

Top 10 Attributes of Successful Sales Managers

We've discussed how the ideal situation is for people to act implicitly on what you've requested. The question remains, however, how do you gain this kind of influence? In the previous section, I suggested that this ideal is part of your long-term team relationship building. I'd now like to break that teambuilding effort down even further into specific characteristics and attributes you can seek to cultivate as a sales manager. In my mind, there are two broad influential categories: trust and presence. Under each category are five specific characteristics that every effective sales manager must possess. I call them the Five Cs of Trust and the Five Points of Presence.

The Ten Attributes of Influence

The Five Cs of Trust

Character
Competence
Confidence
Credibility
Congruence

The Five Points of Presence

Charisma
Enthusiasm
Optimism
Empathy
Vision

Why do you suppose that the first major category deals with trust? The ability to gain and keep trust is a vital factor in being able to influence your team. Research has shown, time and time again, that trust is always a contributing factor in the ability to influence others. When a person trusts you, that trust alone can cause them to accept you. On the flip side, if your team doesn't trust you, all the evidence, reasoning, facts or figures in the world won't get them to budge. Character is the foundation of trust. Stephen Covey, the author of the excellent book *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, masterfully explains the essence of character and why it is so vital:

If I try to use human influence strategies and tactics of how to get other people to do what I want, to work better, to be more motivated, to like me

and each other—while my character is fundamentally flawed, marked by duplicity or insincerity—then, in the long run, I cannot be successful. My duplicity will breed distrust, and everything I do—even using so-called good human relations techniques—will be perceived as manipulative. It simply makes no difference how good the rhetoric is or even how good the intentions are; if there is little or no trust, there is no foundation for permanent success. Only basic goodness gives life to technique.

I also believe that the teaching of Phillips Brooks, a nineteenth-century clergyman, offers profound wisdom on the nature of character: “Character is made in the small moments in our lives.” Stop and think a moment about those individuals in your life whom you respect most deeply. While you may be able to recall a few momentous occasions, it is likely that it is these people’s quiet example that has most impressed you. It is their very nature and spirit, even when they are not “on stage,” that has garnered your respect.

Competence is your knowledge and ability in a particular subject area and comes from life-long learning and experience. We consider others to be competent when we see them continually learning and advancing their training and education, being successful in what they do or having a strong track record with the various people they have worked with. Obviously, competency is a crucial element to trust. If your team is to trust you, they have to feel like you know what you’re doing. Confidence is also a major factor in gaining trust and influence. You can probably think of a time when it was very apparent that someone you were relying on was not very confident in her/his abilities. In turn, her/his lack of confidence made you feel uneasy. You must exude confidence or else your team will feel like it’s a case of “the blind leading the blind.” They will not trust in you or your abilities; therefore, you will have very little influence over them.

The next attribute under the trust umbrella is credibility. Gerry Spence, perhaps the most famous trial lawyer of all time, explained the importance of credibility the best: “One can stand as the greatest orator the world has known, possess the quickest mind, employ the cleverest psychology and have mastered all the technical devices of argument, but if one

is not credible, one might just as well preach to the pelicans.” To boost your credibility with your team, find out who your team knows and respects. See if you can get their mentor’s endorsement, either in person or in writing, to back up your credibility. If you are a known expert in your field, be sure to communicate that you have studied the subject, researched it and met with its other experts. Also, be prepared to drop the names of people your team will recognize. Another way to boost your credibility is to always present yourself in a calm, organized and authoritative manner. Being overly emotional or flustered throws your credibility out the window.

The last building block of trust is congruence. Congruence means that your words and actions always match. You are not one who is known to say one thing and then do another. Agreement and harmony in your verbal and nonverbal messages increase trust, and hence your ability to influence. When congruence is lacking, red flags go up in your team members’ minds. You can probably think of a manager you’ve known whose words you always had to take with a grain of salt. Such an individual is not the type of person you are likely to be influenced by.

Now that we’ve revealed the Five Cs of Trust, let’s take a moment to examine the Five Points of Presence. Presence is the ability to influence and empower others. Your presence energizes and inspires other individuals. They are compelled to follow you because of the vision you offer. Charisma heads the list of attributes under the Five Points of Presence and is a big part of motivating others. Who wants to follow someone who is drab and blah? Again, Gerry Spence has some keen insight on this crucial quality:

Charisma is energy from the heart zone. If the speaker has no feeling, there is nothing to transfer. Charisma occurs when the speaker’s feelings are transferred in the purest form to another. Charisma is not a diluted feeling. It is not disguised. It is a raw feeling. Charisma is the passing of our pure energy, our pure passion to the other.

People who are charismatic often hold us in awe. Their energy prods us, motivates us and inspires us. They fulfill our need to have heroes. We feel better for having met them, seen them, listened to them and interacted with them. Charisma is closely related to enthusiasm. If you are passionate about what you do, your enthusiasm will carry over into your interactions with your team. It is quite possibly passion and enthusiasm that most powerfully recruit the hearts and minds of those around you. Others are more likely to jump on board if they can see your conviction. Enthusiasm is a great moving force that we should seek to permeate into all we do. It is the drive that keeps our motivation up until the goal is reached. Emerson said, "Nothing great was ever achieved without enthusiasm." Another great thinker, especially in the area of personal development, Norman Vincent Peale, said, "When one gets enthusiastic, the entire personality lights up. The mind becomes sharper, more intuitive; the entire life force and creative ability are enhanced. Such a person is motivated and will certainly make an impact."

Another key factor is optimism. Optimism is more than a positive mental attitude. It is not just thinking about positive things and then hoping they will come true. True optimism is a frame of reference that governs how you lead. Optimists don't just hope for but they actually expect success and goodness. Even when there are setbacks, they are able to quickly bounce back. If you can inspire optimism in your team members, they will be grateful for your positive influence and the difference it makes not only in the workplace, but also in their personal lives. Nobody wants to be around a moody, angry or pessimistic manager. Your optimism will attract others and be contagious. Once your optimism spreads, your team will begin working together with a lot of positive energy.

Your attitude reflects what's going on inside of you and is a strong indicator of what will actually play out on the surface. That's why, when it comes to teambuilding, an optimistic attitude starts with you. Optimism *is* something you can control, and you can't expect your team to develop it if you don't have it yourself.

Empathy is another major part of being an effective leader. When someone feels your empathy, they will be more open to your influence. The world is full of people who are

trying to make us do things for *their* reasons. It is refreshing to find someone who will take the time to pause and seek to understand. As a leader, once you know whom you are dealing with, what s/he is thinking and why s/he is thinking such things, you will be better able to empathize.

Zig Ziglar points out that this kind of focus on others actually helps us meet our own needs: “The best way to get what you want out of life is to help others get what they want.” When you’re trying to work on being more empathetic, you must remember the universal needs of all men and women: approval, attention, praise, encouragement, understanding and acceptance. We can learn a lot about empathy from the ancient classic *Tao-te-Ching* by Lao-tzu. It states: “Evolved leaders win the trust and support of the people through their complete identification with them. The interests of people are naturally promoted because they become the interests of the leader as well.”

Vision is the final attribute of the Five Points of Presence. Influential leaders have a clearly defined vision, which in turn serves as a powerful tool in helping others see the big picture. Most people will embrace their leader’s vision if they know exactly where they fit into it and what they have to do to achieve it. Vision should pull the team together and generate energy, passion and a willingness to work hard. Creating a sound vision begins with focusing on our destination. In other words, you must know where you are going. If you hope to achieve outstanding results, give your team clear direction. Stephen Covey said, “To begin with the end in mind means to start with a clear understanding of your destination. It means to know where you’re going so that you better understand where you are now and so that the steps you take are always in the right direction.” Lastly, when you plan and execute your vision, don’t be afraid to dream big. Walt Disney once said,

Make no little plans; they have no magic to stir men’s blood and probably themselves will not be realized. Make big plans; aim high in hope and work, remembering that a noble, logical diagram once recorded will never die, but long

after we are gone will be a living thing, asserting itself with ever-growing insistency.

Think of the incredible legacy that has been enjoyed by millions and that will continue to touch generations of people because of this one man's vision. It all started with one man, whose enthusiasm had a ripple effect on all those he worked with. Walt Disney's mark will forever be emblazoned upon the world.

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