



The Sales Director's Dream

Abstract

Every sales director dreams of having a team of professionals like Max Kwotabusta. Max effortlessly opens doors, understands and develops the customer's need, produces the perfect proposal and negotiates only the very best deals.

Sadly, however, sales professionals like Max are very rare birds, and a sales management strategy built on such dreams is doomed. Instead the sales director needs to implement hard-headed and practical measures that improve the performance of the sales team as a whole.

So while the sales director nods, Ian Henley of *ChangeBEAT* gives his top tips on how to go about building a sales team that will build their own success.

Max Kwotabusta... the Sales Director's dream

Max Kwotabusta is every sales director's dream. Proactive, determined and urbane, Max can open doors that most sales professionals would never even find. He immediately captures the prospect's attention with succinct and well-articulated value statements. He listens carefully and attentively to what the prospect needs, and adds value with his consultative selling style. With unerring judgement Max knows if there is a deal to be done; he would never waste his company's precious time in a losing bid!

Effortlessly the prospect's needs are teased out and developed. In Max's sure hands the prospect recognises that he has a far, far bigger problem than first he thought, but also a golden opportunity for personal and business glory.

Max patiently lays out a sure route to success. Before long the prospect is begging for Max's proposal. Max produces an exciting and innovative solution that is even better than the prospect dared expect. Objections are cleverly dealt with and turned to Max's advantage. Any whiff of competition is stopped stone dead in its tracks.

Max produces professional proposal documents that are a credit to his company and a warm reassurance both to the customer and his own management. These proposals are superb selling documents, but also properly costed and priced. Risks, responsibilities and assumptions are identified, keeping the customer very happy and ensuring a smooth implementation.

Max is mature enough to know the importance of working well with his own delivery people, and ensures they are closely involved from the outset. The necessary internal reviews are handled by Max like the pro he is. If the prospect does come back to negotiate, they find themselves securing a better deal for themselves and, strangely, for Max as well!

When the order is taken (just when Max said it would be) Max smoothly initiates the delivery project staying in close touch with the customer throughout but moving quietly on to the next big sale. Max's forecasts are reliable and his reporting succinct and accurate.



With a team of people like Max, what sales director would lie awake at night? If only Max were everywhere, win rate would rise, as would deal size, customer satisfaction and margin. The sales cycle would shorten by weeks and the deal flow increase.

If only your sales team all performed like Max, what would it do for your sales productivity?

Meanwhile in the real world

However, in the real world sales directors are very lucky if a quarter of their sales team are even in the same league as Max.

The fact is that most people on quota are far, far less productive than they could be. Many struggle to pick up more than “sitting duck” business and a significant number are unable to develop even the most straightforward opportunity.

Despite this, the packages required to attract sales professionals continue to soar and even “top dollar” hires often prove to be disappointing. So how should the sales director go about building a sales team that will build their own success?

Top tips

Here are a dozen top tips for the sales director to boost the productivity of the team and get them to perform like Max. The sales team is usually the scapegoat when sales fall, but there is much that must be done to help them succeed.

Get the offering right. Look very hard at your offering. Even great sales people struggle with a market offering that is positioned in vaguely defined markets, lacks clarity, is poorly documented or is undifferentiated from competition.

Develop and manage the team. Many sales directors react to short-term pressures by throwing themselves into the most crucial sales campaigns. Too often this leaves the sales director with no time to develop, help and manage the team. A downward spiral results in which mistakes are repeated as the sales director becomes increasingly buried in tactical issues.

Recruiting sales professionals is tough. Many new sales directors hope to recruit their way to a top sales team, but unless you are a blue chip company



with a premium, lucrative market proposition, the chances of success are small. Good sales professionals are rare and expensive. Many move on quickly to senior management.

Horses for courses. Certain types of “softer” market offering (typically technical products or services) are much more effectively sold by people who really understand the product or service they are selling. Most mainstream product sales professionals find it very hard to adjust and usually fail in this environment.

It is easier to teach the right technicians to sell than sellers to be technical. Your own consultancy and engineering people may be the most fruitful recruiting ground for your future Max.

Processes. A well-documented sales process (and sales support knowledge base) is the key to long-term productivity because it provides a framework within which you can manage and improve. Some sales directors achieved success through their own well developed intuition and can be resistant to a process oriented approach, but they will find it impossible to scale up their team without it.

Define review points and outcomes. Any sales process must include clearly defined and documented outcomes such as prospecting letters (or call records), sponsor letters, qualification reviews, proposal reviews, contract signature and delivery initiation. These become vital milestones in managing the sales process and providing added value. They are also fundamental to successful sales forecasting.

Sales tools. A sales team is often blamed for poor performance when in fact they have not been given a sporting chance to succeed. Do your sales professionals have the right tools to do the job? If they lack for standard presentations, sales aids, analytical tools, proposal proforma, checklists and so on, you are not providing an environment where they can succeed.

Invest in training. The effective training of sales people is absolutely crucial. There is a wide, wide gap between the effectiveness of sales professionals who have been properly trained and those who have not. There are a surprising number of people on quota who can count the days of training they have received on one hand. Just look at the skills Max displays in



closing a deal. Do you think he learned those on the job?

Make training effective. Sales training must really hit hard and hit home. Improved performance is its single goal. It must be

- **Designed to achieve measurable objectives.** Delegates must be prepared for training and set themselves challenges which are then followed through. The achievement of the business goals must be defined and inspected after the event.
- **Heavily based on customised “role-play” exercises.** Selling theory is pointless unless reinforced by practical application in an environment where delegates can make mistakes and learn from them.
- **Done by specialists using your own sales offering.** Delegates must practise selling their own product. Unless the trainers have been there and done the sales job, not only will they struggle to win the respect of sales professionals, but they will be unable to test the sales team with “real life” objections in role play.

About the author

Ian Henley, chairman of *ChangeBEAT*, is recognised in the IT and technology market as a leading expert in improving business performance. He specialises in business strategy, marketing and sales and is well known through industry publications and Intellect where he provides advanced sales and commercial management training.



ChangeBEAT defines, develops and executes change programmes that help achieve enduring business benefit rapidly and reliably. Our people have practical field experience, and are equipped with WingBEAT, our proven change methodology, and our extensive tools. We are professional, pragmatic and action oriented.

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