

Holding Salespeople Accountable

Holding salespeople accountable: This is one of the major challenges of managing a sales team- regardless of whether it's a traditional team where people show up for work at a central physical location, or a team working remotely, or a team at a call center. What, exactly, is the best way to do this? And how do you do it without falling into the trap of micromanaging people?



Sales accountability can be a touchy challenge for any sales leader. Most of us who lead teams can relate to these statements.

“I’m frustrated with the need to chase salespeople and their quotas each month. Their projections never seem to match up with reality.”

“I’m unsure about what my people are REALLY doing every day.”

“We always seem to be pushing on the last week of every quarter to hit the numbers. Why can’t we have a more even keeled approach?”

“I am not sure my team knows how many appointments or proposals they need to make to hit quota.”

We may convince ourselves that these kinds of problems “force” us to jump into the fray to fix things ourselves...as though we were the ones responsible for prospecting and executing the sales cycle. Perhaps we tell ourselves that we have no alternative but to take them helm so we can make sure things are on course....and find out for ourselves what’s really going on.

But is that really holding them accountable?

I would say no. My belief is that the key to holding team members accountable in the sales process is making sure everyone knows what the process is and what it takes to move from one stage to another and this starts with the sales leader.

Too often, salespeople don’t have a clear process to follow because we, the leaders, haven’t set up the process for them. That’s when things go all over the place. Telling ourselves, “If I want it done right, I have to do it myself” is the opposite of holding people accountable.

Does each member of the team have a clear behavioral plan – a cookbook- that lays out specifically which activities need to be performed, and how often, for that salesperson to hit his or her income target?

Does each member of the team follow the same sales process?

Can each member of the team describe specifically what must happen at each stage of that process?

If the answer to any of those questions is “No,” then the first person who needs to be held accountable is the sales leader! There’s still some work for us to do. We must set up the path before we can hold people accountable for staying on it.

Remember: Our goal for each salesperson and indeed for the entire team, to be self-sufficient. The model we want to follow here is not the back-seat-driver who’s constantly yelling instructions about how to operate the car, but the top-tier professional sports coach.

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