How a Vigorous Sales Management Team Helps You Win in the Marketplace

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Excerpted from:
Building a Winning Sales Management Team:
The Force Behind the Sales Force

ISBN: 978-0-9853436-0-6
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ZS Associates, Inc.
The Impact of the Sales Manager

As a sales leader charged with driving sales performance, which of the alternatives shown in Figure 1-1 do you prefer?

Figure 1-1 Which Sales District Do You Prefer?

Many sales leaders argue that having excellent salespeople is more important than having excellent managers. They say:

- “Managers aren’t the ones who are selling, they are the ones managing, and not all salespeople follow their managers. A manager can tell a salesperson to do something, but at the end of the day, it’s the salesperson’s talent and effort that drive results.”
- “Customers don’t care who the sales manager is—they just want an excellent salesperson who can deliver what they need.”
- “Replacing one average manager is much easier than replacing an entire team of average salespeople.”
- “It’s the salespeople—not the managers—who make sales and ensure we achieve goal. That’s why at our company, many salespeople make more money than their managers.”
Other sales leaders believe that having excellent managers is what’s most important. They say:

- “Excellent salespeople win sales and can help you make this year’s sales goal, but eventually they retire, get promoted, or get wooed away by a competitor. Excellent managers develop excellent salespeople and are there to keep developing excellent salespeople.”
- “An excellent manager constantly recruits the best talent, coaches salespeople to continuously improve, motivates them to succeed, and keeps talented salespeople on the team and engaged in their jobs.”
- “An excellent manager can make a team of average salespeople excellent by managing to the strengths and improving the weaknesses of different team members.”
- “Without a strong manager, even a team of excellent salespeople will start to disengage and go astray—an entire district can quickly get out of control.”
- “Salespeople take their job because of the company but leave or stay because of their sales manager.”

Since 1987, we have been teaching an executive-level course entitled Accelerating Sales Force Performance at Northwestern University’s Kellogg School of Management as well as in other global venues. During the course, we often ask the sales leaders in attendance which of the two alternatives shown in Figure 1-1 they prefer. After asking thousands of sales leaders this question, we have found that the vote is nearly evenly divided.

In the short term, a team of excellent salespeople with an average manager easily outsells a team of average salespeople with an excellent manager. But over time, excellent salespeople who work for an average manager are likely either to disengage from their jobs (channeling their talents and energies toward personal endeavors) or to set their own priorities for what selling activities to focus on (possibly diverging from what may be most important for customers or the company). Many excellent salespeople get promoted or retire, or they quit because their average manager is holding them back. And when excellent salespeople leave, an average manager is likely to replace them with average salespeople. Average managers rarely surround themselves with excellent salespeople, as they may be unable to recognize talent or may be intimidated by excellence. It is often said that “first class hires first class; second class hires third class.”

In the long run, average managers bring all of the salespeople that they manage down to their level. On the other hand, excellent managers bring excellence to all their territories. Great managers may inherit average salespeople, but in the long run they counsel, coach, motivate, or replace salespeople until their entire team is excellent.
Clearly, the best sales forces have both great salespeople and great managers—and the best way to get both is to start with excellent managers. A strong sales management team is the force behind a great sales force.

**Two Case Studies: How Sales Managers Impact Performance**

When one company conducted an assessment of its first-line sales managers (FLMs), it saw clear evidence that sales manager coaching improves district performance. The company had a large sales force with a few hundred sales districts. Districts in which salespeople were consistently coached by their managers outperformed other districts on goal achievement by a significant margin (see Figure 1-2).

When another company conducted an assessment of its sales managers, it discovered that the quality of the sales manager has a big impact on performance when a salesperson leaves a territory and has to be replaced. The company identified two groups of managers—one group of top performers and another group of average performers—using a combination of competency model assessment data, historical performance rankings, and input from salespeople’s upward evaluations of their managers. Then the company compared the performance of new salespeople who were hired to fill vacant territories by managers in each of the two groups. Twenty months after coming on board, more than 90 percent of the salespeople who had been hired by top-performing managers had maintained...
or improved the performance ranking of their territory. In the same time frame, more than a third of the salespeople who had been hired by average-performing managers experienced a decline in their territory’s performance ranking (see Figure 1-3). The company attributed this difference to two characteristics of top-performing managers: (1) top-performing managers were better at identifying and attracting talented salespeople, and (2) they were better at helping new salespeople get off to a strong start through effective coaching and support.

**Inconsistency in the Sales Management Team**

When a salesperson is excellent, performance is excellent in a single territory. When a first-line sales manager is excellent, that manager will coach, counsel, motivate, or replace salespeople until performance is excellent across the entire district or region. Consistent strong performance by a company’s sales management team is critical for sales force excellence.

When companies assess their sales management teams, they often discover serious deficiencies in the competencies of some FLMs. Assessments can be based on input from several sources, including evaluations using sales manager competency models, sales leaders’ observations, salespeople’s view on the effectiveness of their managers, and rankings on metrics such as district quota attainment.
Examples of assessments conducted by two companies illustrate how performance is too often inconsistent across FLMs, leading to lost sales opportunity.

**Example 1: Revealing Sales Manager Inconsistency at a Hospital Supply Company**

A hospital supply company conducted an assessment in which salespeople completed upward evaluations of their FLMs on several managerial competencies (see Figure 1-4). The evaluations were anonymous, and the results were not identified by individual manager but rather were used to produce an overall assessment of the quality of the sales management team. Sales leaders discovered and were concerned that the average rating that salespeople gave their managers was nowhere near “excellent” for any of the seven competencies that they felt were critical to sales manager success. In fact, managers were rated below “average” on four competencies. Leaders were also concerned that the distribution of scores on most competencies followed a disturbing bimodal pattern; Figure 1-4 shows the pattern for the leadership competency. While many salespeople gave their manager an “excellent” rating on leadership, almost equally as many gave their manager a “poor” rating and relatively few gave their manager an “average” rating. This bimodal trend occurred for the other managerial competencies as well. The

![Figure 1-4](image-url)  
*Figure 1-4  How Salespeople Rated Their Managers on Seven Key Competencies at a Hospital Supply Company*
survey results confirmed sales leaders’ hypothesis that the sales force was carrying a number of weak managers.

Regrettably, too many sales organizations don’t assess the capabilities of their FLMs, and many fail to provide the necessary development programs needed to address FLM deficiencies. Too often, companies retain poor managers for too long.

**Example 2: Identifying Opportunities for Sales Manager Improvement at a Software Company**

A software company’s assessment of its sales management team demonstrates the diagnostic power of assessment to uncover the underlying causes of sales force effectiveness and reveal improvement opportunities. The assessment showed that the company’s management team was fairly strong, yet it also helped the company discover an important way to boost effectiveness and improve sales results.

The company used a sales competency model assessment to learn about the effectiveness of its FLMs. The model defined two categories of competencies that sales managers need to succeed at the company: knowledge (such as understanding of products, customers, and markets) and skills (such as selling, planning, and communicating). The model also recognized that FLMs need to be not only proficient in these areas but also good at coaching their salespeople to develop competency with knowledge and skills. An assessment team collected feedback on each manager’s behaviors related to the job competencies by gathering input from each manager’s direct supervisor, his or her direct reports, and self-evaluation. Based on the input, each FLM was rated at a “basic,” “skilled,” or “advanced” level of competency for proficiency and coaching of knowledge and skills. As in the previous example, the results were not identified by individual manager but rather were summarized across managers to produce an overall assessment of the FLM team (see Figure 1-5).

The company’s sales leaders were pleased to see that for all four competency categories, more than 80 percent of managers were rated “skilled” or “advanced.” The greatest opportunity for improvement was in the coaching abilities of sales managers. The ratings for FLMs’ proficiency of knowledge and skills were higher than the ratings for FLMs’ ability to coach others on knowledge and skills (that is, the categories have a larger percentage of managers rated “advanced” and a smaller percentage rated “basic” as compared to the coaching categories).

These results helped sales managers understand that they had been succeeding too often by doing the work with their salespeople, rather than teaching their people how to do it themselves. Renewed emphasis on the importance of coaching for successful sales management helped this company improve results. One year later, the company observed higher salesperson proficiency on the core
competencies and had realized an increase in the number of deals in the pipeline as well as higher deal close rates.

The Critical Role of the Sales Manager

The job of the first-line sales manager is arguably the most important job in the entire sales force. Sales leaders tell us:

- “If your first-line management is broken, the entire sales force will be ineffective.” (Helmut Wilke, Vice President Sales, U.S. Western Region, Enterprise and Partner Group at Microsoft Corporation)

- “In any sales force, you can get along without the vice president of sales, regional sales directors, and the training manager, but you cannot get along without the district [first-line] sales manager.” (Andy Anderson, former Vice President of Sales and President of U.S. Pharmaceuticals, Searle U.S.)
Top sales leaders determine the direction for the organization, but it is the FLMs who ensure that the strategy is executed.

**Taking on a Role Different from a Salesperson**

Most FLMs are former salespeople. They know what it takes to succeed as a salesperson and therefore are capable of earning the respect of those who report to them. However, a promoted salesperson quickly discovers that the job of sales manager is very different from the job of salesperson.

Consider what happened to John, a super-salesperson who, after several years of stellar sales performance, was promoted to sales manager. As a salesperson, John had an exceptional work ethic and a strong customer focus. He was highly achievement-oriented, competitive, and confident, and he would do anything to get his customers what they needed. When John was promoted to manager, he expected all of his salespeople to be just as hard-driving and achievement-oriented as he was. When he became frustrated with the work styles and performance of some of the people in his district, he told them, “Either make quota or you’re fired.” On big deals, John would take charge of the relationship himself, using his “super-sales skills” to close the deal. When customers made difficult or even unreasonable requests of the company, John would call someone at headquarters and demand that the company deliver whatever the customer wanted.

Unfortunately, many of the traits that had contributed to John’s success as a salesperson worked against him as a manager. John didn’t know how to give salespeople constructive feedback. He undermined salespeople’s motivation and confidence and, at the same time, weakened their relationships with customers by getting too involved in the sales process. His demanding attitude irritated people at headquarters with whom he had to work. John made his quota during his first two quarters as manager, but by the third quarter, two of his salespeople had left the company, and the district’s annual quota was in jeopardy.

Sales leaders share their thoughts on the challenges that salespeople face when making a transition from salesperson to manager:

- “Many super-salespeople who get promoted to manager become ‘helicopter managers’ who hover over their salespeople and insist on being involved in every deal. This can create some short-term successes, but in the long run, the best managers are those who coach, train, and teach their entire team to be successful,” observes Chris Ahearn, a Senior Advisor at TPG Capital and a former Senior Vice President of Sales and Marketing for temporary housing provider Oakwood Worldwide.
- “When salespeople are promoted to manager, one of their biggest challenges is learning to start leading people and to stop doing the sales activity themselves,” says Denise O’Brien, Vice President of Business Development
for Global Sales and Client Development at professional services company ARAMARK.

• “The job of manager is not just a bigger job—it’s a totally different job than salesperson,” says Helmut Wilke, who has led sales teams at Sun Microsystems, Extreme Networks, and Microsoft. “Many salespeople who become managers miss the freedom and excitement that they enjoyed as salespeople. When a deal closes, the salesperson is a hero; when a deal is lost, the manager often gets the blame.”

For the right individual, a sales management job can be very rewarding. However, some salespeople are successful in sales because they are independent, action-oriented, and impatient—traits that can work against their success as a manager. Because many salespeople who are contemplating a move to management don’t have a clear idea of what the job entails, it’s important for sales leaders to communicate their expectations clearly and screen candidates thoughtfully, assessing each candidate’s skills and interests relative to the job requirements.

Good salespeople differ from good sales managers in many important ways (see Figure 1-6). Salespeople are successful when they meet customer needs while at the same time achieving the company’s financial goals for their territories. Sales managers also succeed by meeting customer needs and achieving objectives linked to company goals. But the manager is not the hunter, the playmaker, or the center of action. Managers contribute to customer and company success when their team of salespeople is successful. Managers are coaches, not players; they

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Good Salespeople</th>
<th>Good Sales Managers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Listen to and are an advocate for customers</td>
<td>Listen to and are an advocate for salespeople</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do it themselves</td>
<td>Teach and coach others how to do it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strive for personal success</td>
<td>Strive for team success</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control</td>
<td>Motivate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make each transaction successful</td>
<td>Make the district or region successful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strive for strong short-term results</td>
<td>Strive for strong short- and medium-term results</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus on customer needs</td>
<td>Focus on customer needs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 1-6  A Comparison of Good Salespeople and Good Sales Managers
achieve their objectives through others. When a salesperson gets promoted to manager, it’s no longer about “me”—it’s about “the team.”

Research by Dawn R. Deeter-Schmelz (Ohio University), Daniel Goebel (Illinois State University), and Karen Norman Kennedy (University of Alabama at Birmingham) sheds light on why many good salespeople fail as managers. The researchers examined the characteristics of effective sales managers from the perspective of both salespeople and sales managers. Through interviews, they asked 58 salespeople and managers from a range of industries what they felt were the attributes of a successful sales manager and why. Although the salespeople and managers agreed on some attributes, subtle differences between the salespeople’s and sales managers’ responses revealed a common reason why sales managers fail. Salespeople want their manager to be a supportive resource, someone who enables the sales process by helping them do their job better. Managers see themselves as participants in the sales process, and they feel that their own credibility and reputation are important for success. Too many sales managers have a difficult time sacrificing their own ego needs to give salespeople the help and support they need to do their jobs effectively. In most situations, managers who view their role as sales process “enablers” rather than sales process “participants” are more likely to be successful.

Connecting Headquarters and the Field

“Sales managers are the critical link between salespeople, customers, and other departments within our company,” says Liza Clechenko, a former Vice President of Sales, East/Gulf Coast at BP. “Everything comes together at the sales manager level.” As Figure 1-7 shows, sales managers act as a hub that connects the field (salespeople and customers) to headquarters (the company).

In their connection with the field, FLMs interact directly with salespeople, as they have primary responsibility for selecting, building, leading, managing, and rewarding the team responsible for maintaining customer relationships. Sales managers also have at least an indirect (and sometimes a direct) role in working with customers.

In their connection with headquarters, FLMs act as intermediaries to facilitate a bidirectional flow of information. FLMs are the voice of the company to the salespeople they manage. Salespeople, in turn, convey that voice to their customers. At the same time, when salespeople need something from the company for themselves or for their customers, sales managers play a central role in helping them navigate the organization in order to secure the needed resources. So, sales managers are also the voice of salespeople and customers to the company.

Implementing Key Sales Force Decisions and Programs

FLMs play a key role in the sales force as implementers of many sales force decisions and programs. A sales manager’s set of responsibilities often includes these:
Ensuring that salespeople understand their responsibilities and territory assignments

Helping salespeople execute the appropriate selling process

Recruiting, training, and coaching salespeople

Helping salespeople make the most effective use of customer research, data and tools, and targeting information

Promoting a culture of success and providing leadership

Implementing incentive and motivation programs

Keeping the team aligned with company goals and strategies through performance management, goal setting, and communication

The role of the sales manager as an implementer of sales force decisions and programs is especially critical during times of transition. Conrad Zils, Global Director, Commercial Center of Excellence for GE Healthcare, who worked with
many different GE businesses in a former role as Global Director of Sales Programs and Sales Force Effectiveness, talks about the critical role that first-line sales managers played when several of GE’s businesses implemented significant sales force changes in 2009 and 2010. In response to the financial crisis and challenging economic conditions, several sales forces in GE Capital’s business were forced to downsize and refocus priorities on profitability. Shortly after that, GE Healthcare’s business underwent a major organizational transformation to align the sales force around key customers and customer segments, rather than products and individual business units.

According to Conrad, “First-line sales managers played a critical role in helping salespeople deal with uncertainty. Salespeople feared the unknown, and our front-line managers were the first place salespeople turned when they had questions. We kept sales managers informed and aligned with the new direction and vision, so they could provide answers and keep sales force retention and engagement at high levels.”

**Driving Sales Force Productivity**

FLMs are a critical driver of sales force productivity (see Figure 1-8). They impact salesperson quality and activity directly through their role as people managers and indirectly as implementers of key sales force decisions and programs. As a result, sales manager performance affects company financial results in a tangible way.

At the beginning of our executive sales management course, we ask the sales leaders in attendance: “What sales force productivity issues are you currently faced with?” Our initial purpose for asking the question was to learn about sales leaders’ needs so we could tailor course content appropriately. In 1995, we began building a database of responses to our question; by 2010, we had captured and categorized more than 2,400 responses from sales leaders from a broad variety of

![Figure 1-8](image-url)  
**Figure 1-8**  How First-Line Sales Managers Affect Productivity and Results
industries, countries, and selling environments (see Figure 1-9). Many responses directly identify the sales management team as a major source of concern; other responses point to issues that FLMs have direct influence over.

All sales force productivity issues listed in Figure 1-9 can be addressed, at least partially, by improving the sales management team. Sales managers directly

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**First-Line Sales Managers (FLMs)**

- **Inappropriate structure**
  - “Not enough managers to support the sales force”
  - “Too many types of sales specialists reporting to managers”

- **Too little training and support**
  - “Not enough management training to support sales force growth”
  - “Sales managers get promoted but are not properly trained”

- **Weak competency**
  - “Inconsistency in the way that sales managers manage their teams”
  - “Managers struggle to stay on top of everything”

- **Misdirected activity**
  - “Managers don’t spend enough time coaching”
  - “Managers ‘do’ rather than ‘manage’”

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**Sales Force Decisions and Programs**

- **Territory alignment**: “Differences in territory potential create unfairness”
- **Recruiting**: “We don’t always hire the ‘right’ salesperson”
- **Training**: “Need to ramp up new salespeople faster”
- **Targeting**: “Not targeting enough high-potential customers”
- **Data and tools**: “Better use of data can help us drive the business”
- **Performance management**: “Salespeople need more feedback”
- **Goal setting**: “Sales goals are not realistic”

**Salesperson Quality and Activity**

- **Quality**
  - “The sales force lacks key skills”
  - “Turnover of good salespeople is high”
  - “Huge disparity between our best and weakest salesperson”

- **Activity**
  - “Salespeople sell only products they are comfortable with”
  - “Too little time with key decision makers”
  - “Need to improve quality, not quantity, of sales calls”

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*Figure 1-9*  Examples of Challenges That Companies Face in Areas Under the Direct Influence of Sales Managers
impact *salesperson quality* and retention through their roles as recruiters, coaches, and trainers. They influence *sales force activities* through their roles as coaches, leaders, motivators, and managers of performance. They also have responsibility for implementing many *sales force decisions and programs* that impact salespeople and their activities. Because of the many important roles that sales managers play, investments to improve the quality of the sales management team will certainly enhance company financial results.

**The Ever-Changing Role of the Sales Manager**

The job of FLM is perhaps more difficult today than ever before, as continuous change in the business environment impacts the sales organization. Some changes originate in forces external to the company: an environment of advancing technology, intensified competition, and a changing world economy; customers who are more knowledgeable and make buying decisions based on business value; a workforce of tech-savvy sales talent with new attitudes about work and life priorities. Other changes come from inside the company, as companies launch new products and strategies and focus on constant improvement and cost-cutting initiatives, often in response to external changes. All of these changes create new challenges for FLMs.

Chris Hartman, Vice President, Central Zone, Cardiology, Rhythm and Vascular Group at medical device company Boston Scientific Corporation, talks about several new challenges that sales managers faced in 2010:

- **More knowledgeable customers:** “The Internet provides customers easy access to information about products and pricing. A quick web search may enable a prospective customer to learn instantly about a price you’ve offered a customer on the other side of the globe.”

- **Increasing numbers of Gen Y employees in the workplace:** “Today’s manager is challenged to deal with a new generation of salespeople who have different priorities and goals, place greater value on work-life balance, and shun traditional business communication methods like newsletters, voicemail, and even email, preferring to stay connected through social media such as Twitter and Facebook.”

- **Increased workload:** “As companies cut costs, they reduce management staff and ask managers to increase their span of control. With more people to manage, managers are working longer hours. At the same time, expectations for responsiveness have increased, as mobile communication technology keeps people connected anywhere and anytime.”
• **Increased emphasis on compliance and regulatory concerns:** “In a world where technology enables transparency of information, sales managers need to be constantly aware of rules and regulations and keep a keen eye on compliance. An innocent email can easily cause considerable damage to a company.”

These new complexities further increase the already difficult challenge of building a winning sales management team.

**Establishing and Sustaining a Vigorous Sales Management Team in a Changing Sales Environment**

The quality of the sales management team affects sales force productivity and success, yet too often companies underinvest in developing their FLMs. When sales managers come into their jobs (usually after having been successful salespeople), they are expected to know how to manage, sometimes with minimal guidance and support. Too few companies focus enough energy and resources on developing and maintaining a top-notch sales management team. As Amy Davalle, Vice President of Sales — West at medical device company Smith & Nephew, observes, “When budgets get tight, management development programs are often one of the first things that companies cut to save short-term costs, and they end up paying for this in the long term.”

**The Importance of Aligning Sales Management Team Decisions with Sales Force Strategy and Design**

FLMs play a critical role in ensuring that sales force strategy is executed effectively. For this reason, sales leaders need to anchor their approach for building a winning sales management team with a winning sales force strategy and design. This strategy includes decisions such as these:

- Which customer segments should the sales force sell to, and what is the right value proposition for each segment?
- What is the best sales process for meeting customer needs in each targeted market segment?
- What is the right size and structure for the sales organization?

It is essential to align sales management team decisions with the right sales strategy and design. According to Quinton Oswald, CEO of SARcode BioScience...
and a former Vice President and Business Unit leader for Tissue Growth and Repair at Genentech, “Because sales managers are a critical link between sales strategy and execution, you can’t define the sales manager’s role in isolation. When we changed our sales strategy and design at Genentech to better meet the needs of local markets, we had to realign the role of sales managers as well. We increased our expectations for the role. In addition to coaching, counseling, and managing the performance of their people, sales managers had to become local general managers who could develop business plans and allocate resources effectively. By defining strategy and tying the FLM role to the strategy, the sales management team became a valuable vehicle for executing strategy to achieve company goals.”

Three Core Elements of Building a Winning FLM Team

This book lays out an approach consisting of three core elements for establishing and sustaining a vigorous sales management team:

1. **Defining** the FLM job that best facilitates execution of the sales force strategy
2. **Creating** a strong team of FLMs with the talents and competencies that can drive success
3. **Enabling** the right FLM activity for leading the sales team to drive results

Anchored by sales force strategy and design, the approach enables you to win in the marketplace with a sales management team that helps your sales organization achieve its goals in the face of a continuously changing sales environment (see Figure 1-10).

![Figure 1-10](image-url)
The FLM Success Drivers

This book describes eight key FLM success drivers, organized into three sections that correspond to the three core elements. The success drivers include the decisions that sales leaders make and the programs, systems, processes, and tools that they use to define, create, and enable the FLM team to drive sales force performance. Each chapter provides approaches, examples, and practical advice for executing one of the FLM success drivers. A concluding chapter addresses strategies for managing change across the success drivers (see Figure 1-11).

The FLM success drivers are introduced here. More detail is provided in the next eight chapters.

Figure 1-11  An Approach for Building a Winning Sales Management Team Through Eight Key FLM Success Drivers
Section I: Defining the FLM Job

Three FLM success drivers help you create a blueprint for a winning sales management team. The three chapters organized around these success drivers address the following topics:

*Defining the Sales Manager’s Role (Chapter 2)*
- Three roles for FLMs in driving district success
- The right focus on managing salespeople, customers, and the business
- Steps to defining and implementing the FLM role
- Ensuring that FLMs focus on both long-term and short-term success

*Sizing and Structuring the Sales Management Team (Chapter 3)*
- The right span of control
- The best sales force reporting structure
- Managing a structure to achieve business objectives
- Managing with different types of sales specialists

*Creating the Sales Manager Success Profile (Chapter 4)*
- Characteristics (personal qualities) and competencies (skills and knowledge) that drive FLM success
- Discovering FLM success characteristics and competencies
- Using the success profile to create and enable the FLM team

Section II: Creating a Strong FLM Team

Two FLM success drivers help you recruit and develop a talented team of first-line sales managers. The chapters in this section address the following topics:

*Selecting the Best Sales Management Talent (Chapter 5)*
- Role of characteristics and competencies in FLM selection
- Looking for internal versus external FLM talent
- Strategies for finding, selecting, and attracting talent
- Selecting those with the right management characteristics, not simply those who are the best salespeople
- Strategies for retaining management talent and keeping the best salespeople
CHAPTER 1  How a Vigorous Sales Management Team Helps You Win in the Marketplace

Enhancing Sales Management Competencies (Chapter 6)
- Training and development content for new FLMs to learn the job
- Content for current FLMs to develop skills and adapt to change
- Prioritizing FLM development needs
- Blending learning methods for highest impact at appropriate cost

Section III: Enabling the Right FLM Activity
Three FLM success drivers help you enable and encourage the sales management team to perform the right activities for driving sales force success. The three chapters in this section address the following topics:

Supporting Critical Sales Management Activities (Chapter 7)
- Processes and systems, support people, and data and tools for enhancing FLM efficiency and effectiveness
- Support that benefits salespeople, customers, and the company without adding unnecessary overhead
- Dashboards and metrics to help FLMs improve performance
- Helping FLMs prioritize to minimize time spent on less-productive tasks

Managing Sales Management Performance (Chapter 8)
- FLM success factors that are critical to manage
- Best metrics for managing FLM performance
- Processes for managing FLM performance that drive results
- Early signs that an FLM is in trouble and steps to take to effect change

Motivating and Rewarding Sales Management Success (Chapter 9)
- The motivators of successful FLMs
- Defining a motivating FLM job and creating a culture of success
- Using recognition to increase FLM motivation and engagement
- Financial rewards that enhance short-term and long-term FLM motivation

Aligning the FLM Success Drivers
It is impossible to create a winning sales management team without strong alignment of the decisions that define, create, and enable the team. Team quality is sacrificed when, for example,
The FLM role requires managers to spend five days a week with salespeople and customers; yet the company does not provide managers with the tools and support they need to complete all their administrative responsibilities efficiently.

The FLM selection process does not screen candidates for a competency such as coaching ability; yet new FLMs receive no training on how to coach.

The FLM performance management process focuses on developing the team for long-term success; yet sales managers earn most of their pay through incentives tied to quarterly sales results.

The FLM role suggests that sales managers spend two days a month in the field with each salesperson; yet budget constraints have led to an average span of control of 15 salespeople per manager.

As you manage the FLM success drivers that define, create, and enable your sales management team, check that your decisions are consistently aligned with one another and support your sales force strategy.

**Recognizing the Need to Change**

FLMs play a critical role in providing input for and implementing sales force change. The book’s last chapter addresses the following topics:

*The Sales Manager: An Essential Facilitator of Change (Chapter 10)*

- The critical role of the FLM as a facilitator of sales force change
- Changes impacting sales forces today
- How companies are responding with sales force transformations or evolutionary sales force improvements
- How sales leaders can enable FLMs in their role as facilitators of change

The book concludes with a self-assessment tool that you can use to determine priorities for improving the FLM success drivers for your sales organization. By adapting to the changing environment, and continually improving the FLM success drivers, your sales force can gain competitive advantage by capitalizing on a frequently overlooked productivity opportunity—the sales management team—the force behind the sales force.
Glossary

Every selling organization has its own unique vocabulary. Terms such as “salesperson,” “sales management team,” and “customer,” for example, can mean different things in different contexts. At the same time, what one company calls, for example, a “salesperson” another may refer to as a “sales professional” or a “sales representative.” To enhance clarity for readers, we provide here a glossary of several terms that we use frequently throughout this book. You may wish to mentally substitute the terms your company uses—for example, substitute “district sales manager” (DSM) for “first-line sales manager” (FLM)—to make the ideas more accessible for your situation.

Company  Generally refers to the selling company. Equivalent terms in some contexts include “seller” or “selling company.”

Company leaders / Executive leadership team  The highest levels of leadership within a company, generally those to whom the top sales executives report—for example, a divisional general manager, a COO, or a CEO.

Customer  A current or potential buyer of a company’s products and services (equivalent to a client, buyer, decision maker, or purchaser in some contexts). We use the term “customer” when referring to both the customer organization (the buying company) and specific individuals within the customer organization who influence buying decisions.

First-line sales manager (FLM)  A manager within a sales force to whom salespeople report directly. Equivalent terms in some contexts include “district manager” or “region manager.”

Prospect  An organization or a person who is a potential buyer of a company’s products and services but has not yet made a purchase. Generally we use the term “customer” to refer to both current customers and prospects; however, when it is important to distinguish between the two, we use the term “prospect” to differentiate those customers who have not yet purchased from the company.

Sales leaders / Sales leadership team  Includes second-line sales managers (SLMs) and others above them within the sales organization hierarchy. For example, in a large sales force with FLMs who report to regional directors who report to a sales vice president who reports to a divisional general manager, the regional directors and sales vice president together comprise the “sales leadership team.” In a smaller sales force with FLMs who report to a national sales director who reports to a divisional general manager, the national sales director is considered the “sales leader.”
Sales management team  All the first-line sales managers in a sales force. This term is used commonly in larger sales forces that have many FLMs with similar job responsibilities. The term is less common in smaller sales forces with just a few FLMs or with FLMs with diverse job responsibilities; however, the ideas in this book apply equally to sales management “teams” of any size and composition.

Salesperson  A person in the sales force who has direct responsibility for selling to customers or prospects. Equivalent terms in some contexts include “sales representative,” “sales professional,” “seller,” “sales agent,” “account manager,” or “account executive.”