



Eight Challenges Sales Leaders Face

Description

The role of a sales leader is one of the most important in any organization. The sales department is the fuel of the business and without good motivation, things can fall apart. The role requires years of experience, a good set of soft skills (empathy, communication, emotional intelligence) and trust coming from the sales team and the top members of the organization. However, it does not matter how good a sales leader might be, they will always face challenges that can affect their team's performance. The list of challenges is extremely long, but there are eight specific challenges we'd like to address.

Assuming the Role Before Being Ready

Many sales leaders are promoted based on their performance rather than their ability to inspire and motivate their teams. However, it is the company's responsibility to equip their sales leaders and develop the skills they will need (especially if they are new leaders).

Leadership can come in two ways. On one side we find the natural leader, those who have the right set of skills by default. For this group, the transition feels more natural and they will perform at high levels without much problem. On the other hand, we find those who have been promoted, who understand the business, have great ideas but lack the skills needed to lead a team. This group usually requires bigger developmental interventions, and the company should help them with this task. It does not matter if they are natural leaders or not, each sales leader needs to be equipped before assuming the role.

Environment

Sometimes it does not matter how good a sales leader might be. If they are performing in negative environments, surrounded by an organizational culture that does not match them, their job can become harder than it already is. Positive environments with transparent communication raise confidence in the sales leader and their team. It allows a better flow of ideas, higher motivation and more engagement with their job. However, if the sales leader is facing a negative environment, they will have to work with other members of the organization to build a better environment for their teams. The environment in which the teams operate is crucial, as it has an important impact on the performance of the team.

Managing People and Performance

Many people think the role of a sales leader is mainly based on giving directions, hiring, and firing people when things don't go well. In reality, the role of a sales leader is more focused on mentoring and coaching their teams, finding what is working and what is not, understanding employee confidence levels in their role, help them when they need more support, and the current challenges and aspirations they have. These aspects can affect the performance of their teams (for good or bad) and it is the leader's responsibility to manage them in order to have a positive impact on their team's performance.

Making An Impact Takes Time

Every sales leader wants to improve the performance of their team and 'scale higher mountains', but sometimes one of their biggest enemies is time. Making any kind of positive impact takes time as people need to adapt to new strategies, processes, and objectives that in the long-term will make the impact their sales leaders were looking for. When leaders define a new objective, design a new strategy or develop a new value proposition, their biggest challenge is transmitting this to their teams. It will take time, effort and being consistent every day in order to achieve the new goals. Only those who persist over time with their ideas will make the impact they want.

Learning Culture

In every sales team, big or small, we find different levels of skill and potential. Some of them can be seen as high potentials and some of them belong to the average or low potentials. Not only sales leaders have the task to understand their team's problems or motivate them to achieve bigger goals, but they also need to upskill their teams. However, the learning culture in their company can make this task easier or harder. Some companies have a strong learning culture and keep developing their employees every day, but there are companies where learning is not a priority or is not aligned to the corporate strategy. Sales leaders have the task to understand what are their team's learning priorities, what are the areas that need more development and work with other teams inside the organization to upskill their sales force and develop a learning culture that favors this initiative. At the end of the day, only those who keep learning and acquiring new skills will be able to beat the competition.

Maintaining the Motivation to Sell

Like many other functions in an organization, sales works with targets. Sales leaders have the challenge to keep their teams hungry and motivated to keep selling. Sometimes this motivation comes in the shape of a bonus or a prize, but independently of the method they use, the only thing that can't happen is having a team that has lost their motivation. However, this motivation also comes when the

team feels engaged with their role, supported by their leader and enjoys their time working for the company. The challenge is not only keeping the team motivated, but also making them feel comfortable with their job.

Spread of Focus

Many people would say sales leaders are always focused on coaching and managing their teams. However, that does not seem to be the case as they only spend one-third of their time with their teams. Most of their time is spent on activities like managing data and administrative tasks. The role of a sales leader is extremely complex and requires their assistance in many organizational activities, leading them to focus on other things rather than their teams. This can have a negative impact as they can ignore their teams, lose track of the actual status of their customers, and the problems and needs that might be appearing in the team. If the team is not led by their leader, then who is going to do it?

Not Enough Time and Space for Improvements

We all want to shape the world based on our own ideas. Sometimes it does not matter how well the company is doing, there is always something that can be improved. Every organization has its problems, and many people are aware of them, but sometimes the organization does not have the time or the resources to implement these changes. On the other hand, some leaders want to bring ideas that would radically change the shape of the team and the way they work. They need to overcome these barriers if they want to improve the actual status of their teams, but they cannot be ignored since for any organizational change, big or small, requires the work of managers and leaders, and the collaboration of their employees.

Sales leaders have the role of guiding their teams to achieve the organization's goals, bring new ideas, and understand and overcome the challenges that will come in the future. Although the role is full of barriers, sales leaders must be equipped with a list of attributes that will help them overcome even the most difficult ones and excel in their role.

If you would like to learn more about how to develop excellent sales leaders, [contact us](#).

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