

YOUR V.P. OF SALES MUST BE YOUR TEAM'S HERO

The V.P. has two key functions: leading people and getting results. Score A's in these two vital areas and you'll be the hero. And every organization needs one.

To get superior results, the V. P. must lead his people (not manage) to become the superior sales team in the industry. The challenge is that over 90% of V.P.s don't fall in the superior category themselves – and most CEOs let them be average, or worse, by not investing in a Mentor. It's crucial to invest in the V.P. as s/he will learn what a great, servant leader acts like, people will grow and follow, and the business relationships will multiply in leaps and bounds. When s/he stalls at being average, s/he will learn how amazing s/he can be, providing the right person is in place to teach. Most just don't know what they don't know.

Let me share some areas that need to be improved by the majority of V.P.s internationally.

- Check their egos at the door as most haven't earned the right to have one yet. An example: The V.P. of International Sales arranged for me to speak for his 2,300 attendees and he asked for us to meet in advance as he wanted to learn more about my consulting services. He very quickly agreed that I would begin consulting immediately after the engagement. At the conference, a very well-known comedian preceded me. After I finished speaking to conclude the day, only two people approached the comedian to chat – the V.P. and his wife. I was approached by about 500 attendees to autograph my books they had been given. The Marketing Manager escorted me to the limo and said, "You can forget about consulting with him." I was stunned and asked, "Why not?" to which she said, "His ego won't allow it." Almost a year later, they made newspaper headlines about laying off 700+ people followed by more shortly after that.

And the CEO also gets and F as he said on my way out, “I look forward to seeing you real soon.” He let a V.P. dedicated to being average (or a Mr. Know-it-all) stay the same as he had been. The lesson to remember is *So goes the V.P. so goes the Salespeople*.

- Be great at recruiting and selecting the right people for the right job. Many failures come from hiring someone because “I really like that lady.” You’re probably familiar with the DISC profiles. Most that were hired because of their being “liked” by the V.P. are High-I (Influencer) people. They are great at talking, laughing, entertaining, and often fun to be with. They like to be friends but the problem, however, is that most High-I people don’t get great results. You’re looking for more High-D people (Driver or Dominant) as they are usually the volume leaders. And, if your V.P. is not a High-D individual, he needs a Mentor beginning next week. I have often found a High-D person when I didn’t need a salesperson. I dine them, golf and dine them again and sometimes state, “stay where you are for 6 months and then contact me.” During these 6 months, I watch for the thank you note regarding dinner, and “I’m very interested in meeting with you again” note, or something he cut out and mailed to me and similar actions. If I get nothing, I call and ask why and listen and watch for corrective action. Message: Hire slow and fire fast. Almost every organization I’ve worked with found out fast that they made a hiring mistake, but they hadn’t taken action. This is where I come in. I often visit with the slacker to find out if s/he’s the problem or if it’s a Manager or the V.P. Quite often, they can be turned around if properly educated on how to be better, and setting new performance goals with deadline dates. After I monitor their next 5 to 30 days I’ll then know if he’s a keeper or not. But sometimes I let them go on the spot – because the V.P. should have already done it, but didn’t. Stop the drift! Remember, the only thing worse than turnover is when there should be some and there is none.

- Evaluations or reviews are more often than not – horrible. Assuming you have great position descriptions and measurement devices in place (a very bad assumption), evaluations should never be an annual event. Rather, they are ongoing. Formalized quarterly reviews are mandatory, but with certain individuals they are monthly with or without the aforementioned documents. Some steps for a great outcome include:
 - You must be a great communicator (rare).
 - You must be prepared (rare).
 - You must tell the truth (rare).
 - You must be a great listener (rare).
 - You must use both hard and soft skills (rare).
 - You must agree on the required improvements (rare).
 - You must follow-up fast and regularly (rare).
 - You must offer your specific assistance (rare).
 - At the end of the meeting, I want to hear “I will...” And personally, wherever there is a will, I want to be in it.

I facilitate many one-on-one sessions but I don't assist the V.P. in preparing for the first one as I want to see how effective he is and I'm making notes for how I can help him improve. He'll learn quickly that change is inevitable except with vending machines.

Recruiting and selecting your top Assistants is every bit as important as your salespeople as they can proactively tackle tasks that don't need a great V.P.s attention. I was new to a V.P. of Sales and Marketing position in the deep south where I met several CEOs who attempted to get employees to convert to a certain religion. When I asked my CEO why we didn't have any females in management and sales positions, one of his replies was, “I don't want them on the road as you know what they will do.” I

just responded, “And who will they do that with?” Working around him, our first female manager was in Customer Service which was part of my team. I didn’t suggest the promotion to the CEO – I just did it as I didn’t want to hear any more nonsense about females. And I assigned her one of our top 3 accounts I had personally landed. She became our first flying female. The client and I had formed a great relationship, but the client repeatedly bragged on my new manager so it was a strategic decision to not just promote our first female manager, but to match a great client with a great manager. It added \$million to our revenue.

I then needed to upgrade my Administrative Assistant as I shared an average Assistant with the CEO. I called the Certified Professional Secretaries Association (their former name) for recruiting assistance and wound up hiring a 24-25 year old away from Delta Airlines. Their V.P. of Sales had just given me 1 of 4 annual Flying Colonel Awards for the U.S. He called to congratulate me for “stealing” his Assistant. He also shared, “She has the highest score of all Administrative Assistants in the history of Delta and since I had to lose her, I’m glad it was to you.” I now had my two key support personnel to help our salespeople, our clients and with the details. A recent survey conducted by burning-glass.com, that focused on Executive Assistants, revealed 65% of new job postings called for a Bachelor’s degree, but only 19% already in the position had a B.A. Is it time for you to upgrade to a more qualified Assistant?

Investing crucial time educating the Customer Service Manager and raising the bar for my new Administrative Assistant allowed me to be more effective as I was able to invest more time with our target accounts and with salespeople needing more coaching. Message: Those two people were key to us increasing revenue so don’t be cheap when hiring and promoting for these two positions. In most organizations, five percent of your people can have great influence with the other 95% in getting buying in to your culture change and with upgrading others with their skills and attitude. They made us money.

I had taken my two Assistants out for National Secretary's Day the year before and with the date coming up, the CEO decreed that lunch out for National Secretary's Day was out. "We'll bring in lunch for all of the office ladies." I met with my two ladies and told them of the new policy and added, "so the three of us are going to lunch tomorrow, ahead of National Secretary's Day, as you both are very special." A great V.P. of Sales takes care of his/her people and is a leader – not a follower.

A big benefit to me from promoting and hiring these two professionals? Pre-email and laptop days, the CEO and I were going to Europe for 3 weeks. I was a bit frantic over leaving several, huge projects behind so I was in a "don't forget this, this and this" mode with the two high achievers. They both came to my office with one message. "You said you were educating us so that we could run the company some day. The day has arrived so go on your trip and let us run the company." Oh. And our first Black American promoted to the supervisory ranks developed the same attitude and results. I consult so much in culture as I've seen the impact in both people and revenue.

Lastly, I had to do my own recruiting because the Director of H.R. was personally hired by the CEO as their religious beliefs were identical and they went to the same church. We desperately needed a qualified person in this position as we were rapidly growing, but all we had was an unqualified church member. Take notice that many mid-sized companies often tend to hire HR managers for the clerical and legal issues and not as leaders because they are not often thought of as being on the leadership team. If true, it means that the HR managers are not bringing enough value. This can be corrected by the massive upgrade of necessary skill sets.

Communication is almost always ranked in the top 3 for individual and corporate weaknesses and it is often in the #1 position. If the CEO doesn't possess great communication skills, coupled with people skills, the V.P. of Sales is almost always the logical choice to be the leader at company meetings. CEOs with finance and engineering backgrounds often communicate with logical or left-brain thinking. It's best to have a master communicator who uses both left and right brain skills. Then, it will usually come with high-energy and dosages of humor. And changes.

I'm sure you've noticed that the evening news starts with "Good evening" and then they proceed to tell you why it isn't. It's very similar to a CEO giving a presentation that is full of data and short on enthusiasm and "WIIFM". In most cases, it's not what is spoken, but how it is said – and received.

A client had a dull, after dinner speaker that didn't have a stop button. And he was totally oblivious to the increasingly restless sales team that was consuming the table wine at an increasing pace. Finally, one of the more drunken diners (drinkers) hurled an empty wine bottle at him. It missed and hit the CEO's head instead. As he slid from his chair to the floor, he mumbled, "Hit me again. I can still hear him."

I write just as I speak and consult. I move from one sub-topic to the next instead of banging away on one specific topic. That way, almost any reader or audience member can pick up on at least one idea. The one thing I don't want to be is – B-O-R-I-N-G. You want to invoke a funny line once in a while whether at a company event or when communicating with a client. You can often pick up those lines by reading quotes on delivery trucks. A septic tank truck can be a crappy business, but I saw one truck that

put a different smell on their company with their message, “Yesterday’s Meals on Wheels.” Not hilarious, but a right touch, again, beats boring.

Even the vast majority of emails can be improved quite easily.

- Firstly, remember that you are sending an electronic letter and should be written as such.
- Most start with “Bill, instead of “Hi Bill” or “Dear Bill.” And some don’t have either. The former is blunt and lacks in business acumen. And most readers are more open to a warm greeting.
- And most emails don’t end with “Thanks, Bill.” Or often nothing. They typically end with “Joe Jones, ABC Company” leaving a mundane taste in the reader’s mind that is often “I don’t think I’ll like this person” or “This doesn’t even deserve a response.”

A few decades ago, someone started this trend and now millions have followed suit. Your letters and emails should be interesting, beneficial and fun to read. Message: Don’t follow the pack. Do what the top 2% do. If you speak with charisma, include it in your emails. If you lack charisma, you can develop it by securing a specialist in this area.

Unfortunately, many people don’t take the time to improve their communication skills and their upward mobility suffers because of it. Everything you say and write is a representation of you as a person. And the V. P. should master every salesperson’s writing skills. It’s also imperative that Customer Service receive the same coaching as an irate client can become an even better client, or a lost client, based on the written response. Your hero insures that everyone is improving – forever.

AMA Enterprise reported results of a survey of the “top 5 most important skills training provided” that put communication in the top spot. And since part of communication is brevity, I’ll stop here and continue, with more meat, when we meet again.

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