

## 10-Step Sales System for Growth: Step 9: Your Sales Accountability Plan

One of the value drivers that business owners find most difficult to improve is revenue growth. Unless your products and services are obsolete or not competitive, revenue growth is achievable. But it requires a well thought out plan, discipline, and hard work. This series of articles provides a step-by-step approach to grow your revenue and perhaps even surpass your sales goals.

### Step 9: Your Sales Accountability Plan

Many owners and managers push accountability to front line employees, and that's fair...to a degree. But sales accountability really starts at the very top. Always. As an owner/manager, you need to look in the mirror each morning and ask, "Am I doing my job when it comes to sales accountability?"



Your sales accountability plan should be clearly defined and monitored; from the new employee to the most senior veteran. There should be no question or guesswork on what your salespeople are accountable for, and they should be trained and coached as such. Here are some tactics to help set them up for success:

1. Ensure that all salespeople understand, precisely, the company's non-negotiable requirements; include hours to be worked, number of phone calls, number of first appointments, closing rate, average invoice, sales, etc. Explain how the company makes (and loses) money as

- well as on how the sales person makes money. They need to understand the economic models.
2. Have them physically sign-off on their job requirements, and then store those documents in their personnel file. These documents may include the offer letter, job description, task list, company handbook, etc.
3. Properly train all of your salespeople from the new hire to the veterans. Include oral and written exams from time to time. Remember, phenomenal sales training prevents problems.
4. Review reports and systematically follow through on sales improvement tasks and plans. Inspect what you expect.
5. Meet consistently with the sales staff in one-on-ones to review sales results and develop action plans.

While having these clear expectations will help, what do you do when issues arise? Let's say Billy, one of your salespeople, is not making plan. How do you proactively and effectively manage the situation?

Catch the snowballs before they roll down the mountain. Address issues when they first surface. This can be as simple as an email, phone call, or an in-person visit. Calmly and objectively describe the issue, and ask Billy to follow up with a list of actions he will take to improve.

If you're not seeing improvement or don't get a response from Billy, use a formal system for disciplinary write-ups. This includes detail about the performance issue, action required, and what will be done if it's not rectified. For example, "Billy, if you are not making sales plan in 60 days, there will be further disciplinary action up to, and including, termination of employment." Chances are that if you get to this point, the employee probably isn't a fit. Also, if an employee doesn't have the talent or desire to be successful, find a replacement. Don't waste time on Billy if he's a lost cause.

Many managers are afraid to address issues, or

write up employees for fear of having them quit. However, if you communicate with respect and candor, employees will actually appreciate it. Everyone works more effectively when they are being held accountable.

A sales accountability plan creates a structure that

keeps you, your management team, and your sales staff on track and prevents performance issues from becoming a drag on the organization. Don't avoid difficult conversations. The earlier they're addressed, the less painful they'll be for you, the sales person, and the company's momentum.

For more information or to learn how L. Harris Partners can help you grow your business:



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