



Sales Managers Workshop

Key Learnings

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Introduction

ICMA held a Sales Managers workshop, moderated by Peter Lamb, to discuss & debate aspects of Sales Leadership in order to manage & lead sales teams more effectively. The following captures the key learnings of the sales managers present and collates what they felt were the key things they would take away

Key Learnings

It helps to consolidate or group key learnings into two areas

- Rep Management
- Motivation which centred around pay & reward

Rep Management

- Sales Managers/effective sales leaders should listen to our reps. It is, of course, best practice to listen to our clients to understand their drivers, problems and needs. Equal value can be gained by listening to sales reps. It is easy to be cynical when reps are talking about problems about their selling, it's easy to view this sort of discussion as excuses about not selling enough. But actually a balance should be struck to make sure we are actually listening to issues, so we understand what road blocks, problems and time wasters affect our sales people so we can perhaps address or remove these issues to increase their sales effectiveness & company results
- Sales Leaders, or business leaders for that matter, should spend more time with reps to see first hand what's happening in the field, what's working & what's not, what customers are actually saying & thinking and also to provide coaching and mentoring to the reps, on the job. On the jobs training is well recognised as a cost effective method of upskilling staff and is particularly relevant in a sales environment
- We should reflect on how much training is being provided to reps. As with all training a key consideration should be the timeliness of it and making sure training is aligned with expectations around sales performance & targets
- With only 25-40% of a sales persons time actually being spent with clients, we should examine what is wasting reps time. These timewasters can actually be things put upon the reps by sales leaders themselves – a common example of this could be too many reporting requirements put upon the rep that are actually a big time drain for them, particularly if effective systems are not in place. What else is distracting the reps from selling or wasting their time?
- CRM has to work for the sales rep – not the other way around. Bad practice here is to have salespeople constantly inputting data into a CRM system so that management can pull various management reports. If Reps/sales people get no value back from a CRM system ultimately they will stop using it. Good practice around CRM means the system working for the rep. An example of this would be the CRM system supporting or driving the sales process forward – if your sales cycle has particular stages and timings, is your CRM system configured to prompt & support the rep through this with timely interventions?

- Suggested by Peter, there was general consensus that a best practice sales meeting would be:
 - 0900 Monday morning
 - One hour long maximum made up of
 - 15 minutes talking about success of the previous week
 - 15 minutes on actual numbers
 - 15 minutes cascading information or receiving feedback
 - 15 minutes on training/coaching

Motivation/Pay

The second key area of learning was around motivation and, no surprises, this centred on financial reward. But some sensible best practices emerged:

- A good commission plan is vital to motivate sales teams
- A key aspect of this is simplicity. It should be clear and simple to the sales person “if I sell this, I get this”. A personal view is that ultimate best practice is a commission plan that is no more than one page. If you can’t do that, your plan is too complex and you haven’t thought it through well enough
- Unlimited (rather than capped) commission seemed to have 100% support to maximise sales performance
- There were tales of reps earning \$250,000. Clearly there is an important task to manage the margins going on so that sales people are exceptionally motivated without the company going bust. It can be done
- Sales cycles in the classified markets are generally short. Payment & reward cycles should reflect this. E.g. if Sales reps are running against weekly or daily targets, then they should be rewarded in a similar (but practical) fashion to encourage a virtuous circle of high performance & clear reward for that performance. Bad practice here would of course be a scenario of daily targets and annual payments. This extreme example would clearly be demotivational to sales people
- Contests were discussed as an under used but very effective way to drive high performance & motivation. Contests between reps, contests between teams, contests between Sales Managers or Sales Leaders would all drive motivation & performance in an environment that obviously tends to attract and have competitive people. Obviously the timing aspect of this can help the company achieve key objectives – quarterly targets, half yearly targets, new product launches, new market entry etc
- The last point, on the downside of all of this, is that sales leaders need to step in early to deal with poor performance. There were a few examples in the room where we, as sales leaders, had been too slow to deal with poor performance, had left it too long, had given too many chances. Early intervention is good practice as is awareness and adherence to company procedures, employment policy & law

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