

What Makes a Good Sales Leader?

September 13, 2023

Have you ever wondered what makes a good sales leader?

There's more to being a leader in sales than simply having a 'management role' that allows you to tell other team members what to do. A true leader elevates the performance of an entire sales team, helping to motivate and inspire employees, and drive results.

An effective sales leader can transform the performance of an entire company, contributing to greater efficiency, productivity, and staff engagement.

Let's take a closer look at the skills, attributes, and qualities of a great sales leader.

What is a Sales Leader? An Introduction

Before we discuss what makes a good sales leader, it's worth defining what a sales leadership role actually involves. It's easy to assume 'sales leadership' and 'sales management' are the same thing. After all, leaders often have to manage employees, and managers frequently have to lead.

However, while a sales manager focuses on the day-to-day management of a sales team, providing support, sales training, and hiring new team members, sales leaders are a little different. Sales leaders are individuals within a company's hierarchy that make strategic decisions to empower the sales team.

They oversee big-picture strategic ventures, setting policies, and determining the sales strategy of the company. Sales leaders evaluate sales processes, examine performance metrics, and interact with team members. They also work with sales managers to ensure teams receive the right training to expand their skills and improve their win rates.

What Makes a Good Sales Leader? Sales Leader Skills

Sales leaders play an important role in any business. They carry the responsibility for the success or failure of teams, solve problems on a regular basis, and help drive reps towards specific goals. They need to be inspiring, passionate, communicative, and energetic, as well as humble.

Here are some of the skills and attributes that make for a good sales leader in today's world:

1. The Ability to Align KPIs and Goals

An effective sales leader must be able to set goals and establish KPIs to monitor and improve sales performance. Crucially, the goals a good leader sets need to be challenging enough to motivate team members, but also realistic, obtainable, and aligned with a company's overall vision.

This means sales leaders need excellent attention to detail, fantastic business acumen, and a strong understanding of sales forecasting and reporting.

1. A Passion for Teaching Others

While sales leadership teams aren't always responsible for all of the training offered to sales teams, they do regularly coach and mentor other reps. They should be able to help each individual on their team reach their own specific 'sales goal', or develop new sales skills.

A good leader will be able to identify a professional's strengths and weaknesses, and help them find ways to improve. They don't drive improvement through fear and threats, but through continuous guidance, motivation, and transparency.

1. A Strategic, Data-Driven Mentality

While sales leaders need to be innovative and creative, they can't rely entirely on their gut feelings. Sales leaders may have excellent instincts, but they make decisions based on hard data and real insights. They use their analytical skills to learn as much as they can about the value of different sales processes, customer behaviors, and the wider market.

With a data driven mentality, sales leaders can make more intelligent decisions about which skill sets are most important for their team members, or which territories deserve the most attention.

1. Communication Skills

Great sales leaders need strong communication skills for a variety of reasons. They need to be able to speak to their teams with language they can understand, clarify goals, and ensuring everyone on the team shares the same vision.

Good leaders also need to be able to listen to their sales teams. They take a collaborative approach to building strategies, gathering insights and feedback from sales reps who are actively working in the field. They actively determine what kind of barriers salespeople face when closing deals, and what sort of issues may be leading to problems within the sales experience.

1. Emotional Intelligence

Sales leadership skills don't revolve entirely around strategy and data. Great sales leaders also need to be emotionally intelligent. In other words, they need to be able to empathize not just with their sales people, but with prospects and consumers too.

Great sales leaders use their understanding of customers to help guide employees and increase win rates. They also use their empathy for their employees to provide support and motivation, reducing the risk of burnout and stress among team members.

1. Confidence with Technology

In today's world in particular, sales leaders rely heavily on technology to complete a number of tasks. There are new software solutions and innovations emerging in the industry all the time, from generative AI apps that help reps to create outreach messages, to sales enablement software.

Great sales leaders stay up to date on the latest technical advancements in their industry. They know how to analyze new software and solutions, and determine whether they can offer benefits to their sales organization. Good leaders also help to champion the adoption of new technology, by training team members on how to use various platforms and tools.

1. A Resourceful and Well-Organized approach

In today's busy sales landscape, managing a team of sales people is a complex task. It can be difficult to keep up with all the activities that need to be dealt with every day. Great sales leaders therefore need to be excellent at making the most of their time. Sales leaders are intuitive and resourceful, and they're excellent at effective delegation.

Sales leaders know how to assign responsibilities to each member of their team based on their unique skills, and abilities. They don't just pass work on to someone else. They ensure every team member is focusing on the task they're best suited for.

Guide to Becoming a Sales Leader: Simple Steps

Becoming an effective sales leader takes time and focus. It can take years for a professional to be ready for a leadership position. Even if you move into a managerial role, you'll need to maintain your growth mindset, and constantly work on becoming a more effective leader.

Here are the key steps involved in becoming a great sales leader:

- **Develop your experience:** Sales leaders need a lot of experience. As you advance through positions in your sales organization, from sales development rep to account executive, try to gather as much knowledge and insight as you can along the way. Commit to constantly finding new ways to expand your skills, whether that means shadowing other team members, taking online courses, or earning sales certifications.
- **Hone your leadership skills:** General leadership skills are still important in the sales landscape. Building skills like emotional intelligence, the ability to strategize, and the ability to motivate and inspire others is important. You can even consider taking leadership seminars or courses online to help boost your leadership potential.
- **Adopt technology:** As mentioned above, today's sales leaders often need to be comfortable with a wide variety of different tools and software solutions. Learning how to use different types of technology to automate processes, improve efficiency, and even analyze your sales performance over time will help to make you a more powerful leader.
- **Find a mentor:** A mentor in a leadership position can give you a behind the scenes insight into what it really means to be a successful leader. They can provide guidance and feedback on your development

strategies, and share their knowledge and experience with you. You might even be able to ask an existing leader in your workplace to mentor you.

- **Pursue leadership opportunities:** Putting your leadership skills to the test is one of the best ways to accelerate your education. Pursuing leadership opportunities doesn't necessarily have to mean applying for a managerial role. Take advantage of the chance to lead other people in your team, or take responsibility for specific projects.

Could You Be an Effective Sales Leader?

While virtually anyone can become a sales leader with perseverance and patience, it takes a lot more to become a truly incredible sales leader. If you want to make a genuine difference in your organization, you need to commit to developing the right skills and attributes.

You can learn some of the skills you need for leadership in your day-to-day role as a sales rep or account manager. However, it pays to look for other ways to expand your education.??

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