



The Gift of Sales Management

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What is the greatest gift of high performing insurance agencies? The gift of Sales Management!

Sales Management represents the planning, development, execution and achievement of business development goals using available resources effectively and efficiently. The gift of Sales Management is both a science and an art.

The Science and Art of Sales Management

The science of Sales Management reflects the design and implementation of a step-by-step operational process – a system – that incorporates each stage of the sales cycle. The scientific approach includes a rigorous application of process, tools and strategies bundled into a system which is understood and whole heartedly embraced by the entire organization.

The art of sales management, on the other hand, is all about the soft skills of team members including relationship building, presentation techniques, active listening as well as guiding and influencing decisions. While the science of sales management serves as the foundation of the sales platform, the art represents the creative flair and natural talents to which individuals apply the process and utilize the tools to achieve success. By itself, the science is inefficient to achieve

sales effectiveness. The art of sales – a person’s competence, knowledge and motivation supported by the process – is the ultimate differentiator.

The combination of the science and art of sales management instills pride in an organization. It is this sense of pride that fuels each employee’s passion for excellence and dedication to enhancing the customer experience.

Corporate Culture and Sales Management

In the formative years of an agency, the principals are required to be rainmakers. As the business evolves, the owners impart their business development skills and passion for sales to others in the agency to sustain growth. It is here where many organizations face a significant challenge. As the 500 B.C. Chinese military strategist, Sun Tzu, wrote in *The Art of War*, “Your strengths will eventually become a weakness.” Let’s examine the competencies of the Producer/Principal as compared to the Sales Manager.

| Producer/Principal | Sales Manager |
|-----------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Develops accounts | Develops people |
| Focus on productivity | Focus on building a team |
| Loves independence | Kiss independence goodbye |
| Popular with staff | Respected by staff |
| Instant gratification | Patience. Long term gratification |

The role reversal for many agency leaders represents a huge hurdle. Yet, in order to create a scalable business model – one that is not dependent upon a single person or two to bring in the lion’s share of the business – a company wide sales culture must evolve. A true sales culture forms when every member of an organization feels a part of, and is connected to, the sales process.

A productive corporate culture represents the perfect blend of the science and art of sales management as measured by the attitude employees have about the environment in which they work. The leaders of high performance organic growth agencies empower staff to understand the link between sales management and business outcomes including customer loyalty, referrals, cross sell opportunities, growth, retention and profitability. They have also discovered that by engaging, mobilizing and harnessing the power of the entire organization, they can effectively and predictably boost revenue, profit and agency value. These Best Practice firms integrate sales management into all aspects of the organization with the goal of creating a robust, resource rich experience for the prospective client.

The Gift of Sales Management is reserved for agencies who embrace and implement the following five interconnected elements of sales and sales management.

1. Value proposition
2. Playbook
3. Prospect qualification and service delivery road map
4. Coaching and mentoring
5. Success indicators

Value Proposition

The first link in the Gift of Sales Management is the organization's value proposition. A value proposition is the reason for an agency's existence. It describes how the firm creates value for others. It allows the agency to stand out in a crowded marketplace. When all members of the staff understand and support the value proposition, they become engaged and active contributors to the sales culture.

Without a compelling value proposition supported by a unique process, the planning, development, execution and achievement of business development goals is an uphill battle. A unique value proposition in the form of a concise, clear and compelling statement that describes why a potential customer should buy a particular product or service, how it exceeds that of the competition and why it is worthy of the price they must pay represents the first link to Sales Management.

The research of Beyond Insurance indicates that most agencies do not have a value proposition that explains the tangible results that their customers will receive, the unique benefits they bring to bear that others cannot.

The Playbook

The Playbook represents the capabilities (i.e., plays) of an agency including, but not limited to, client acquisition, account management and quality assurance strategies, systems and tools. It is the second link in the Gift of Sales Management.

In the game of football, the coaching staff and players spend countless hours studying their playbook. The playbook allows the coaching staff to design and set strategy to enable the players to achieve results within the framework of the system. While the coach never gets on the field, he demonstrates and rehearses strategies to achieve success. When players execute a play properly, the coach rewards the performance. When the execution is lacking, the coach gives them a pep talk and reviews the play. There are occasions when the coach goes deep into the playbook to adjust the game plan in an effort to alter the outcome of the performance. When the game is over, the players and coaches analyze results so they can continue doing what they did right and learn from their mistakes. With the playbook, the coach is able to execute, motivate and win!

High performance organic growth agencies understand the importance of play and skill development. It is for this reason they dedicate so much time to building their offensive (i.e., business development) and defensive (client retention/intimacy) systems.

Prospect Identification, Qualification and Service Delivery Road Map

The third link to the Gift of Sales Management is a Prospect Identification, Qualification and Service Delivery Road Map. This critical component of a Sales Management System includes strategies to fill the pipelines, criteria filter to screen out “commodity shoppers” and a planning process which flaunts the agency’s unique capabilities.

The research of Beyond Insurance indicates that the vast majority of agencies lack a strategic approach to prospect identification, research and qualification. In a survey administered to over 5,000 agency principals and producers, Beyond Insurance uncovered the following:

| Statement | Agree | Uncertain | Disagree |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------|-----------|----------|
| My agency’s sales process protects us from getting caught in the “commodity trap” – the 90-day insurance blitz. | 16% | 10% | 74% |
| My firm has a disciplined, strategic, energized prospect research and qualification system. | 26% | 11% | 63% |
| Our prospect research and qualification system creates a steady flow of qualified new business opportunities. | 30% | 5% | 65% |
| My firm’s prospect research and qualification system is able to screen out commodity shoppers. | 19% | 11% | 70% |

A focused and efficient Sales Management system effectively utilizes a referral network of loyal, enthusiastic clients and centers of influences to identify and screen prospective clients. These engaged and passionate individuals help the agency with prospect research, identification and qualification. They help the agency keep the pipeline full!

High performance organic growth agencies are selective in committing and delivering resources and services to prospective clients. These firms reserve their resources and technical capabilities for prospects who have demonstrated a commitment to play the game under the rules determined by the agency. When it is determined that a prospective client meets the agency’s “criteria,” a Service Delivery Road Map is established. The Road Map is comprised of handpicked capabilities from the Agency’s Play Book.

Coaching and Mentoring

As mentioned, the Art of Sales – a person’s talent, competence and desire – is of significant importance to Sales and Sales Management. It is the soft skills of the business development team that give passion, purpose and energy to the sales process.

Perhaps most important is the art of the Sales leader. Effective communication, guided discovery, prospect research & qualification, interpreting account profiles and building networks are teachable skills. The Sales leader must be a good listener and able to communicate and connect with team members of diverse artistic talent. The most productive sales leader is a person who demands the best from his or her people. This person also has a unique ability to re-energize individuals who may have “lost the fire.”

As with a winning football program, the Sales leader must develop talent and offer feedback. It is for this reason top notch Sales leaders follow a regiment consisting of:

- Visioning and goal-setting
- Value proposition mastering
- Play execution
- Communication of expectations (i.e., accountability)
- Teaching how to overcome objections
- Constant feedback

Coaching and mentoring is an essential gift in the Sales Management process. With a system comprised of strategies and tactics, the Sales leader is able to maximize the performance of the business development team.

Success Indicators

The final link in the Gift of Sales Management encompasses the organization’s ability to monitor the results of the sales system. Critical indicators include, but are not limited to, activity based performance, sales funnel forecasting, quality new business appointments as well as the hit rate. These key performance indicators allow the firm to benchmark the effectiveness of the sales process and achieve results measured against targeted goals and objectives.

Of particular importance is the quality and quantity of prospects in the sales funnel. The funnel/forecast review enables the sales leader to gauge the efficiency and impact of the Sales Management Process.

In today’s challenging business environment, an organization must be relentlessly committed to success indicators and fact-based data. It is this discipline that drives performance.

The Gift of Sales Management is awaiting you and your team. Go get it!

About the Author

Scott Addis, CPCU, CRA, CBWA is the CEO of Beyond Insurance and is recognized as an industry leader having been named a Philadelphia finalist for *Inc. Magazine's* "Entrepreneur of the Year" award as well as one of the "25 Most Innovative Agents in America." Beyond Insurance is a consulting firm that offers leadership training, cultural transformation, and talent and tactical development for enlightened professionals who are looking to take their practice to the next level. Since 2007, the proven and repeatable processes of Beyond Insurance have transformed individuals and organizations as measured by enhanced organic growth, productivity, profitability, and value in the marketplace