



Coaching Sales to Success

By Doug Fleener

One thing I've learned is that **high-performing store managers and owners are extremely focused on being good sales coaches.** I see some managers and owners who are good people coaches and have strong business skills but their stores never reach the desired level of performance because they fall short in coaching sales.

One of the mistakes I made when I first became a district manager was rewarding strong operationally focused managers before those who were more sales focused. While running an operationally sound store is certainly important, **I now see that a manager/owner needs to be focused more on coaching sales than running a perfect store.**

Here are some of the activities I see those high-performing sales coaches carry out on a regular basis:

1. They coach each individual - as well as the team - to perform at a peak level. Many managers have a tendency to coach the team as a whole but unless they work with each individual the team will never reach that next level.

2. They regularly meet with each individual as well as the team. High-performing managers and owners know that constantly communicating with their team is key to their success. Taking time to meet one-on-one with their team at least once a month pays huge dividends. They use the time to discuss the employee's strengths as well as those areas that need improvement. A mentor of mine once told me that if every employee doesn't know what areas they need to work to improve then you're not effectively coaching your team.

They also have a monthly staff meeting that no one would dream of missing. Those meetings are used to improve the team's teamwork and performance by focusing on training and business development. These managers/owners never use this meeting to communicate information that transmitted in a memo or one-on-one. **Having the team all together is so valuable that the time should never be used for anything except improving the team and business results.**

3. High-performing sales coaches have their team focused on the behaviors that improve sales performance. The key word is behaviors. High-performing sales coaches know that right behavior drives the desired results. Just talking about the desired results isn't enough; **you have to teach people what those behaviors are.** I have sat through countless rah-rah meetings where a manager/owner went on and on about making goal but never once said what the team needed to do to achieve it.

In sports, before every game a coach will meet with his/her team and tell them what they need to do to win. They don't just say "Go win the game," the players already know that; they tell them how to win.



4. They spend a lot of time on practice and feedback, feedback and practice.

High-performing sales coaches never miss a chance to praise an employee and tell them what they could do better. They find the time to roleplay every day until it becomes second nature to the team.

So let me ask, are you a strong sales coach?

About the author: Doug Fleener is a veteran retailer with over 25 years of hands-on retail experience with world-class retailers including Bose Corporation and The Sharper Image. He has also owned and operated his own specialty stores. In his ten years at Bose, Doug grew the Retail Direct Group from four to 100 stores and was instrumental in developing Bose's unique and engaging retail methods.

Doug is now president and managing partner of Dynamic Experiences Group LLC, a Lexington, MA based retail and customer experience consulting firm dedicated to helping retailers improve their customer experiences that results in higher sales and profits.

Fleener is the author of the book *The Profitable Retailer: 56 surprisingly simple and effective lessons to boost your sales and profits*. He is a frequent speaker around the world on retail issues and his insights has been covered in leading business media including *The New York Times*, *Entrepreneur*, and *Shopping Centers Today*. Along with partner Matt Norcia they write the popular retail blog *Retail Contrarian*.

Doug lives in Lexington, Massachusetts with his wife and two daughters, where in his free time he barbecues while listening to Jimmy Buffet music.

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