

7 Traits of a High Performance Sales Culture

By Zorian Rotenberg

It's simple: If your sales team is not motivated and empowered to produce superior results, they won't. But how can you, as a Sales VP or manager, create a culture that encourages and rewards the best performance? Many sales executives struggle to find a balance between healthy competition and a cutthroat, negative atmosphere. That's why we took a look at companies with high performance sales cultures (including our own) and came up with the seven most common characteristics demonstrated by these companies. Read on to learn which traits to emphasize, implement, and monitor as part of your sales management strategy.

1. A data-driven mind-set

The best sales teams rely on hard data, not theories or gut feelings, to optimize their performance and grow revenue. Don't stop at simply monitoring sales metrics – it is critical that you derive actionable insights from this data. For example, an analysis of your sales funnel historical conversion rates by stage might reveal a team wide weakness in qualifying opportunities at the top of the funnel. With that knowledge, you can then direct more of your sales coaching efforts toward addressing this issue of top-of-the-funnel qualification. By finding specific areas of improvement as revealed by data analysis, you can coach your team much more compellingly. If you rely on lagging results to make adjustments, it will be too late.

2. Transparency across all levels

High performance sales teams are big believers in corporate transparency. They are proud of their accomplishments at all levels across all departments and are willing to display their performance metrics to the entire company. Even during times when their performance isn't stellar, neither the sales reps nor anyone else in the company should have unrealistic "happy ears." Start improving your team's transparency by installing a sales leader board that displays each rep's monthly bookings. Consider sending a nightly email that details each rep's activities the previous day. These measures foster friendly, healthy competition and prevent your underperforming reps from sliding under the radar.

3. Constant improvement through sales coaching

Companies with the best sales cultures tend to not rest on their laurels – one good quarter is not a reason to celebrate, but rather, should be a motivator to make the next quarter even better. A key asset to inspiring this mind-set is regular sales coaching. Coaching your sales team to success requires consistent communication with your reps through regularly scheduled team meetings in addition to one-on-one discussions. In these meetings, you should present sales performance metrics to identify specific areas of weakness in the sales process of either their entire team or an individual rep. Then, use that information to shore up these weak areas and consistently increase your bookings number.

4. Low rep turnover

It typically takes about four months for sales reps to be fully trained and on boarded. Companies that experience constant rep turnover aren't able to gain a good rhythm because they are constantly training new reps for that four-month process. This interrupts the flow of a smooth-operating sales team, in which each rep knows what to do on a daily basis and can do so without disruption.

5. Agility and flexibility

You'll never catch an agile sales manager working within a high performance sales culture say, "But that's the way we've always done it!" That's because the most effective sales managers respond to and embrace change rapidly and flexibly. You must understand the value of measuring everything – and if the data suggests that the sales process needs to change, and change quickly, do not hesitate to do so.

6. Healthy competition

Encouraging healthy competition deserves its own section. You don't want your sales reps to ever be satisfied with their performance to the point of complacency; they should always push each other to be better the next month or next quarter. As the month progresses, sales reps will constantly compete for the top five spots, ranked by bookings. Those that finish out on top will be both proud of their work and motivated to retain their spots on the leader board. Great sales reps are naturally competitive and will thrive in this atmosphere.

7. A common vision

The most critical characteristic of high performance sales team is a shared vision of the company, where it's going, and what you are trying to achieve as a team. It's important to get full employee buy-in so that each rep is working hard not just to hit the numbers or marginally improve performance, but to accomplish the collective goal that every employee is working toward.

Does your company possess the traits of a high performance sales culture? What other characteristics do you think are critical?

About the author



Zorian is a sales and marketing executive who has been management teams of several successful global software companies. He was also the CEO of StarWind Software. Zorian has been a speaker at a number of industry conferences including the American Association of Inside Sales Professionals (AA-ISP), Mass Technology Leadership Council (MassTLC), The Conference Board, Heartland Technology Group, and B2BCamp Sales and Marketing summit among others. He has also been a contributor to The WSJ Accelerators Blog, Top Sales World, Salesforce.com blog, OpenView Labs blog, Chief Sales Officer Insights, DemandGen Report, and iMedia among others. Zorian has a degree in Finance and with minors in Applied Mathematics and in Computer Science from Lehigh University and earned his MBA from Harvard Business School. You can reach Zorian by email at Zorian@InsightSquared.com or on Twitter at [@Zorian](https://twitter.com/Zorian).