

The Mid-Year Sales Check-Up - Three Critical Steps

It's the end of the second quarter for most firms.

Will you achieve your third quarter and year-end sales quotas? *Can you be sure?*

If you have concerns, what's your plan for improving performance? Do you have the right team in place to achieve the results expected by upper management? Many sales managers find it challenging to both effectively and objectively evaluate their sales team – yet these critical tasks must be done in order to deliver maximum performance. Chief Sales Officers must **ACT NOW**, if there is any expectation that changes will impact 2015 results.

It all starts with the *individuals on the sales team*. If you want to consistently exceed your revenue objective, it is imperative that the CSO consistently evaluate each sales professional. And be prepared to make some *tough decisions*.

Your entire organization's revenue goals can't be carried by a few 'rock-stars' on the team. That's not what the word 'team' means. If you are the CSO, any missed individual quota goal rolls up to your goal shortfall as well.

Early in my career as a Sales Manager, I would diligently work with each and every member of my sales team to improve their skills and boost their performance. This included a few Sales Reps, who, quite frankly, would have been better off in another – *ANY other* – line of work. In other words, they should have been "let go." But I was determined to get the best performance from each member of my team.

A respected superior and mentor counseled me that no sales manager can consistently exceed revenue goals by fostering the "laggards" on the sales team. Rather, *the Sales Manager must focus on getting top performance - from the top performers.*

When a talented golf pro is struggling with any aspect of the game, a coach will advise that the athlete **focus on the strongest** part of that Professional's game – **not the weakest**. This same "natural selection" must be practiced in Sales Management – and there are tools to help you.

Not many Sales Managers welcome the task of replacing a sales team member. All the necessary recruiting tasks detract from management time. Hiring expenses can be \$30K to \$40K to replace a sales representative. It can take two to three months for a Manager to recruit and hire a Sales Rep, plus another three months until that new Rep achieves sales productivity. And only 75% of newly hired reps actually "make the grade." (source: *Sales Benchmark Index*) For these reasons, and because not many Sales Managers relish the tough task of firing, underachievers remain on the sales team. This is a "**lose-lose-lose**" situation

for the organization, sales management and the individual – who continues to struggle to succeed in the wrong role – one that is ill-suited for their temperament and talents.

Here are three steps to take now to “check-up” on the sales health of your team.

1. **Evaluate The Entire Team - Sales Reps, Managers and Executives** – But wait! That includes *me!* Yes, a full team check-up includes a self-evaluation as well as evaluations of all sales professionals and support staff. For our clients, Warner Professional Sales implements the Objective Management Group® (OMG) award-winning Sales Effectiveness & Improvement Analysis (SEIA) for employee benchmarking and evaluation as well as testing for pre-hire assessment. How good is it? OMG is the leading sales assessment program, used by over 11,000 companies worldwide, and rated *Top Sales Assessment* worldwide for four consecutive years by *Sales and Marketing Awards*.

OMG analysis documents the “Sales Quotient” of members of your sales team – similar to an “Intelligence Quotient” - to reveal whether a Sales Rep is “wired” to be successful as a sales professional for your firm. In other words, is predisposed to be successful in sales of your offerings. These are the innate characteristics or “Sales DNA” which unlike skills, cannot be readily changed. Other test results will show those skill sets needing development in a promising, but underperforming sales talent. Skill sets can be enhanced by proper training and coaching.

2. **Hire New Talent** – Based on testing results and job performance (recent and past), *remove the laggards from your team*. Recruit, **test** and hire replacement sales talent. Remember that the hiring and ramp-up process can take months. Many sales cycles are 3 to 5 months. If you want any new sales professional to make a contribution in 2015, you must hire now and onboard that talent effectively.

Letting people go is tough – and in today’s environment, having objective test results that back-up non-performance can head off potential post-employment problems.

3. **Define your Training and Development Plans** – Review individual performance metrics plus the Evaluation Analysis of your entire sales organization to create training and coaching programs for your top performers and your promising “average” reps.

At the end of a losing baseball season (or two!), the Boston Red Sox didn’t fire all the players, they fired the *Manager*.

If your sales organization has had a disappointing quota year so far, you **must** take steps for a healthier sales performance. That typically requires outside resources and an intense focus on results. Otherwise, your successor may be the one making the changes.

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About the Author:

Marie Warner is founder and President of Warner Professional Sales, LLC. Warner Professional Sales helps companies achieve **sales force success through people, performance and planning**. Warner Professional Sales helps companies get more revenue growth from their sales force by *recruiting* the right sales staff, 2) *training and developing* those sales professionals to consistently exceed revenue goals, and helping management to define and implement the best sales "process" and tactics for sales cycle control, territory assignments and quota planning.

Marie brings to client engagements over two-decades of leadership in the sale of technology, consulting and financial products and services to the Fortune 1000 and major financial institutions. This includes nine years of experience as Chief Sales Officer, in both enterprise-level and start-up organizations.

