

About Vistage

Running a business has always been challenging.

But today's environment presents an entirely new set of issues and opportunities – and many business leaders are not equipped to overcome the challenges and prosper in the new business landscape.

Here are just some of the key reasons why Chief Executives join Vistage, which items do you relate to?

- You're looking for fresh ideas and input.
- You're a new Chief Executive, and you need to know what to focus on.
- You're in a family business, and as well as running the business you have to deal with family ownership issues.
- You're struggling to achieve work/life balance.
- You need to grow sales.
- People (staff, fellow directors, owners) expect you to have all of the answers.
- You need to stay current, be ahead of your competitors.
- You seem to have reached a milestone, but you want to do more, much more.
- You need to plan your exit – on your terms.
- You're struggling to survive, you know that you need help.
- It can be lonely at the top. You need confidential advice that you can trust.
- You're struggling to raise finance in this new economy.

So what is Vistage, and how can it help you?

Vistage is the World's Leading Chief Executive Organisation. 50 years strong and with over 15,000 members around the world. When you join Vistage, you join a local group of up to 15 other Chief Executives, led by a skilled facilitator and coach – your Vistage Chairman. You meet monthly with your Vistage Group. Your fellow Vistage Group members serve as your trusted 'board of advisors'. They test your plans, your assumptions and your decisions, and hold you accountable for turning good intentions into great results.

Your Vistage Group Chairman runs the group and also acts as your personal business coach and advisor. Vistage supplies world-class speakers at your Vistage Group meetings, so you're always learning from the very latest in business thinking and know-how. And you also gain access to a wide variety of other member benefits that will help you and your organisation be more successful. Vistage member companies outperform their competitors by growing on average over twice as fast after joining Vistage.

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Table of contents

	Page
1. Introduction By Steve Gilroy, Chief Executive, Vistage International (UK) Ltd.....	2
2. Selling in a Down Economy: Criteria for Success Charles Bernard, Criteria for Success, Inc	5
3. How Relationship Selling has to Change in the New Economy Grant Leboff, Sticky Marketing Club	8
4. What are the Key Factors around Recruitment and Retention when building High Performing Sales Teams Lars Tewes, SBR Consulting	11
5. High Performance Sales in The New Economy – Key Points	14



1. Introduction

By Steve Gilroy, Chief Executive, Vistage International (UK) Ltd.



Steve Gilroy

The 'age of plenty' is over

FT .com
FINANCIAL TIMES

Prepare for age of austerity

Scary isn't it? If you're running a business, it seems that the road ahead is going to give you a bumpy ride. The election is now over, and we'll soon have a new budget. The chances are that we're in for some major public spending cuts that will ultimately affect the buying power and patterns of that vast majority of UK citizens and businesses. Some sectors have already seen a significant reduction in sales. Just compare the high-street retail sector now to what it was in 2008. Gone are Woolworths, Borders, Zavvi, Threshers, Land of Leather, Adams, Waterford/Wedgewood – the list is long.

And it's not just retail or consumer-driven businesses that are suffering. The UK Manufacturing industry 'fell off a cliff' in late 2008, and many have not survived to see an upturn.

Of course, it seems obvious doesn't it? If people have less money to spend, and are worried about their immediate future, then they are less likely to spend, invest; they are less likely to buy. But it's not just the lack of cash or confidence that is causing businesses to suffer from lack of sales. All recessions tend to sort out the weak from the strong. Businesses with a very clear value proposition, that deliver very good products and very good services, with great efficiency and vision tend to survive recessions – many even prosper in this environment.

But this recession is like no others. The reduction in demand for many goods and services is not just down to lack of cash and confidence. *The buying patterns of those able to spend have changed.* The recession has actually forced people and businesses to do much more research on what they actually need; to search out new solutions and suppliers. Businesses are also now much more focused on what they really need, and are prepared to consider many other options and alternatives than perhaps they would have done before 2008 (including the option of doing nothing at all, or using suppliers they would never have chosen a few years ago). The internet is playing a significant part. Of course we can now search for almost any item or service and find a myriad of suppliers. But social networking and business community sites now also connect together players within a supply chain. Consumers and businesses are starting to trust these communities more and are now putting their cash where their faith is – and often it's not with the traditional players.

At the same time, many businesses continue to do what they have always done. They are simply trying to 'wait out' the recession; to muddle through until demand picks up again.



Some pile on the buying promotions, ramp-up their sales incentives, fire and hire different sales talent and hope that these actions will see them through. Some will make it, many will not.

But while all of this is happening, there are many businesses that are in fact prospering in this new landscape. Those businesses that have been pro-active and re-assessed their sales and marketing are the winners. To be successful in this new landscape you need to re-evaluate your target market. Know in much more detail what your clients are really looking for and why they buy. You may need to adjust your sales approach, your go-to-market strategy. The new sales model is more about creating an environment where people want to buy than pushing a sales cycle towards a reluctant or hesitant buyer. If buying patterns have changed, then has your sales model changed to reflect the new status quo?

It used to be that to be successful at selling you just needed the right sales process, with the right sales talent, the right attitude, the right behaviours and sales measurements. Those are now a given. **To be successful at sales in this New Economy you need to fundamentally adjust your approach to selling to reflect the new environment we're now in.**

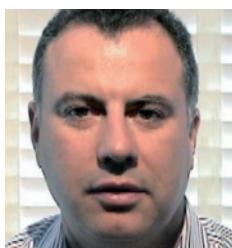
This Guide to High Performance Sales in The New Economy is a collection of expert opinion from a range of sales experts – all of them world-class professionals and part of the Vistage Speaker network. It explores the specific areas that are now much more important for success. It highlights what you need to focus on, what you need to change, to explore.

I hope that the content in this guide will encourage you to look again at how you sell your products and services. I hope that you will prosper in this new environment and demonstrate high performance in your sales operation.



2. Selling in a Down Economy: Criteria for Success

Charles Bernard, Criteria for Success, Inc.



Charles Bernard

Every business has ups and downs and you don't need a recession to act on solving problems for your business. Even in the best of times, you should develop revenue generating strategies that succeed even when times are tough. Many sales people fear a down economy, believing that clients will scale back on projects, buy on price, and stop spending. An economic slowdown can be a problem for your company, but it can also be an opportunity to gain new clients and drive more sales. This is especially true if you have developed sales methods that work in a recessionary period.

We are living in a "survival of the fittest" sales world, where we are forced to adapt on a constant basis. Some of the recommendations in this article may help you to meet this challenge. Here are six suggestions to proactively improve sales in your company, right now:

1. Revisit old clients and old leads
2. Help clients create new sales for you.
3. Add more value
4. Keep busy and stay focused
5. Prospect more
6. Be positive.

1. Revisit old clients.

Contact a past client or someone you served at one time, but are not actively working for now and do business with them again. Start with your list of past clients, call them, say hello, and see what's going on. Don't make this a hard-sell call.

EXAMPLE: Tell them, "Hi, it's Sophia. I'm calling just to check in." Ask them what's new ...how they're doing ...what problems they are facing. Plant seeds (ask problem probing questions and describe solutions that you have provided to other clients like them) in the conversation and get invited to meet face to face.

Reactivate old leads. Someone calls. You send information. You call to follow-up. They don't respond. You call again. After that, you give up and forget about them. Many of those leads you simply gave up on can be turned into profitable business for you, with just a little extra sales effort. Most salespeople give up too early.

EXAMPLE: I recently went back to my CRM system and ran a report on leads that were entered in the last six months. After thirty minutes, two prospects that I did not have last week had scheduled conference calls with us. It was that simple.

2. Help clients create new sales for you.

I don't usually suggest that you give away free consulting. But if business is slow, there's nothing wrong with throwing out a few tips or bright ideas which are obvious to you and could be valuable to your client.

EXAMPLE: When one of my clients introduced a new business class phone service, I immediately suggested that he put his sales team on a referral request quota to generate some quick leads. I also suggested that he add an MBO (Management by Objective) that specifically pays additional commissions for closing new business in this service. This resulted in him asking us to create a new prospecting program as well as revisiting his entire sales compensation plan.



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Your approach is "I have an idea that can help you, Mr. Client (and by the way, I'd be happy to implement it for you)." Not, "please give me business so I can keep busy and make money."

3. Add more value.

One way to generate some extra profitable business is to encourage clients or customers to add on to existing purchases. For example, if one of your clients is placing an advertisement with you on a new product, they could probably use an accompanying press release or even a new PR campaign. Maybe you can do both projects for a bundled price. This is a nice approach because you're investing very little extra sales effort.

If you sell a commodity item, you can add value by offering faster delivery than your competitors, or a wider selection, more options, easier payment terms, etc.

There is no need to do a fire sale and promise an excessive amount of add-ons. You want a little extra effort or service on your part to be perceived by the client as adding significant value.

4. Keep busy and stay focused.

A slow period in your business is a good time to focus on other projects that you've been putting off. Some of these might include developing a new marketing strategy, improving existing products and services, revising your proposal templates or sales letters or redesigning your PowerPoint presentation.

Map your selling processes and train your salespeople. This is the time to invest in sharpening their skills and making them even more focused.

Don't forget to be a talent scout. Now is a good time to find good salespeople that were hard to get before. Look for talent, experience and chemistry. The most important quality is

"chemistry." Make sure that they are a good fit for your culture. The least important is "experience," which you can augment on the job.

You can also work on your sales system. Most companies have a Payroll system, an HR system or an Accounting system. Rarely do I see a Sales system. Create a sales playbook.

Document your best selling practices, now. Include everything from generating the lead to closing the deal, and all the steps in between. Orient selling towards problem solving, create a 30 second commercial, a list of common problems that you solve, a list of 10-20 best-practice problem-probing questions, meeting agendas, email templates, etc. Use these tools to shorten your sales cycles, disqualify opportunities, gain trust, and ultimately demonstrate your professionalism. At Criteria for Success, we help clients develop their sales playbooks using an online "wiki" website. You can do this yourself also, choosing from several online, free Wiki platforms, including one provided by Google. This allows your sales team and your managers to constantly keep selling techniques fresh and suggesting improvements by changing the content themselves. It operates like a sales knowledge ecosystem that constantly evolves with your business.

Rank your customers and target sales and marketing efforts to each level accordingly. If you follow the Pareto principle, 80% of your business comes from 20% of your clients. These clients are in a class of their own, but what about everyone else? Create all the levels that define someone who does business with you, or has the potential to do business with you. These might be labelled as "suspects," "prospects," "customers," "clients," "advocates" and "partners." Focus on specific selling activities at each level. For instance, at "suspect" level, make more calls to qualify opportunities, at "partner" and "advocate" level, ask higher executives in the organisation to call on them. Incidentally, "advocates" are the best source of

referrals, testimonials and case studies. On the marketing side, at "partner" level, form a Client Council to brainstorm new ideas about new offerings that you might provide. Use the Council to measure the level of satisfaction with your firm. Do joint planning with them. These are some of your most trusted clients.

5. Prospect, prospect, prospect.

Be Ruthless with your sales pipeline and focus sales efforts on "real" prospects. Encourage your sales people to ask those probing questions which help determine if the prospect is really going to buy or is "just looking." Do they have decision-making authority to buy now? Is there a budget? Is their inventory low on what you provide? How did they buy in the past? What is their financial condition? If they don't give good answers to these and other questions, maybe you're just not a good fit for them at this time. The bottom line is that when you need sales now, don't waste too much time on people who aren't ready or cannot buy anytime soon.

Get creative and accommodate smaller budgets by repackaging your service or product.

EXAMPLE: The client who cannot afford to pay you £10,000 to develop his direct mail campaign might be able to pay you £5,000 if he does some of the work himself. He can also afford to pay your £150 an hour consulting fee, take your full-day workshop for £1,000 or buy your book for £30. Manufacturers may offer economy sizes, no-frills versions, conditional discounts, payment terms, and smaller minimum orders.

6. Be positive.

Recognise achievement. Salespeople rank recognition pretty high, right below high commissions! As a CEO or senior executive, you can make sure that top performers (and those working toward becoming one) are acknowledged throughout the company for

making great contributions. Don't waste time worrying about how bad it is out there. Be productive instead.

Don't let them see you sweat! Be more available to your employees. Let them test your resolve, and see for themselves how focused and confident you are. They will want to borrow that from you! The CEO's presence at staff meetings is a prime motivator for the rest of the team. Help wherever you can and schedule at least once every quarter to formerly meet with the sales team and find areas where you can support them directly.

Charles Bernard brings more than 15 years experience in direct sales, sales management, recruiting and training. As a sales consultant for General Electric, he was the top revenue producer, three years in a row, and brought in the firm's largest multi-year, multi-million dollar regional account, Mobil Oil. His practice is based in Manhattan, specializing in sales reinforcement training and coaching of the proven Structured Selling Method, which is critical to maintaining successful client relationships. Bernard is a graduate of Salesian's College, in the UK.

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3. How Relationship Selling has to Change in the New Economy

Grant Leboff, Sticky Marketing Club.



Grant Leboff

Picture in your mind, the following scenario: 'A salesperson walks in to a potential customer's office. Sitting on the shelves behind the customer's desk are several golf trophies. The salesperson starts to engage their prospect in a conversation about golf to which they respond enthusiastically. Over ten minutes goes by before the dialogue moves on to business.'

In traditional parlance the salesperson has successfully been "building rapport". The salesperson then spends the rest of the meeting doing everything they can to secure the order.

Our scenario continues: 'Every once in a while the salesperson will phone this particular customer or drop in to their office. They may even periodically go out for a drink together. As familiarity builds, conversations will often centre on family, their respective children, holidays and golf, before business is done. The experience is a pleasant one for both parties.'

For many people, what has just been described is a text book example of 'Relationship Selling'. Rapport has been built, and these two people obviously get along. There is little doubt that one of the reasons the customer continues to do business with that company is their interaction with the salesperson.

Mistaken identity.

However, this is not 'Relationship Selling'. Throughout all of these dialogues and interactions with the customer, the salesperson's main focus has been on the next transaction, not the actual relationship. The relationship has merely been the means to achieving the goal of; 'getting the customer to

buy'. In reality, it is more a very gentle form of manipulation, rather than being a good example of Relationship Selling.

Of course, I am not suggesting that small talk should be banned or that people shouldn't aim at getting along. On the contrary, we all know that 'people buy from people' and it is more probable that you will do business with someone who you like. However, if the salesperson's main focus is the transaction, and they are doing everything in their means to secure that transaction, it is not 'Relationship Selling'. The 'relationship' here, is merely another tool in the salesperson's armour.

Until now, this misinterpretation of 'Relationship Selling' has never mattered because the entire traditional sales and marketing model has been transactional in nature.

Companies bombard their potential customers with sales messages via advertising, direct mail, telemarketing calls etc., and the leads that came out of this marketing activity have been passed onto the sales team. Sometimes, sales people have also been responsible for some of this activity, by knocking on doors and making phone calls themselves.

This whole model is based on the idea of 'the funnel', whereby, if you put enough in at the top, deals will drop out the bottom. This means that so long as the deals at the bottom cover the costs of the sales and marketing activity, with some profit, then you have your return on investment (ROI) and the model works. Ultimately, the only measure that matters is transactions.

Commission structures are based on transactions and therefore salespeople are only measured on transactions. In this model; 'relationships' count only inasmuch as they help the salesperson reach their target of 'X' number of transactions.

In other words; true 'Relationship Selling' can never take place in these conditions.

Changing times.

Consumers have an abundance of choice like never before and the Web empowers them to exercise that choice. At the touch of a button they have a wealth of information on possible suppliers, prices and availability. Through blogs, forums and social networks etc., it is possible to obtain instant feedback on the quality of these offerings.

In this context customers are increasingly putting up barriers to protect themselves from sensory overkill and as a result, they no longer respond in the same way to telemarketing calls or direct mail as they once did, and they have learnt to avoid advertising messages whenever possible. In short, the days of the transactional funnel model are numbered.

To replace it, the focus has to be on customer engagement. This means; having a dialogue with a customer because they want to, not because you have paid to grab their attention.

Customers will only engage with a company, and continue to engage, if they perceive they are getting value from their dialogue with the sales person or company. Therefore; the sales and marketing model now has to change from focusing on transactions, to focusing on relationships.

That is, giving value throughout all interactions with a customer, not just at the point when they buy. Moreover, it means giving value, even when they are not buying, to keep them engaged. Of course, in this way, when a

customer is ready to purchase, they are more likely to purchase from you.

A new sales paradigm.

Within this context, proper 'Relationship Selling' has to start to really happen for the first time. That is, salespeople not just building a rapport with a customer, but putting the whole relationship first, well before the transaction. In a world where there is so much information on the internet, this means salespeople need to be capable of giving a high level of insight and expertise to really add value. They need to be true experts in their field.

It also means that the way salespeople are commissioned needs to be looked at with a fresh approach taken. Rather than focusing on transactions, companies need to understand their customer's journey.

How do they get a customer engaged?
What value can they give that keeps the dialogue happening?

The answer may be through publishing white papers, posting pertinent podcasts and videos on the web, organising relevant seminars and a whole array of other activities. By continually adding value and engaging with customers, transactions will happen as a matter of course; but the 'relationship' can no longer be a means to an end. The means has to change.

If this customer journey is plotted and analysed properly, there may be points where face to face interaction is necessary. It is here that salespeople can add value. There may also be other activities that salespeople need to undertake. For example; being able to recommend their customer's services to others, informing customers of developments of which they should be aware, or making useful introductions to others in their network, are all ways in which they will enhance customer relationships and become a valuable supplier.

However, while the only measurement of success remains the transaction, it is unlikely these other activities will take place. Companies need to reward, not just transactions, but behaviours which they recognise are important within the context of their customer journey. Only by rewarding these behaviours will they happen.

For some salespeople this approach is going to mean learning new skills in order to become a hub; whereby their new business model is one of connecting people, recommending customers and having expert knowledge. In other words, salespeople have to make themselves attractive to customers in the same way as their companies do.

For the first time we are entering a world where the most successful companies will practice 'Real Relationship Selling'. That is, engaging prospects by providing real value, and in so doing, put the relationship before the transaction.

Salespeople, of course, will still sell and still 'build rapport' but today they need to be so much more than that. This cannot happen without companies re-evaluating commission schemes and how they measure a salesperson's activity.

It isn't easy. We are moving from a world of Return on Investment to Return on Engagement. Those companies that learn how to do this, and work with their salespeople to achieve this, will be the successful organisations of the future.

Frustrated at the way the traditional methods of selling are being taught and conducted within the workplace author and speaker Grant Leboff formalised his own highly successful sales philosophy and in 2002 copyrighted Sales Therapy® a new sales methodology for the 21st Century. Grant is Principal of the Sticky Marketing Club; which helps companies build brands and works with them on sales and marketing strategy, sales training and lead generation; creating a steady stream of sales opportunities.

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4. What are the Key Factors around Recruitment and Retention when building High Performing Sales Teams

Lars Tewes, SBR Consulting



Lars Tewes

In the New Economy the importance of personal relationships and trusting the salesperson has become an even stronger competitive advantage that differentiates your company from the competition. This is because the New Economy is a crowded marketplace, inundated with numerous product and service options along with social media bombardment. It is for this reason that it is becoming even more important for companies to ensure their recruitment and retention process is effective.

There has been countless number of books and articles written on the three areas of sales recruitment, sales motivation and sales management. The vast majority have good content and make sense when you read them. Why then do we still seem to have “the revolving door” syndrome in many sales teams, or potentially even worse, why do we continue to keep underperforming sales people in the team for too long?

If I had to sum up the factor for success for sales teams in one sentence it would probably be, “Ensure you communicate consistent messages around the agreed competencies from the start of the recruitment process, through hiring, during the probation period and beyond, so that these competencies are the culture of the organisation.” Without a sales culture you will constantly be battling with inconsistency around behaviours required.

As MD of SBR Consulting, a sales performance consultancy, my team and I see many examples of real inconsistency in what is being looked for in a salesperson followed by the way they are managed and motivated. Companies recruit based on a person’s CV or a personality that

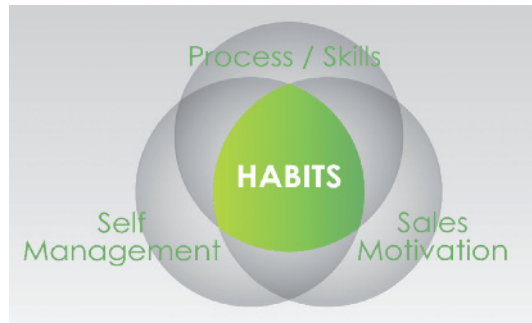
has attractive qualities rather than “creating the desired script and sticking to it”. A good analogy for this is when we go to the shops to buy something and we see another product that entices us instead and we buy it, then when we get home we discover it does not have one of the essential functions required in the first place.

Step 1 – Develop the correct competencies that can be measured.

How do you develop the list of competencies and behaviours your salespeople must have? One approach is to make a long list of what you observe in your consistently high producers and come up with definitions and expectations attached to these. Note the use of the word “consistent” because we sometimes think an individual in our organisation is successful because they have brought in the big sale and know the industry. However, you need to be aware that your most experienced salesperson may actually be the reason you are losing good salespeople because newcomers try to emulate this persons behaviours which are not the ones that need duplicated to be successful. If this does prevent you from knowing what the ideal salesperson looks like then it may be worth getting some help from an external sales consultancy to help. It would be a small investment compared with the wasted expenses linked to recruiting the wrong people.

If you do the above, and create a competency list and stick to it you will already be ahead of most. The challenge then becomes giving the list structure and simplicity, “Confused salespeople don’t sell and confused customers don’t buy”. SBR Consulting has developed a simple but hugely effective model,

SBR Consulting's Habits Triangle© to ensure that salespeople form habits in these three areas:



Divide your competencies and expectations into these three areas. Ideally you do not want to have more than 10-15 competencies in total, although you can have varying numbers under each heading. The simplicity of this is that when you start working with a salesperson, you will see a pattern emerging as to the corner of the triangle where they need support.

If you observe where salespeople in your business fail, 90% of the time it is because they have formed good habits in two out of the three areas. Meatloaf once sang a song called, "Two out of Three Ain't Bad". Well we think he got it wrong! You need all three to be a consistent high producer – for example, you may have all the skills / knowledge you need, be highly organised but not really motivated and if that is the case you cannot achieve your potential.

Once you have created your list with key competencies and expectations under each part of The Habits Triangle, you are ready to talk to potential candidates.

Step 2 – Recruit to those competencies.

The Golden Rule here is to make sure that the people you interview match the competencies as closely as possible. We may never find the perfect candidate but we can get pretty close if the work upfront is achieved.

A wonderful top tip is to make sure that whoever is interviewing the candidate asks lots

of "how" questions. If you observe most interviews, the interviewer asks lots of questions about the person's experiences and what they have achieved. The candidate can gloss over their actual involvement and therefore their ability by talking about targets they have achieved, clients they have won, etc. Dig a little deeper and ask "How did you personally achieve this?", "Explain to me the process you used to win the deal?", "How do you motivate yourself when your sales are not where you want them to be? Give me an example of how you did that?", "How do you measure your own activity? Can you give me your most recent examples of this?"

Make sure you ask these for the competencies mapped to SBR Consulting's Habits Triangle© and very quickly you will see the "Real Deal". Just because someone had Prestige names on their CV and references does not mean they know "how" to do the job you will be hiring them for.

Step 3 – Create the right sales culture, environment.

Be aware of your current sales culture or possibly lack of one. Many businesses, especially technical and engineering organisations, do not have a sales culture and so new hires are often greeted with a less than encouraging environment. Feedback we receive at SBR Consulting from many professional salespeople is that they have to battle to gain the information they need from other departments when they should be giving it freely, as it is the sales function which drives the rest of the business. Without selling something the rest of the organisation cannot exist.

The right sales culture is one where there is mutual respect amongst all departments and each works closely with the other to beat the competition. Do not make it easier for your competition by creating more of it internally. Help the salesperson have access to all resources they need.



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Step 4 – Understand the type of management style required for each person and the competency requiring development.

It is essential that the Sales Leadership team has a “conscious competency” around how to performance coach an individual. Applying a one style fits all leadership style rarely works in this day and age. All styles are potentially good when used in the appropriate situation and equally all styles are ineffective if used at the wrong time.

To keep it simple, we refer to four leadership styles; Directive, Coaching, Supportive and Delegative. Leading sales teams can be and for many is definitely a learnt skill. The leaders must learn to adjust their style to one of these four depending on the situation being addressed.

Directive – High Structure and lots of “How to”. This establishes the habits early on

Coaching – Still providing structure but a little more empathetic and supportive as the person is often still putting in more effort learning the new ways than reflected in their commissions

Supportive – The correct habits have been formed. Support and challenge is now the best style as the persons skill and will is paying off.

Delegative – Giving a person day-to-day responsibility whilst providing milestone dates and feedback allows them to now perform at a high level.

For example a new hire is generally highly motivated but lacks a lot of knowledge in certain areas of your business. It is better to be more directive by providing structure and lots of “how to” so that you ensure best practice is established early on. If you leave it for a while and let the new hire do it their way first and it fails it is a lot harder to establish correct process and activity once their motivation has dropped a bit.

We have seen many versions of this but few have covered it as well as Ken Blanchard and Spencer Johnson in, “One Minute Manager Builds High Performance Teams”. I definitely recommend you read this if not already.

Step 5 – Understanding “Why” people stick around.

Finally, managers must understand that good people do have a choice as to where they stay. Ultimately people stay around as long as one of more of the following factors exists. If one of them is sufficiently strong it can outweigh the lack of the others:

- **Earn** - They believe their financial expectations are being met
- **Learn** - They believe they are being more fulfilled personally
- **People** - Above them, around them, and below them

Most people in life are lucky to have a job where they have at least one of these met. If we can provide a position where a high performance salesperson: is earning to their potential, really enjoying their environment and the people they work with and report to, and they are continually learning and feeling invested in, we are likely to be able to hang on to our top producers.

Depending on what your company provides in terms of products and services, there will be natural variations on the above, but the five steps shared with you in this article will at a minimum give you a strong foundation to build successful sales teams on to achieve the success you deserve. It is an exciting time for business and it is more important than ever to be represented by the right professional sales people. We have never had it so good as long as we recruit and retain the best people. Build your people and they will build your company.



During his time at university 23 years ago, Lars Tewes spent his summers working for the direct sales division of Tennessee-based development corporation Southwestern, discovering first-hand how Americans taught their sales people. Since then, he has been involved in establishing and building three of Southwestern's companies on European soil. These include SBR Search, a retained search and selection firm, established in London during 1995, which is currently in the top five per cent of international search firms. Lars is now managing director of Southwestern's newest company in Europe, SBR Consulting.

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5. High Performance Sales in The New Economy – Key Points

To be successful in the new business landscape you need to re-evaluate your target market. Know in much more detail what your clients are really looking for and why they buy. You need to adjust your sales approach, your go-to-market strategy. The new sales model is more about creating an environment where people want to buy than pushing a sales cycle towards a reluctant or hesitant buyer. If buying patterns have changed, then has your sales model changed to reflect the new status quo?

Our key points and recommendations are as follows:

1. **Re-visit old clients and leads.** Your world has changed, their's probably has too.
2. **Add value.** Make more suggestions and deliver value that might help your clients achieve their goals.
3. **Stay focused.** When was the last time you looked at your sales process and analysed what causes sales? Map your sales process and train your sales people on best practice.
4. **Know your ratios.** What are your conversion rates for each step in the sales process? If you know them, do you know where to focus to get maximum return?
5. **Prospect, prospect, prospect.** But consider updating your target market definition. If your original target market is not buying at the same levels, then you either have to work harder to achieve the same result or re-define the market and find some new customers that you weren't considering previously (or do both).
6. **Be positive.** Stating the obvious, but if you say you can or can't you're probably right.
7. **Practice real relationship selling.** Engage with your customers, don't just sell at them. Give value at all points of engagement. Help them succeed, even if they are not currently buying. Keep them engaged with you, keep them loyal.
8. **Are your sales people 'attractive' to prospects and clients?** Are they seen as valuable resources, partners or are they seen as sales people focused on the transaction? Create an environment where customers want to BUY and will recommend you to others.
9. **What causes sales?** Both in terms of activity and behavior. Develop the right sales competencies and KPIs that allow you to measure performance against these.
10. **Practice the right 'self-talk'.** High-performance sales staff are like sports athletes. A top athlete doesn't succeed without the right coach. Practice praise and recognition and re-frame your language in terms of what can and must be done (not what is wrong or difficult).



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The last few years have created a new business landscape, with new challenges, new extremes and new business models that can change the rules of the game. Within this volatile environment, you may not be able to rely on the knowledge, experience and practices that got you here. New, fresh thinking is needed.

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