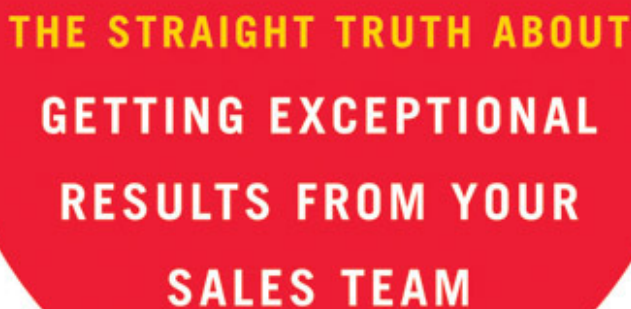


**THE STRAIGHT TRUTH ABOUT
GETTING EXCEPTIONAL
RESULTS FROM YOUR
SALES TEAM**



EXCERPT
from

**SALES
MANAGEMENT.
SIMPLIFIED.**

MIKE WEINBERG

AUTHOR OF *NEW SALES. SIMPLIFIED.*

FOREWORD by Jeb Blount, CEO of Sales Gravy and author of *People Follow You*

Early Praise for *Sales Management. Simplified.*

“This is arguably the best book that has ever been written on sales management . . . Weinberg delivers an unequalled blueprint for both leading salespeople and building high-performance sales teams.”

—**Job Blount, CEO of Sales Gravy, and author of *People Follow You***

“In *Sales Management. Simplified.*, Mike Weinberg has written more than a great sales management book; he’s crafted a no-nonsense, step-by-step guide for sales success.”

—**Chris Pflueger, Vice President, Business Development, RE/MAX World Headquarters**

“Your sacred cows will be slaughtered, and conventional wisdom turned on its head. Weinberg, in his blunt, inimitable take-no-prisoners style, offers no quarter. You are going to change what you believe as a sales leader. You are going to change what you do. And you are going to be thankful for the better results you produce.”

—**Anthony Iannarino, speaker, author, sales leader**

“An absolute must-read for leaders at every level! Whether you’ve been a sales leader for years or just starting out, *Sales Management. Simplified.* provides the framework to dramatically improve your team’s performance and overall culture. Just executing the inspiring call to action in Chapters 20-22 will produce the best ROI of your career.”

—**Khris Stillman, Director of Sales, National Distribution, Verizon Wireless**

“Mike Weinberg cuts through the crap, makes you laugh, and teaches the fundamentals of sales leadership all at the same time. This book is absolutely jammed with entertaining, essential advice that Will. Help. Your. Team. Sell. More.”

—**Matt Heinz, President, Heinz Marketing, named a Forbes Top 30 Social Sales Influencer**

“*Sales Management. Simplified.* is a wake-up call for all executives, not just sales leaders. Mike Weinberg shares the “blunt truth” about the problems in sales organizations with real-life examples that will make you laugh (or maybe cry). Then he delivers a blueprint for change. Take Mike’s challenge to heart. Put his sales management framework into action. Enjoy the positive results that follow.”

—**Mark Peterman, CEO, Cornerstone Solutions Group, Inc.**

“*Sales Management. Simplified.* is a valuable road map to profitably grow sales. Starting with creating the right sales culture, we are implementing Mike Weinberg’s three clear principles of sales management to help us become the dominant leader in heavy-duty trucks.”

—**Stephen Roy, President, Mack Trucks, NA**

“Weinberg’s book drips with the common sense wisdom of experience. Topic after topic, he finds the sweet spot between sound theory and practical advice. The chapters on manager conversations and business plans are worth the price alone! Stock up on highlighter pens—you’ll need them.”

—**Charles Green, CEO, Trusted Advisor Associates,
and co-author of *The Trusted Advisor***

“This is the first blunt, spot-on sales management book that will unsettle you to the core about how you lead people. A must-read for every sales manager, for every salesperson to buy for their manager, and for anyone who wants to be a manager!”

—**Mark Hunter, “The Sales Hunter,”
and author of *High-Profit Selling***

“I have always believed you can’t learn Sales Management from a book; you just have to get engaged and learn along the way. *Sales Management. Simplified.* has caused me to revise my thinking. You still need to get engaged, but you can’t have a better reference to accelerate your learning than Mike’s book.”

—**Dave Brock, CEO, Partners in EXCELLENCE**

“If you want a clear and concise overview of exactly what you need to do to run a superstar sales team, this is the book for you. Mike takes his years of experience and shares with you his best ideas on how to make successful sales management...simple. I highly recommend this book to anyone in sales.”

—**John Spence, author of *Awesomely Simple***

Excerpt from *Sales Management. Simplified.*

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FOREWORD

In a recent LinkedIn Pulse article, a CEO in the tech industry declared that he would never again hire salespeople. The post went viral to cheers and jeers, and was viewed and shared hundreds of thousands of times on LinkedIn.

While the premise of the article was absurd, it clearly struck a nerve and brought to the surface highly charged emotions, including a deep animosity toward sales in general. It also revealed how desperate businesses are for a solution to the #1 problem plaguing twenty-first century companies: underperforming salespeople in dysfunctional and sub-optimized sales organizations.

Sadly, many of the problems that front-line sales management and senior executives face with their sales organizations are self-inflicted. In *Sales Management. Simplified.*, Mike Weinberg does a brilliant job of laying this truth bare. And while doing so, he delivers an unequaled blueprint for both leading salespeople and building high-performance sales teams.

This is arguably the best book that has ever been written on sales management, and I don't say this lightly. I've read virtually every book on the subject published over the last 20 years and have dedicated my career to building better sales leaders. When it comes to sales leadership, I know awesome when I see it.

FOREWORD

With real-life examples, authenticity, honesty, and common sense, Mike conquers the three core pillars of sales leadership—*leading*, *managing*, and *coaching*—and provides you with the concepts and tools you’ll need to be effective and proficient in each.

The first half of the book is loud—so loud it will shake you out of your comfort zone as it delivers a blunt wake-up call that clearly illustrates why your sales team isn’t delivering results. You’ll come face to face with the destructive leadership attitudes and behaviors that are holding your sales organization back. The second half of the book then offers a simple model for sales leadership as well as practical advice on the essentials of sales management that you can begin using immediately.

Here’s the brutal truth, though, that you must embrace. Regardless of your organizational role, as a leader, if your sales team succeeds, you succeed. If your team fails, you fail, your company fails, and all of the employees that work for your company fail. Without sales, without customers, you have no company. Period. End of story. Sales leadership is that important.

Sales Management. Simplified. gets you upfront and personal with the undeniable fact that your job as a leader is to create a healthy, results-focused culture where your salespeople can develop their skills, leverage their talents, and thrive. Mike reminds you that to drive long-term success, you must “*make heroes, not be the hero.*” All roadblocks, including your own ego-driven interference, must be relentlessly removed in order for your team to deliver on the number that everyone in your organization counts on for survival.

This might be a good time to pause and strap yourself in. You’re about to go on a high-octane journey to higher sales productivity. I promise that it’s going to be one heck of a ride.

Jeb Blount, CEO of Sales Gravy & author of
*People Follow You: The Real Secret to What Matters
Most in Leadership*

INTRODUCTION

I love sales and helping salespeople excel at developing new business. But what I love even more is experiencing a high-performance, results-focused, winning sales team with solid leadership, smart talent management, a strong sales culture, and a sound sales process. My two primary goals in writing *Sales Management. Simplified.* are to bluntly share the reasons so few sales organizations today exhibit these characteristics, and to offer a simple, actionable framework that sales managers and senior executives can adopt to create dramatic and lasting sales performance improvement.

I was compelled to write this book because of what I'm observing in companies where I consult, coach, and speak. Everywhere I turn, sales managers are overwhelmed and often confused, and executives are frustrated. Managers are working harder and longer than ever, yet accomplishing less. The *noise* from supposed sales "experts" is deafening. We have more sales tools, toys, gimmicks, and processes than any human being could possibly digest, and we are constantly being told that "everything has changed." Instead of returning to the tried-and-true basics of sales management, sales leaders live daily searching for new answers.

This book is divided into two distinct parts. Part One delivers the straight truth about why so many sales organizations are failing to

deliver the desired results. Be forewarned: I did not hold back or mince words. My intention is for Chapters 1–16 to serve as a loud wakeup call. Very often, what is believed to be a sales problem turns out to be a leadership and culture problem. So, if you are a sales leader or a corporate executive and your salespeople gave you this book, please don't hold it against them. Be angry with me for stirring the pot. If they had the guts to ask you to read this, believe me, they want to succeed as badly as you do!

In Part One you will read true stories about real sales managers and real executives in real companies, big and small. My hope is that seeing their situations will cause you to pause and take a long look in the mirror to evaluate yours with fresh eyes and a new perspective.

I'll tackle topics ranging from company leadership diverting and distracting sales managers from their primary job and burying them with unimaginable amounts of crap, to silly compensation plans that reward salespeople for babysitting customers acquired years ago. I shine the spotlight on self-proclaimed "sales expert" executives who deflate salespeople with their pontificating and micromanagement, while also reminding charismatic, visionary entrepreneurs that their salespeople require a tad more clarity and support than they tend to realize.

After reading Part One, sales managers may think twice before putting on the fire chief's helmet and attempting to solve their company's every problem. Hopefully, many will come to agree that you can't effectively lead a sales team via email or with your head buried in CRM screens! And above all, sales managers will become convinced that much of their time is spent on low-value, low-payoff activities instead of on the sales leadership essentials outlined in the second half of the book.

Part Two presents a very simple, practical sales management framework that any company or leader can implement. We will examine the characteristics of a healthy sales culture and learn how to create one. Managers will be challenged to radically reorient their calendars to maximize time spent on high-value activities that include conduct-

ing regular results-focused 1:1 meetings with each of their people; leading productive sales team meetings that energize, equip, and align their teams; and working alongside salespeople as a true coach, manager, and mentor.

In Chapter 18, I take you behind the scenes for an in-depth look at the single healthiest sales culture I've ever experienced. Chapter 20 offers practical tips to significantly ramp up accountability without coming across as a micromanager or demotivating salespeople. Chapter 21 not only paints the picture of what sales team meetings can be, but also offers ideas for agenda items and help for exhausted sales managers who carry too much of the burden for leading sales meetings.

Chapter 23 challenges you to rethink the sales roles at your company as I make my best case that zookeepers won't hunt no matter how hard you push them—and that you'd have more sales if your few true hunters were freed up to do more of what they do best. I also describe practical ways to keep your A-players happy and on your team, and how to coach up or coach out your underperformers quickly.

Chapters 24 through 26 cover the sales leader's responsibilities to point the team toward strategic targets, to arm the team with the weapons necessary to win, and to monitor the battle in real time. These managers also get one final reminder that they're ultimately judged by the results of their team, not the amount of *work* they do. Therefore, they must master the art of becoming *selfishly productive* to take back control of their calendars and focus on the sales management essentials that truly move the performance needle.

Thank you for joining me on this journey to first look at what may be hindering sales performance and then at simple ways you can start getting exceptional results from your sales team.



CHAPTER 3

You Can't Effectively Run a Sales Team when You're Buried in Crap

Be forewarned. I'm a rather emotional guy, and after reviewing my notes for this chapter, I am already angry! The barbs that follow are directed squarely at the senior executive to whom the sales manager reports. But before I begin the tirade, allow me to let you in on one of the dirty little secrets of my consulting practice.

It's Not Rocket Science: Little Effort = Little Results

I get brought into all kinds of companies to help improve the sales effort. On the rare occasion, senior leadership at a high-growth company with a very healthy sales organization will bring me in to help them get to the next level. That's truly a joy and a treat. But as I mentioned, it's also pretty darn rare. Typically, I'm engaged when the sales team isn't working the way it's supposed to; results aren't what they should be—particularly when it comes to bringing in new business—

or sales management is stuck and seeking an infusion of energy, along with a fresh perspective and outside ideas.

Regardless of the size of the company, industry, or even type of sales role, do you know what I *almost always* find? (The only reason I say *almost* is because I've taught my kids that whenever you say *always* or *never* you're probably not telling the truth.) The dirty little secret of this highly paid consultant is that with almost every sales team I've worked who struggle to develop more new business, from SAP consulting firms to printing companies, from OEM truck manufacturers to mortgage lenders, from a highly respected defense contractor to a software company, one of the main causes of underperformance is that the very people charged with selling new pieces of business and acquiring new clients spend a surprisingly low percentage of their time selling new business.

That's it. The secret is out. No matter how complex the business, how tenured the reps, how long the sales cycle, how compelling their sales story, or how well they conduct sales calls, make presentations, or tailor proposals, one of the biggest culprits detracting from sales performance is that salespeople forget their primary job. Quite simply, they get all caught up in doing all kinds of seemingly important activities: playing corporate ambassador, safety committee member, customer service advocate, delivery boy, assistant to the operations manager. You get the point. Salespeople regularly fall short of delivering their numbers because *Little Effort = Little Results*. It's not that they're not working. They're just working on the wrong things.

So why take all this space to expound on why salespeople fail when this chapter is supposedly about companies burying the sales manager? Because sales managers commit the very same sins, but with one huge difference: While salespeople *choose* to take their eye off the new business development ball and are often happily distracted from their primary job, in most cases, sales managers are typically kept from doing their primary job and highest-value activities because their company buries them with an unimaginable amount of crap that has little to do with leading the sales team or driving revenue!

Senior Executives Divert and Distract Sales Managers from Their Most Important Job

As mentioned in Chapter 1, the sales manager's role is already hard enough. People and projects incessantly vie for the manager's time and attention. This happens even though the sales manager is the key leverage point in the organization to drive sales success. Somehow it has become permissible, even fashionable, to pile a large load of non-revenue-driving tasks and responsibilities on this person as well.

I recently facilitated a two-day sales management retreat for a large national client. About two dozen sales managers came to the headquarters city and joined members of the company's executive team. I split up the two days pretty evenly between sessions covering the "Essentials of Sales Leadership" (presented in Part Two of this book), and "Train the Trainer" sessions tackling the critical elements of my New Sales Driver framework from *New Sales. Simplified*. Prior to the retreat, I did some field coaching in several of the client's markets so I had a decent feel for the load these sales managers carried, along with the significant pressure being applied from the executive committee.

During the first day of the retreat I sensed something was amiss. While the managers were intellectually assenting to the sales leadership principles I was espousing, I could tell they weren't truly buying in. In other words, they believed that what I was preaching was true, but they were not reacting like sales managers usually do when I share this content.

On the second day, I set aside time for a closed-door session with just the sales managers. Within a minute of the executive team leaving the room the twenty-five of us were seated informally in a circle. By this point they knew enough about me to understand that things were about to get very real. You could visibly see the angst on several managers' faces. I took a deep breath and exhaled loud enough for everyone to know that I was tracking with them emotionally. I then asked two questions that opened the flood gates:

1. What the heck is going on?
2. And how much worse is it than I think it is?

Voices rose. Expletives flew. Tears flowed. What they described sounded more like *Mission Impossible* than sales management. Along with the tremendous pressure applied from the senior executives (trying to appease their overly involved private equity group owners), these “sales” managers were subject to burdens and expectations that were nearly unbelievable. In one region, the maintenance staff was short-handed, so the sales manager was asked to physically prep the facility for arriving clients. In another, the local executive insisted that the sales manager regularly participate in employee appreciation events, even though they conflicted with her own sales management responsibilities. Another manager decried the fact that when the main incoming phone line was busy or went unanswered, calls would roll over to his number. Several managers were working seven days a week in an effort just to keep up with the litany of tasks. I could fill a few pages with what I heard, but the point has been made. This company, whether intentionally or accidentally, was burying its sales managers to the point of utter exasperation.

I wish the preceding scenario was uncommon, but unfortunately it seems to be the norm in many businesses today. Last year I was hired by an industrial manufacturing company with a strong anti-sales culture. The COO brought me in to look at the sales process, help create a more proactive sales approach for the regional sales managers (who fancied themselves as “sales engineers” as opposed to salespeople), and personally coach the director of sales on sales leadership. Due to aggressive cost cutting, the company was profitable despite flat sales resulting from a protracted slowdown in that particular space, the sales team’s lack of leadership, and its reactive, pessimistic mode of operating.

The COO warned me going into the assignment that I likely wouldn’t see much good sales management behavior in place because

it was widely agreed that the director of sales was overwhelmed. The COO was correct. It was even a challenge scheduling my first coaching session with the director. That should have been a clue to the two dominant issues I quickly uncovered. First, this long-time employee had pretty close to zero interest in being coached—by anyone, let alone by me. And second, to say that this poor man was overwhelmed would be the sales management understatement of the century! He was underwater, breathing through a straw in the midst of a tsunami.

For the first half-hour, sitting in the director's impressive, glass-enclosed office, I just listened. He provided a history lesson about the company's sales management failures over the past fifteen years. He then told me about the various types of meetings he was required to attend on a regular basis. The Production Planning Meeting. The Product Development Meeting. The New Strategy Meeting. The Executive Committee Meeting. The S & OP Meeting. There were more, but I stopped writing them down. When I asked to see his actual calendar, he smiled and gladly walked me over to his desk. What I saw was unfathomable. There was practically no open space, and that's not because he was time-blocking his high-value activities. All of a sudden, the bizarre placard on the wall in the company's men's restroom started to make sense to me.

*"IT IS AGAINST COUNTY, STATE & FEDERAL REGULATIONS TO
CONSUME EITHER FOOD OR BEVERAGES IN A RESTROOM AREA.
WE ASK YOUR COOPERATION IN OBSERVING THESE REGULATIONS."*

I kid you not. Word for word, that was on the wall in the men's room. It was so beyond the pale that I snapped a picture and tweeted it (August 14, 2013, if you want to check my Twitter stream).

Was it in the realm of possibility that this company's managers were so over-burdened that they were trying to combine their lunch and pee break into one event? You can't make this stuff up. Another reason I love consulting!

During the second half-hour of this initial sales management

coaching session, I began asking the director a few basic questions to get a handle on how he was (wasn't) leading the sales organization:

Me: Tell me how often you get out in the field to spend a day with one of your people.

Director: I don't.

Me: Let's talk about accountability for members of the sales team. When do you have one-to-one conversations to review sales results with the salespeople?

Director: I don't.

Me: Okay. How about pipeline reviews, where you go over existing opportunities and what's been added to the pipeline recently?

Director: Nope.

Me: When are you doing team conference calls?

Director: I'm not.

Me: How certain are you about team members' level of activity or that they're even targeting the right customers and prospects?

He didn't need to answer. We both knew that we found the problem in our first hour together.

But let me very blunt and very clear here. There was a lot of leadership sin to go around. Yes, clearly this head of sales was confused about his priorities. And he certainly was not taking ownership of his team, his calendar, or sales results. However, and I mean a big however, before throwing any more stones at this faithful, hard-working, long-tenured employee (who happened to be in the wrong job at the wrong time), let's take just a quick look at the situation created for him.

The director had twenty-two direct reports, fifteen of whom were the regional salespeople. The other seven were in support roles: service and marketing. He had no administrative assistance. The company mandated his attendance at all those non-sales management

meetings mentioned previously. I also remember the director of sales sharing that he was receiving in excess of 200 emails per day—many which did indeed require his response. In reality, he could've worked 60 hours per week in 100 percent reactive mode and still not have been able to handle all the work being put on his plate, let alone get to the proactive sales leadership priorities I was hired to help him master.

What a disaster. But don't think for a minute these two examples are extraordinary. They're not. I could regale you with stories that would make you both laugh and cry. There's the suffering senior vice president of a major bank who was being evaluated on how her team scored in eighteen categories. That's right: eighteen. My consulting partner at the time looked at her and quizzically asked, "Are you telling me that your company has given you eighteen separate goals and *all* of these are *priorities*?" She offered a huge smile, admitting how ludicrous it was, and replied, "Yes, I have been instructed that each and every one of these eighteen areas on my scorecard is a top priority." What idiots run that company! The only solace in the story is that the clown CEO of the bank was finally tossed out following the discovery that he was less than forthright in some of his dealings during the financial meltdown.

Diverting and distracting the sales manager is a problem of epidemic proportions, and companies are reaping the consequences for what they've sown. They are losing out on sales and they're losing key talent, too. A very big part of the reason I walked away from two high-end sales executive positions and ultimately returned to consulting is because of how little of my time and attention I was able to spend doing what I love: driving revenue. Whether it was the customer service rep giving out my cell phone number because she was told that "all problems go to the sales manager," or, at my last employer, where it had become a game to see how many times a week the CEO could gather executives in the conference room, companies love to bury the sales manager with all kinds of crap and then complain that they're not leading the sales team well.

I would challenge senior executives to take a hard look at the burden they're placing on sales managers. And I specifically ask them to compare the amount time their "sales leaders" spend playing assistant general manager, customer service agent, errand boy, email slave, and committee member versus the amount of time dedicated to the high-value, revenue-driving activities described in Part Two.



CHAPTER 4

Playing CRM Desk Jockey Does Not Equate to Sales Leadership

There is no more ubiquitous sales management tool over the past decade than the customer relationship management (CRM) system. CRMs come in all shapes and sizes, from companies new and old, big and small. None is more widely recognized, talked about, accepted as the *standard*, and loved and hated than the 1,600-pound gorilla in the space, salesforce.com.

I give “Salesforce,” as the entire sales world calls it, tons of credit. From the company’s fearless leader, Marc Benioff, to its widely read blog, to the annual Dreamforce Conference, which draws 140,000 to San Francisco each fall, to its comprehensive robust platform, Salesforce is to CRMs what Kleenex is to facial tissue—or pretty darn close! And as incredibly valuable as it is for a sales leader and sales team to have such a powerful system to enter, track, and report sales opportunities that also allows you to communicate about and with prospective and current customers, it’s still just a piece of software. Yes, I just wrote that. We’ll have to see if

Salesforce revokes my guest blogger status once this book is out. And this piece of software, albeit wonderful and powerful, has caused a dramatic, and not necessarily positive, shift in where many sales managers focus their energy and attention.

Salesforce.com Will Fix a Broken Sales Organization Just Like Having Kids Will Fix a Bad Marriage

Earlier this year I was having lunch with the president of a midsize local (St. Louis) company whose sales team was not firing on all cylinders. I'm pretty familiar with this organization and have relationships with a handful of key employees. The company's sales team is disjointed, lacking clarity on which markets to pursue and how to pursue them. There are significant challenges with the company's value proposition, sales process, and compensation plan. Morale is not great (no surprise), and sales management is inconsistent in its approach. Aside from that, the sales organization runs like a well-oiled machine ☺.

The president shared with great excitement that the company had just committed to adopt salesforce.com, and he began to tell me how this would be *the fix* for much of what was wrong with the sales effort. I smiled politely, mentioned that it was a big commitment for his company, and that I hoped it would pay dividends. I bit my tongue to prevent me from telling this wonderful man (not a client) what I was really thinking. What I wanted to scream loud enough to disrupt the whole restaurant was, "Are you crazy? Your whole freakin' sales engine is broken. I know it. You know it. Everyone knows it. Installing a CRM without addressing the many underlying issues and root causes of your sales problems is akin to a couple with a marriage on the rocks deciding to have children thinking that will save their relationship!" Having children adds stress and exposes weaknesses in your marriage. A CRM can be a wonderful tool, but it doesn't have supernatural healing powers, fold your laundry, or make customers run to your doorstep with cash in hand.

Confused Managers Track, Evaluate, and Reinforce the Wrong Behaviors

While CRM systems can, and often do, bring many benefits to both management and salespeople alike, they unfortunately also create their own set of problems. One of the most common (and amusing) changes I observe is that sales managers become CRM jockeys with their heads constantly buried in CRM screens.

It's almost as if CRM adoption causes sales managers to change how they see their job. I can't decipher whether it's because of the pressure managers feel to rationalize their decision to purchase the system (in smaller organizations) or whether they're afraid of being called out by senior management (in larger companies) who made the significant investment. In both cases, I see many sales managers who become obsessed with the sales team religiously updating activity and opportunities in the system.

In and of itself, enforcing CRM compliance across the sales organization isn't a bad thing at all. In fact, it's essential. But the way it plays out in the real world is where it gets dysfunctional. The sales manager who develops OCD around his new CRM begins sending really weird and unhelpful messages to his team. Without actually saying the words, the CRM-addicted manager continually preaching about the need to keep the CRM updated is communicating that it is more important to enter tasks and opportunities swiftly and properly than it is to actually move sales opportunities forward and close deals.

You may snicker reading that assertion, believing it's absurd. Surely, you might think, there isn't an executive or sales manager on the planet who believes that it's more important to keep CRM data fresh and clean than it is to actually sell something. That may be true, but many sales executives' words and actions belie that fact. I've consulted for organizations where members of the sales team would sacrifice putting time, energy, and creativity into advancing significant sales opportunities because they were behind updating tasks in Salesforce. Said differently, these salespeople were making a conscious

choice to complete administrative tasks rather than actually selling because they worked under a management philosophy where the consequences were harsher for not updating the CRM than for missing sales goals.

Email and the CRM Are Not Replacements for Personal Leadership

We are now experiencing a new breed of sales managers who were raised in the era of email and CRM systems. Many in this generation of “leaders” did not have the benefit of being mentored by seasoned sales managers, who back in the day not only didn’t have these wonderful high-tech tools, but saw it as *their personal responsibility* to develop the sales skills of their team members. If old-time (mid-1990s and earlier) sales managers wanted to evaluate how a salesperson sold—i.e., opened a dialogue, conducted an initial sales call, advanced an opportunity, built consensus, delivered a presentation, handled difficult buyers, etc.—that manager would go into *the field* and actually get in the salesperson’s car. Scandalous, I know.

It’s beyond comprehension how it has become the norm today to judge a salesperson’s ability by solely overanalyzing each of his deals and what percentage of opportunities advance from stage to stage in the CRM. It’s as if we’ve decided to replace true sales experts with quantitative mutual fund managers. Just stick the manager behind a large screen with lots and lots of data under the guise that if she stares at it long enough she’ll figure out which stocks to buy . . . I mean which salespeople can sell.

A chapter picking on sales managers for morphing into desk jockeys would not be complete with addressing another huge leadership issue: email. Maybe I missed the memo on this, or possibly the decree was buried on page 2,344 in the Affordable Care Act legislation. But when did it become acceptable to manage people who manage people and relationships via email? Please reread that last question slowly to truly ponder what I am asking here.

We've got salespeople on the front lines (in various capacities from territory managers to hunters to inside salespeople) who live and die based on their ability to connect with people relationally. All these attributes and behaviors—EQ, empathy, being a good listener, resilience, enthusiasm, and the ability to engage in productive dialogue—are critical for them to be successful. Yet somehow, some way, we've arrived at the place where it's acceptable for the people managing these salespeople to do so via email? We've got sales managers emailing either individual reps or the entire team on a regular basis. "I need this. I need that. Where are you on this deal? You're behind; are you going to hit your number this month?" If I showed you some of the emails forwarded to me by salespeople you'd cringe. You'd be angry. You'd scratch your head. These are emails from desk jockey sales managers who spend almost no time face-to-face with their people. Emails with threats. Emails sent on Sunday mornings asking for an immediate reply. Emails asking for status updates. And of course, emails with harsh words about overdue tasks in the CRM. Again, this is all one-way communication from a manager who likely isn't meeting one-on-one regularly with his people, isn't conducting productive sales team meetings, and certainly isn't spending anywhere near enough time out in the field (or the inside sales office) where the work actually happens.

Could you imagine a Major League Baseball team manager, even one like the Chicago Cubs' Joe Maddon, who's known for his love of stats, probabilities, and sabermetrics, not sitting in the dugout during a game? Not watching players perform with his own eyes? Not being around to offer a word of encouragement or correction on the spot? Not caring whether his players' hearts were engaged? Think about the absurdity of a sports team manager sitting in his office all day (and all night) reviewing reports and data, making lineup decisions based only on what he sees on his screens and exported spreadsheets. And when he had a really important message for his team, firing up his email and firing off a missive to the team complaining about their lousy stats, berating them for lack of hustle and work ethic, and challenging their manhood—all by email! How well do you think that would work?

Newsflash for sales managers: Living with your head buried in CRM screens is not akin to *leading* your sales team. And your ability to craft a high volume of sharply worded emails does not substitute for actually managing the people who work for you.

The CRM Is Supposed to Work for You, Not the Other Way Around

Before moving on, let me make this clear. I'm not anti-CRM. I'm simply sharing what is happening at all kinds of companies using CRM systems. In no way am I opposed to using data to help manage the sales process or people. I have forever preached that "*the math works*" and that a high-frequency sales attack almost always trumps low activity levels. It is essential to monitor key metrics and track opportunities through the pipeline. The cloud-based software and systems available today are incredibly powerful and we'd be foolish not to use them—particularly because there are so many choices making it easier to find the solution that fits an organization's needs well.

But let me make this equally clear. A CRM will not, in and of itself, fix your sales issues. If you're not careful, it will not only create an incredible amount of work (installing it, training people on how to use it, and increasing the administrative burden on managers and reps alike), it also might actually slow your sales effort.

It is not uncommon for me to ask a sales manager or executive for details about a particular sales opportunity or if I can see a certain sales report and get this answer: "We don't have that module yet." Or, "We only purchased the base version so we don't have that functionality." Or, "I think that information is available, but we haven't figured out how to retrieve it in a usable format." Oh my.

We all know that salespeople love to whine and bitch, particularly when asked to incorporate something new into their routine. So it's pretty common to get an earful from sales team members about the (in)effectiveness and burden of their new CRM. Sometimes, it's exactly that—just bitching for the sake of being heard. But often, their

beefs are legit: Cumbersome systems. Predetermined stages of the sales cycle that don't align well with their reality in the field. Difficulty making their legacy methods play nicely with the new system. Hours spent entering information. Inability to get the desired info at the desired time. And maybe the most frustrating beef of all, getting asked to provide information again that had already been entered into the CRM because someone in management can't get what he wants so he asks for it in a different format!

Hearing similar complaints over and over and over again prompted me to start asking this question: *Is your CRM working for you or are you working for it?* Unfortunately, more often than not, it's the latter. And that's a problem.

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