



E-book

Newsletter #6

Salesperson Hits and Misses



Counting down my 10 most popular newsletters, here is #6.

A complete library of my newsletters can be found [here on my website](#).

Introduction

Many of my clients feel capable of dealing with an underperforming salesperson – the path to putting them on warning being fairly clear cut. The rep they really struggle with is the up and down salesperson. This rep’s unpredictable selling patterns wreak havoc on revenue goals, sales forecasts, morale, and group sales contests to name but a few issues.

Other behaviors include:

- Inconsistent prospecting
- Focusing on non-sales activities
- Overestimating prospects’ level of interest

Their variable results typically stem from two issues:

- Poor time management
- Lack of a process

With salespeople in high demand, I recommend my clients devote coaching time to this up and down rep. Take the chance. Look to improve their reliability by a reasonable percentage and turn them into steadier performers.

Enjoy the eBook!

Suzanne



Newsletter

One of my sales reps exceeds quota by more than 50% one month, misses it by at least 30% the next, and then turns in an average performance for several months in a row. The performance of the other reps is much more regular. At the end of the year he either just makes or just misses his annual sales number. The unpredictability has begun to wear on everyone.

Frustrating. One month he's a superstar and the next month he doesn't even make quota. If it's been going on for quite some time, it needs to be addressed.

Run the Numbers

Divide his annual performance by 12 to determine a monthly average. How far above / below the group average is it? Compare his forecasts to actual sales. How far off are the two figures? Go back several years. Do any seasonal highs or lows occur that don't seem to affect the other reps adversely? Does he prospect and meet with decision makers regularly or is he inconsistent there as well?

Get Visual

Instead of bombarding the rep with row after row of numbers, use pie charts or bar graphs to illustrate your points. Presenting the sales data in this way allows you tell a simpler, more dramatic story.

A sales manager once presented me with a graph showing my best sales day. It was Wednesday - almost without exception. It made a big impression on me and I began thinking about my behavior on the other days. What did I do differently on Wednesdays? Could I bring more of whatever I was doing to the other days of the week?

The rep in question might react similarly. Give him a few days to look at the reports, then meet again.

Reactions

Make it a two-way discussion. Share a few of your "light bulb" moments. Say something like, "Were you as surprised as I was by your performance every January?" Listen to any observations. Work together to come up with approaches to the problem.



Your Side of the Story

If he says, "Hey, its sales. As long as I make my year-end number, does it really matter?" Assure him it very much does. Discuss the need to count on him consistently. Point out the difficulty of defending missed sales forecasts to owners or board members several months in a row. Talk about the cash flow problems caused by up and down months. Mention the effect of unpredictable sales on group morale.

Wait a Few Months

Your rep has demonstrated the ability to meet and exceed quota. Once the two of you put an action plan in place, see what happens. With his inconsistencies and the impact it has on others pointed out, his sales performance might start evening out.

Take Proactive Measures

After a particularly strong month, discuss the results with him. How many sales did he close? How did he do it? What can he do to ensure he has another solid performance this month?

If sales are down for the month, alert him as soon as you can. Ask him about steps he can take. Letting him know you're watching before the month continues to spiral downward will cause him to pay closer attention.

Changing Your Behavior

Even if this salesperson improves, high and low months might always be part of his style. With respect to forecasting, if his forecasts are as inconsistent as his monthly sales, then you need to change your behavior, too. When rolling his forecast and those of other reps together to create your forecast, do your best to understand the status of each of his deals in order to assess for yourself the likelihood they will close. After asking some key questions you might choose to remove one of his forecast deals from your forecast.

Conclusion

An erratic sales performance undermines a sales manager's ability to turn in an accurate group sales forecast. Keeping him on staff sanctions this inconsistent behavior. The other reps take notice. Pointing out the issue, making him part of the solution and staying on top of the situation goes a long way toward improving it.



Additional Resources



The Sales Leader's Problem Solver

Chapter 1: The Inconsistent Sales Rep

[MORE ABOUT THE BOOK >](#)

Further reading:

[Helping Rep in a Slump](#)

[Frustrations with the Mediocre Rep](#)

[Sales Reps with Closing Issues](#)

[Minor Quota Misses Result in Big Frustration](#)

[Putting Sales Reps on Probation - Part II](#)

[Putting Sales Reps on Probation](#)

[Salesperson Spends Time on the Phone, But Not with Customers](#)

[Maintaining Sales Momentum](#)