

## Chapter 3

# MANAGING FOR MAXIMUM PERFORMANCE

*The ultimate test of management is  
performance.* - Peter Drucker

### **WHEN YOU WANT IT MORE THAN THEY DO IT'S TIME TO SAY GOODBYE**

Why do we, as professional media managers, allow the lackluster peddlers to occupy a seat on our sales bench? Be honest with yourself. Right now, on your sales staff there's one, or maybe a couple, of AE's who consistently fall short of your sales expectations. Why are they allowed to remain on your team?

My bet is that less than desirable sellers occasionally sit in your sales pit longer than they should because you are human. In being human, you cheerlead the underdog when you note that their personal "sacrifice" is sincere. Maybe you can't

justify firing someone who, by all appearances, is giving it their all. You convince yourself that some sales shadowing, more instructional tape viewing or the passing of time, will move this person from sales loser to sales winner. Before you know it, this individual—your personal sales “project” who has just stolen nine months of your management time away from the rest of the sales team—is sitting across from you in yet another performance meeting, while you contemplate probation or firing.

At some point during this uphill climb, the account executive has grown tired of the fight and the lack of progress. They don't like having a target on their back. Their enthusiasm slows and internally they begin to question themselves on whether this is the career for them. They begin to want “it” (defined as sales success, a broadcasting career, etc.) less. Very quickly, you begin to sense you want “it” more for them than they do for themselves. When this epiphany strikes, it's time for you to act upon something you should have done sooner—cut your losses and terminate the sales underperformer. I guarantee that both of you will feel better after the dust has settled and the ex-media rep is driving away from your office for the last time.

### **THERE IS MORE THAN ONE MANAGEMENT STYLE TO GET IMPROVED REVENUE PERFORMANCE**

When entering a media outlet, it's easy to gather a quick sense of the attitude and morale of the staff.

Typically, “it” is in the air. Very simply, I observe the warm or cold welcome of the receptionist and reception area, employee walking pace, the facial expressions, the staff awards and pictures—or lack thereof. In addition, my ears tune into far-down-the-hallway conversations, listening for enunciation, excitement, laughter—all of which shows commitment. The combination of these assessments takes barely *thirty* seconds, but the observation is telling.

One would think that staffs suffering from low morale would not be able to perform. But that thinking isn’t true, at least when considering short-term performance.

I recall a conversation with a relatively “new to the market” general manager who was quick to answer my questions as though he had no worries. My thirty-second assessment of his organization was that morale was the pits. The employees were walking around like they were headed to the salt mines. Yelling and screaming were on the daily agenda. Yet surprisingly, the sales team was making budget.

Knowing that some of the sellers were seeking opportunity elsewhere, I asked this question of the GM, “What happens if you lose the big sales biller or one of your managers? Do you have a bench?”

Without hesitation, the GM responded, “I don’t care. There’s a line of people wanting to work here. Someone leaves, that’s on them!” The troubling

thing is, I know this manager meant and believed what he was saying. In his mind, salespeople are just a number; they're disposable.

Remember, I said the team was making budget. They did so for the next quarter, but then spent the better part of *five* consecutive quarters trying to dig out of a budget shortfall. The confident GM wasn't so confident anymore.

Apparently, perceived "good for business" threats and yelling and screaming are not long-term plans for prosperous revenue production. Worse yet, when word gets out about media outlets with this type of environment, less qualified employees will knock on the door and the staff talent pool will take a hit through multiple turnovers.

From my experience, there's more than one management style to get improved revenue performance. However, threatening, yelling, and screaming should not be your first choice, as it's a short-term fix that creates long-term problems.

### **A TWIST ON MEASURING NEW BUSINESS**

Are you happy with your sales team's new business performance? Do they consistently fall short *or* over-deliver on your new business expectations? Are you confident that your sellers are capable of delivering the volume of new business needed to grow new business revenue in an off year?

New business sales goals, whether individual or

team, are consistent with other goals, in that effective managers create a plan of achievement. The plan is a road map to keep everyone focused on the task at hand. Likely, your road map includes a certain number of new business calls per week or month, a minimum monthly expectation of closed new business revenue, and maybe measurable expertise in prospecting competing media for new revenue.

However, there's a little known metric that most managers overlook when building their team's new business plan: the number of times an account executive calls on a *single* prospect. In Jack Canfield's book, *The Success Principles*, marketing specialist Herbert True of Notre Dame University details some revealing sales call statistics ([www.thesuccessprinciples.com](http://www.thesuccessprinciples.com)). He found this about salespeople and their prospecting efforts:

- 44% quit after the 1st call
- 24% quit after the 2nd call
- 14% quit after the 3rd call
- 12% quit after the 4th call

In summary, 94% of salespeople quit calling on a prospect after the 4<sup>th</sup> call, but... 60% of all sales are made after the 4th call. That means that 60% of prospective buyers are passed over by 94% of all salespeople!

Teach your future sales stars to commit to at least *five* calls on a qualified decision maker.

Statistics prove that professional persistence will pay off by delivering more new business revenue!

**“C” MANAGERS CAN’T LEAD “A” SELLERS, BUT  
“A” SELLERS WILL LEAD “C” MANAGERS**

“How can you expect your sales team to be their best if you aren’t at your best?” It was a question I asked of a sales manager expressing frustration at the lack of performance from her sales team. She looked at me as though the question offended her. She had previously admitted some signs of personal burnout—that some of her passion for the industry had faded. She even questioned if she was still good enough to continue leading the team. The account executives didn’t seem to respect her authority anymore and her attempts at accountability were ignored. It was as if the sellers were managing her... and she was right!

“C” managers can’t lead “A” sellers, but “A” sellers will lead “C” managers. In the not-so-distant past, this manager was a winner—an A” manager with the best group of sellers in the market. Personal issues spilling over into her work life and stress from a station sale were blows from which she had difficulty recovering. Somewhere along the line she lost control and the respect of the herd.

“Will I ever be able to recover from this setback?” she asked me. Predicting the future *is not* one of my specialties, however, I did explain to her that if she was sincere in her desire to be the

best in the market again, she would first need to have a difficult conversation with her staff. This conversation would mark a new beginning in an effort to right the wrongs and to capitalize on the opportunity for everyone to learn from the experience.

A few months later I saw my sales manager friend. Something was a bit different. She had a pep in her step and was walking fast, as many determined individuals are known to do. There were smiles in the sales pit and a lighter, not so intense, feel in the air.

We got around to the topic of the team conversation. She explained how, for the meeting, she wrote down everything she wanted to address. This allowed her to keep her emotions in check and to stay focused on the topic. She told me she started the team discussion with an apology, taking full responsibility for letting them down as a manager and a leader.

She said the turning point of the meeting was admitting she was human and capable of making mistakes. Many of the sellers apologized back and admitted their own mistakes. All agreed it was a new day and it would take the commitment of everyone on the team if they were to return to market leading revenue shares.

My sales manager friend smiled as she summarized the strained relationships and the ups and downs of the back half of the past year:

“It’s interesting how that negative experience has made us closer. The competitive fun has returned to our office.”