

DEVELOPING YOUR SALES TEAM

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A very important element of the performance of the team is the ability of the individual sellers to perform their roles. Based on our sales management consulting, we believe there are only a few reasons why sellers fail. The most obvious one being a lack of a clear understanding of their role. Assuming that this set of expectations has been clearly articulated, the competency and motivation of the seller are the remaining sources of failure. For the time being, we will not concern ourselves with the motivational element and just focus on competency.

How do you ensure that your seller is capable of doing what you need to have them do? One way is to go out and hire (steal) sellers with proven track records. This is acceptable if we assume they exist and are willing to move.

A more realistic approach (and in fact, for some distributorships the only option) is to hire or identify people with the potential to be a good seller and then develop that potential.

A good portion of what will go into the definition of competency can be developed by the utilization of formal training programs. We can increase the knowledge and skill level of these sellers. It is at this point where most distributors have a problem. You must as the manager of these sellers be willing and able to coach them in the field. A benchmark study published by the American Society for Training and Development (ASTD) concluded that, "Sales training without systematic coaching wastes 87 cents of every training dollar."

Let's assume that you developed your sellers to an acceptable level of selling skills via a formal training program. Upon completion of this training they went back to their sales jobs. However, you failed to provide them with the coaching reinforcement of these skills in the field. The result would be that within only one month your sellers would experience an 87% loss of the improvement in their skills! Your training dollar was only worth 13 cents.

The conclusion to this conversation is basically that your sales manager must be willing and able to coach their salespeople. Based upon our experience this is a skill not found readily in most of your sales managers.

The Acclius Corporation has identified four key success factors that good sales coaches (managers) have in common:

- An aggressive plan for the ongoing development as well as performance of each member of the sales team.
- Frequent and productive communication with each member.
- Continued feedback to each seller in terms of the level of selling skills and sales knowledge being displayed, as well as the results being achieved.

- Regular reinforcement of the value and importance of the work being done and the people doing the work.

The factors were found in those sales managers who were successful—developing and sustaining the performance of salespeople.