coaching - Can indicate the need for the organisation to invest in sales leadership training

#### What to do?



# What sets great sales leaders apart?

In *The 7 deadly sins* of sales leadership we have highlighted the things that unsuccessful sales leaders do. so that you can spot any of these "sins" that might exist in your organisation and do something about it before sales performance is damaged and it's just too late

#### Great sales leaders deliver outstanding results, consistently. But how do they do this?

They inspire their teams to greatness. They create an engaged environment of Trust, Motivation and Accountability in which their team members are Empowered to perform

What do they actually do to create this environment? They...



Coach daily and invest in training and mentoring in order todevelop team members for better performance today and tomorrow



#### **Objective**

Adopt a data driven and objective decision making approach underpinned by robust metrics and lead performance indicators



Improvement:

Foster growth mindset in

the team

Set a high performance bar

and develop a culture of

#### **Team Support**

Are present, always available to support their teams, they listen and are interested and involved in the day to day husiness



# Structure

Provide structure through simple sales process and implement a communication and meeting rhythm that drives consistency



#### **Team First**

Put their team at the centre of activity and understand that their primary role is to support their teams to perform



#### **Behaviour**

"Walk the talk" Lead by example, Live the behaviours that are required Be a beacon for high performance

Great leaders

SALES LEADERSHIP EXCELLENCE for PEAK PERFORMANCE



### Take action

Don't let your sales managers commit any of the 7 deadly sins of sales leadership



CoachHouse sales leadership training programs support your sales managers in creating such a high performance environment

The sales leader - 1st line or 2nd line manager - holds the key position in shaping the culture and performance of the sales organisation. Don't leave it up to chance that they routinely exhibit good habits

It is well documented that Sales Leaders and Managers are a critical component in effecting results and yet often sales leaders make fundamental errors with their teams that are left unchecked



69% of sales people that hit their targets rate their manager excellent or above average\*



56% of sales people who rated their organisation excellent, also rated their manager excellent\*

Through their engagement with their teams, sales leaders indirectly influence customer engagement & financial performance

The approach that sales leaders adopt with their teams is a key factor in both short term and long term performance of the sales organisation

Work with us to enable better leadership in your sales organisation

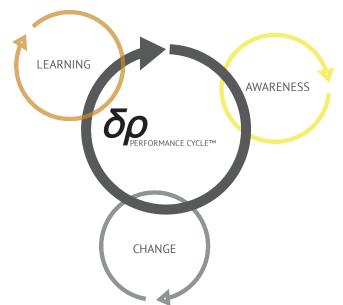
Contact us today so we can help you change your sales leaders approach

email us: contact@coachhouse.uk.com



Support your sales leaders to create an environment of:

Engagement Accountability Trust Empowerment Motivation









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