

SALESSTAR

The 9-step pathway
to transformational
sales results



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Introduction

Sales teams that hit their targets consistently week in week out, month in month out, are critical for businesses looking to grow and scale.



However, [global research from CSO Insights](#) shows that nearly half of all sales companies fail to hit their targets.

“Despite the new tools, the mobile devices, the potential of social, and so on, many salespeople are working harder than ever just to achieve the same old results or worse,” reports CSO Insights.

That leaves businesses and sales teams staring down a barrel of uncertainty. However, if we can be certain of anything, it’s this: **growth requires change.**

That’s where this guide comes in. Inside you’ll find the nine step pathway to achieving transformational sales results. It’s a simple formula built around providing clarity, measuring activity and improving effectiveness designed to help sales teams not just succeed but excel in an increasingly tough selling environment.

“Making the numbers is harder than ever.”

The High Performance Sales Pathway



Step 1: Analyse your sales

Imagine you're ill. Not the head-cold kind of ill, but the chest-pain kind. You go to the doctor, who immediately schedules you for open heart surgery that afternoon.



Fixing one cog
in isolation
won't guarantee
instant sales
success.

Following doctor's orders, you go, get sedated and allow a surgeon to investigate your vital inner workings. The diagnosis? Indigestion! You've just wasted however many thousands of dollars on surgery, an afternoon—plus, a bucket load of stress—on a solution before you had a proper diagnosis.

Luckily, this doesn't happen in medicine. However, it does in sales.

The importance of sales analysis

Conducting a sales analysis is the essential first step to understanding how your sales team works

and how effective they are. Skipping this step is akin to the doctor's scenario described above—you may jump to conclusions and take action without having the full picture.

"Many CEOs and managers don't know how effective their sales teams are," says Paul O'Donohue, SalesStar's Founder and CEO. "There are a lot of cogs and wheels, which makes them complex and quite difficult to understand."

This is why getting a full, holistic understanding of how all the parts fit together and influence one another is essential. Fixing one cog in isolation won't guarantee instant sales success. The benefit

of a sales analysis is that it helps sales managers and CEOs identify the weak points in their system—without having to guess at it. It cuts to the chase.

“A sales analysis gives us a blueprint of what’s wrong,” says Paul. “It gives you clarity, and from there you can strategically focus on the areas that need improving.”

Skipping it can cost you—in more ways than one

A sales analysis is not something to be done half-heartedly. Failing to run an adequate analysis could see you implementing solutions that simply don’t work—costing precious time, energy and resources of your company. You’re also:

Setting up for failure

Many other aspects of your business depend on getting your sales analysis right. Everything flows on from here—your sales plan, processes, strategic messaging, training and recruitment—everything! It pays to do your groundwork thoroughly.



Hamstringing your wider team

Again, without the full picture, you might end up prescribing a solution that doesn’t actually fix the problem your team is experiencing. For example, sales training won’t solve a mindset problem or a management one. Instead, this “solution” is actually getting in the way of implementing real, effective change for your team.

Sabotaging individual success

Everyone is different. So, a one size fits all solution is unlikely to work. Done right, a sales analysis will identify the strengths and weaknesses of your individual team members, allowing for more tailored and effective solutions.

Analysing your sales system can also help you identify whether you have people in the right role. For example, placing a Hunter—someone who excels at finding and developing new business—behind a desk in the role of an account manager is doing neither them nor you any favours.

How to do a sales analysis: 4 tips to remember

1. Assess individual capabilities

Look at the capabilities of each of your team members. Knowing individual strengths and weaknesses can help you capitalise on their capabilities.

“A sales analysis is an excellent way to the capabilities of your team across the sales spectrum,” says Paul.

But remember, capability is both skill and mindset.

“Some people just won’t hunt,” Paul says. “So why would you train them to if psychologically they’re just not that way inclined?”

2. Don't forget your managers

"A lot of the time it's the management and organisation that needs development," says Paul. "Poor sales could have something to do with the company culture; their team may not be motivated or they don't have the right incentives."

3. Pick the right tools

It's no good using assessment tools that only uncover part of the picture. For instance, focusing on personalities with a personality test, but not examining capabilities, or looking at skills alone, rather than the psychological makeup of a person and the wider team.

Having only part of the picture may mean you only fix part of the problem.

4. Think holistically

Examine everything from team skills and mindset to the sales process and core strategy. Companies tend to come unstuck when they don't look at every part of the system.

"You can't fix a problem in isolation," says Paul. "Sales is holistic, so everything needs to be investigated and tied in. Guessing is not a sound strategy, so remove the guesswork and analyse your sales force to make intelligent decisions. You deserve to grow sales!"

While it might seem a lot of work, a sales analysis will save you time, money and energy in the long run. With it, you'll avoid a laborious and costly process of elimination, and cut to the root of your problem from the start. From there, success really is your oyster.



Step 2: Plan for success

After completing a sales analysis, you should have a good understanding of what's working and not working for your sales team and your business at large.



It's now time to strategically hone-in on the weak points and create a plan to develop these areas—and set your growth targets. This is your sales plan; it's one part strategy, one part execution, and is a vital roadmap to your goals.

In other words, if the sales analysis is the What, then the sales plan is the How. Without it, you might as well be driving blind.

The importance of sales planning

“Companies looking for a clear path to transform their results often miss the planning part,” says

Paul O'Donohue, SalesStar's Founder and CEO. “When you don't have a plan, you're not making good strategic decisions, from not knowing where to focus your team to what type of salesperson to hire.”

With a sales plan, you have clarity. It's the fast-track to growth.

Planning for sales success: the critical elements of a sales plan

There are nine core elements to a successful sales plan. Below we touch on three of the most important to consider.

A clear set of numbers and how to get there

A good sales plan should map where your current revenue is coming from and what future channels to strategically target in order to reach your growth goals.

“We get them to plan out how much revenue is coming from existing business, how much revenue could come from selling new products or services to existing business, and the shortfall between this and their growth goals,” says Paul. “That extra revenue needs to come from somewhere, so it’s got to come from new business.”

However: “A sales plan with just numbers isn’t a plan, you need to know how you’re going to get there, who is going to execute it, when that’s going to happen and whether you have the right team to do it.”

If you’ve completed a sales analysis, you should already have a good idea of your team’s capabilities and whether you have the people you need to carry out your strategic goals.



A profile of your ideal target market

The **key component** of a sales plan is to strategically identify the way(s) to reach your goals as fast as possible. In other words, maximising your return on time (ROT). The first step to achieving this is to identify your target market.

“A lot of salespeople waste a lot of time having the wrong conversations with the wrong people,” says Paul. “Part of the planning should focus on getting salespeople to have the right conversations with the right people so you get a better return on time.”

A good place to start is with your current customers. Which ones generate the most profit for the least amount of effort and time? What industries are they in? What type of business are they? Who inside that business do you need to speak to?

From there you can flesh out who your ideal customer is. Make sure you cover these three key areas:

Geographic: where are they located, are they local or further afield?

Demographic: what is their gender, how old are they, what industry do they work in and in what role?

Psyche: what is the mindset of your top clients? Are they growth minded, forward thinking, willing to pay, and willing execute your advice? Do they value what you do?

“Clients outside of this Photograph tend not to be good clients,” says Paul.

With a firm idea of who your ideal customer is, you’ll have a better understanding of how to find, attract and sell to them.

Strategic messaging with cut through

With your target market identified, your sales plan should also include the strategic messaging—your **positioning statement** and unique value proposition—to make customers want to buy from you, and not your competition.



“Not a lot of sales managers actually know how to shape up strategic messaging,” says Paul. “And your strategic messaging needs to be powerful from the start—you’ve only got about 10 seconds to make an impression.

“If you don’t have a really good soundbite, you’re just going to sound like everyone else that’s prospecting those clients.”

3 tips to execute your sales plan

1. Get everyone involved

Remember, those who plan the fight won’t fight the plan.

“One of the biggest mistakes we see is sales managers not involving their team,” says Paul. “If you bestow a plan on your salespeople without buy in, they’ll probably push back saying “that’s unrealistic, we can’t get there”.”

“However, if you involve them and facilitate individual plans that cascade upwards to an overarching plan, they’ll buy into it. They’ll take ownership of it and you can hold them accountable because they’ve helped develop it.”

2. Have clear objectives

It’s much harder to reach a goal if you don’t know what it is. Having clear objectives means you and your team can make good strategic decisions that contribute towards your sales growth goals.

3. Communicate, communicate, communicate

Ensuring your strategy is communicated across your business puts everyone on the same page. It will also prevent people channelling their efforts into the wrong objective, such as finding new clients instead of upselling to existing ones.

Step 3: Set up a best-practice sales process

The sales process is the epicentre of everything in sales—getting it wrong can send shockwaves through your business.



A lack of process means salespeople constantly wing it, sales cycles linger on for what seems like forever, and sales leaders are left frustrated and unable to manage their teams. All this translates to inconsistent sales results, a position no manager likes to be in.

The importance of an effective sales process

For growing companies, not having the right sales process can cause a lot of havoc. For fast-growth companies, it can spell certain doom since there's no accurate way to predict where their next sale—and therefore paycheck—will come from.

A solid sales process can fix all that. However, not any old process will do: you need to tailor it to your business and customer.

“Implementing a sales process can lead to phenomenal and consistent results,” says Paul O’Donohue, SalesStar’s Founder and CEO. “Some of our best breakthroughs with clients have come when they’ve taken time to develop a process based on best practice.”

“When our clients implement a well thought out sales process, they grow, on average, by 20 per cent.”

How to develop a sales process in four steps

1. Make it milestone centric

With clear, well-defined stages, or milestones, there's no need for your salespeople to make up a process on the fly. Milestones not only make your salespeople more effective and hold them accountable to completing the right steps, but they also help managers know exactly where sales are in the pipeline—and what needs to happen to progress them into the next phase.

“With a milestone centric process, you can then start to measure opportunities as they come through and make a planned sales forecast,” says Paul.

Lastly, milestones make it easier for sales managers to coach their salespeople. The visibility a process provides means sales managers can identify the steps their reps excel and struggle in. In short, it helps them identify why their salespeople are or aren't meeting their targets.

For example, without a process, all a manager knows is that their rep isn't meeting their quota. However, with a milestone process in place, a

manager might see that their sales rep is doing an excellent job of finding leads, but then fails when it comes to following them up. From there, the manager can take steps to coach their rep in this specific area.

2. Map your process to your customer journey

According to the [2017 World-Class Sales Practices Study](#), over half of sales organisations (54 per cent) do not formally align their sales process—or other aspects of how they sell—to the specific journey their customers take.

A sales process that is not suited to your business and ideal customer is the equivalent of trying to run a 100-metre race in a pair of oversized slippers. You can still compete, but you're not going to win anything—instead, you're more likely to trip.

To develop an effective sales process, it needs to be fit for purpose—a one-size-fits-all approach won't work. According to the same study, organisations that do align their process to their customer journey report sales quota attainment rates of up to 14 per cent greater than the average. It's just another reason why establishing who your target markets are in your sales plan is so essential.

3. Involve your team

“A company might have 100 salespeople, but there are not 100 ways to sell a product. There's one best practice way,” says Paul.

Calling upon your top salespeople to help develop the sales process can help you understand what best practice looks like. However, it's just as important to talk to all of your team to get an understanding of what **doesn't work**.

Moreover, in helping to develop the sales process, they buy into it, are more likely to follow it and, as a result, become more effective. This all leads to consistent results and shorter sales cycles.



“The big breakthroughs we’ve had is when companies do this,” says Paul. “They go from a handful of people using best practice to everyone.”

Lastly, having one process makes it much easier for a sales manager to coach, since they’re dealing with just one process instead of 100.

4. Keep it simple

When it comes to sales processes, “keep it simple” applies. People won’t follow a process that has information overload. Short, simple and to the point serves best.

Tip: Don’t forget to document it! Having a formal, documented process is a huge asset to sales managers, particularly when they are coaching and onboarding new staff.

Read more: [4 mistakes that lead to an ineffective sales process](#)

“A lot of sales managers struggle to develop an effective process in today’s selling environment; even those who have been in the game for a while,” says Paul.

“Sales has changed a lot in the last few years; strategies have changed. A few subtle tweaks can make a big difference in your ability to have an effective process and achieve the results you want.”



Step 4: Establish KPIs and sales systems to measure against

As the founder of modern management, Peter Drucker, once said, “What gets measured gets improved.”



Without a set of sales KPIs and an effective system to track and monitor them, a sales team is operating without knowing where the goal posts are.

It's a recipe for inconsistent results. The lack of clarity affects all levels of a sales team too. Individuals have no focus, managers can't see if their team is performing (or not), and leaders lose the ability to forecast accurately.

“If you're not measuring your KPIs, you don't know if you're operating an effective sales team,” says Paul O'Donohue, SalesStar's Founder and CEO.

The dos and don'ts of determining your KPIs

Every business is different. There's no one set of KPIs that works for everyone. However, there are a few rules that companies can use to help them select the right ones for them.

Don't focus only on lagging indicators

Lagging indicators consists of output or outcome metrics, such as month to date revenue, profit, and deals won, labour cost per unit (no); essentially anything that is a **result**.

“Focusing only on lagging indicators is where most companies get it wrong,” says Paul. “They are important, but they are historic. It’s like getting a D on a graded paper. You cannot go back and change it; you can only learn from it for next time.”

Do incorporate leading indicators

While lagging KPIs are necessary, they have some limitations. It’s why they are often paired with leading indicators, which are behavioural measures.

“Leading indicators can be the number of phone calls, the number of referrals, the number of meetings, the number of proposals presented,” says Paul. “They are the things we can influence now to change the final outcome. These are what we focus on.”

Tip: Reverse engineer your sales process. If you’ve got an effective sales process in place, work the numbers backwards to produce a set of meaningful KPIs.

For example: If you’ve got a 50 per cent conversion ratio from presenting, then how many proposals do you need to have? How many proposals does each salesperson need to present per week? Therefore,



tracking number of proposals per week could be a handy leading indicator for your sales team.

Don't have too many KPIs

While it’s tempting to track everything, it can lead to confusion. The more KPIs you have, the more difficult it is for your staff to know which to prioritise.

“If you’ve got 12 KPIs, which one is the most important one?” Paul posits.

Do make it easy to understand what success looks like

When setting KPIs, keep it simple. Less often leads to more. SalesStar, for example, focuses primarily on four KPIs:

1. Number of discovery meetings this week.
2. Number of proposals presented this week.
3. Number of discovery meetings booked for the week ahead.
4. Number of proposals booked for the week ahead.

Finding the best sales systems

Businesses can use one or many sales systems to help track and measure KPIs. However, the biggest error companies make is choosing systems that don’t replicate their sales process.

“You need to have really good systems in place to measure those KPIs,” Paul says. “The most effective are those that allow salespeople, managers and CEOs to see deals going through the milestones of their sales process.”

Having a dashboarded system not only helps you track KPIs and deals, but helps managers pick up on non-performers. Most of all, it helps business leaders forecast.

“Without an effective system(s) you can’t see what’s in the pipeline to close in the next week or month. It causes a huge amount of stress,” Paul says.

STEP 4: ESTABLISH KPIS AND SALES SYSTEMS TO MEASURE AGAINST



“You don’t know if you’ve got sufficient cash flow to fund growth and, from a procurement point of view you, you don’t know if you have the necessary stock to fulfill orders. All because you don’t have that visibility.”

What does SalesStar use?

We’re asked this question a lot and the truth is we use several, but our top three are:

[Membrain](#)

Membrain is SalesStar’s main customer relationship management (CRM) system.

“We use it because it can really map out our process,” Paul says. “It also gives us the right statistics and science around closing ratios, such as

win-loss ratios, which helps us forecast accurately. It’s also dashboarded out so we can see deals coming through the pipeline.”

[HubSpot](#)

HubSpot provides inbound marketing and lead generation tracking. It’s also worth noting that it comes with a free CRM that follows on a high-level, milestone centric sales approach.

[Results.com](#)

No two sales teams are the same, which is why Results.com is a useful system that can provide personalised dashboards for sales teams. A handy tool for team meetings!

These are just a few of the options available. If you’re looking at implementing a new sales system(s), remember that the best system is one that can replicate your sales process.

Step 5: Develop effective sales managers

Sales has a problem—or rather, a shortage. Effective sales leaders are hard to find.

The best managers and leaders are those who excel at both aspects.



Research from over 100,000 sales managers has found that 18 per cent of all sales managers should not be in the role and that's just the tip of the iceberg.

The significance of sales leadership

From a lacklustre culture to ineffective salespeople, poor leadership and management is one of the root causes of missed targets and flagging growth. However, it's not all bad news.

"Implementing good leadership and focusing on culture can double your business," says Paul O'Donohue, SalesStar's Founder and CEO.

"We've helped a large construction group grow over 100 per cent. Their market share grew by 47 per cent, in a market with a growth rate of only 13 per cent. This was achieved by focusing on leadership training and developing a culture of coaching."

The difference between leadership and management

Leadership is about people, and management is about tasks. The best managers and leaders are those who excel at both aspects. To quote **Peter Drucker**: "management is about doing things right, leadership is about doing the right things".

Good sales managers will know how to conduct effective sales meetings and hold people accountable—the practical aspects of running a sales team. However, they also need to embody leadership qualities, such as listening, asking not telling, and coaching. This last point, in particular, is important to develop a high performing sales team.

3 reasons why sales managers and leaders fail

The first step to improving the leadership capabilities within your business is to understand why leaders and managers are falling short. More often than not it comes down to one (sometimes all) of the following reasons:

1. They don't coach

A lack of coaching is the number one reason why sales managers and leaders don't get results—both from themselves and their sales teams.

“Where most companies, and sales managers, get it wrong is they simply don't spend enough time coaching,” says Paul. Ideally [50 per cent](#) of their time should be spent coaching their salespeople.”

However, research from the Objective Management Group (OMG) shows that [only 3 per cent](#) of sales managers actually hit this coaching-time quota.

“A sales manager's job is to grow people to grow sales,” Paul says, “If you're not growing people, you're not growing sales and you'll never reach your growth targets.”

2. They continue to sell, instead of manage

An elite salesperson does not make an elite sales manager. Many sales managers were once top salespeople, but the two roles are very different. Some struggle to let go of the selling aspect of their old job.

“Many great salespeople become ineffective sales managers when... they want to be hero closers rather than developers who generate revenue

through others,” writes global sales expert and founder of Objective Management Group, [Dave Kurlan](#).

3. Their role is undefined

Businesses can also fail their sales managers. Having undefined roles and not setting clear expectations is setting them up for failure. They have no choice but to make it up as they go.

This is particularly evident in businesses that skip over the essential sales analysis, planning and KPI steps.

The top 2 ways to become a better sales leader

1. Start coaching

To start with, implement pre-call strategising and post-call debriefing meetings. Make an effort to conduct one-on-one catch ups with your salespeople each week to explore what's in their pipeline and help them work through any milestones they're stuck on.

Want more about coaching suggestions? [13 Most Important Tools for Coaching Salespeople](#)

2. Hold your salespeople accountable

Start reviewing your KPIs at your weekly sales meetings. This is your opportunity to set out what your team's goals are and what activities to focus on for the week.

“Meetings should focus on some positive news and reviewing the week that was,” says Paul. “This includes inspecting the KPIs, such as the number of discovery meetings, the number of proposal meetings and deals won. It should also inspect the pipeline of what's coming up.”

Later during your one-on-ones, you can check in on each salesperson to see how they're tracking towards those KPIs and provide coaching on any issues they're having.

Step 6: Recruit the right people

Gut feel is not a recruitment strategy. Yet, many organisations still rely on it to recruit their salespeople.



**As a sales manager,
you want to hire
candidates who are
better than the people
you had before.**

It's a hit and (mostly) miss strategy, and it can severely impact a company's ability to grow. Onboarding an ineffective salesperson is not going to help you hit your growth targets. However, a solid sales recruitment strategy will.

Why have a sales recruitment strategy?

As a sales manager, you want to hire candidates who are better than the people you had before. The best way to ensure you hire the right people is to use a recruitment strategy that employs science and process for maximum effect.

“The single fastest way to grow sales is to recruit the right person for the role,” says Paul O'Donohue, SalesStar's Founder and CEO.

5 ways to recruit the right salespeople

If you're looking to revamp your recruitment strategy, these are the must-have elements you should include:

1. Identify the profile of salesperson

Do you need an account manager, a farmer or a hunter?

"Get clear on the type of salesperson you are looking for. This will relate back to your sales plan," Paul says. "Having a solid sales plan will mean that when it's time to recruit, you know exactly what capabilities candidates need to have, as well as the capabilities your team needs to maintain and grow its sales."

Also, get clear on the markets they are selling to. Do they call on CEOs, managers, technicians or mums and dads? Are they selling in a competitive market or are you the only game in town? Does your business sell a conceptual service or a product that you can demo? Is it a long, complex process or transactional? Will candidates be expected to sell on value or price?



These are just some examples of what you need to be clear on. Lastly, don't forget to check that your candidates has experience in the areas you need!

2. Make it a process, not an event

Sales recruitment is not a one-off event, you will always have to hire new people from time to time. Where many sales managers go wrong is not making it an ongoing process.

"You should be recruiting all the time," says Paul "That doesn't mean you have to hire all the time, but you should be always networking, looking for salespeople who will fit into your culture and have the capabilities your business needs.

"You need to build a solid candidate bench and always be top-grading."

3. Use pre-hire assessment

If you want to hire the right sales rep, start with science. It is the key to making good, strategic hiring decisions. Not all salespeople or roles are the same. Science is the first step to assessing whether a candidate suits the type of sales role your company needs.

"It comes back to your sales analysis," Paul explains. "When you assess your team, you know what best practice looks like. You know the benchmarks and what skills or deficiencies your team has.

To succeed in sales, candidates need the right mindset & skill set. It's not always apparent at the first meeting, and a lot of sales managers miss it.

That's where a pre-hire assessment comes in— it removes the guesswork. A pre-hire assessment tests for the essential psychological traits that candidates need if they are to succeed in the new role.

"The willingness to sell is critical," says Paul. "Salespeople with this mindset will do whatever it

takes to be successful. If the willingness to sell is missing in your new hire, you've got problems."

Tip: Hire attitude over aptitude. "Time and time again, attitude beats aptitude," says Paul. "Hiring someone with the right mindset is key."

4. Qualify candidates according to sales process and target market

Look for candidates who have experience selling in a similar target market to you, along with those who have used a sales process that matches yours.

"You're looking for sales people who can execute on your process, or the part of the process you're hiring them for," says Paul. "A common mistake sales managers make is they see that a candidate was the top rep at CompanyABC and hire them for their own business. Only their business uses a different sales methodology and process, so the candidate's skills aren't compatible."

Tip: Ask behavioral-based questions in your interviews. Use behaviour-based questions to encourage a candidate to demonstrate: their experience in using a similar sales process to yours, and how they define success.

Questions could include:

- ★ "How did you bring on a new client?"
- ★ "What was the most successful client you brought onboard and how did you do it?"
- ★ "Tell me a time where your sales were in a slump and how did you come out of it?"
- ★ "Tell me how you dealt with a client that pushed back on something they didn't want—how did you handle that?"

Lastly, **don't forget to validate what candidates tell you.** As the saying goes, salespeople do their best selling at the interview!

5. Set up a 90-day onboarding process

Do you have a plan for when a new recruit joins you? How do you contribute to their success in the first 90 days? Not having an onboarding process can be just as damaging as hiring the wrong person.

"Giving new hires the keys and saying: 'You're a salesperson now. If you don't hit your targets in 90 days, you're gone. Good luck.'—that's setting them up for failure," says Paul. "Instead, look at how you can set them up to succeed. That's what a good leader and a good manager would do."



Step 7: Assess mindset

In sales, it really is mind over matter. No amount of skills training will overcome a poor selling psychology.



In fact, at SalesStar we've found that **80 per cent** of a salesperson's success comes down to mindset. It's why hiring people with the right mindset is so critical to developing a high-performance sales team. But what sort of mental attitude should sales managers look for?

There's also the question of the mindsets of your existing sales staff too. Can you improve their selling psychology through training? Answer: yes, you can. It's also the most effective sales training your team can undertake.

"Our biggest breakthroughs have been training in mindset," says Paul O'Donohue, SalesStar's

Founder and CEO. "It makes salespeople far, far more effective.

"We recently had a client, a car dealer, grow by 30 per cent in six months—the market only grew 13 per cent—when we focused on mindset training."

The 2 sides of a positive sales mindset

There are two parts to the selling mindset: the will to sell and psychological competencies. The top salespeople rank high across both these aspects.

1. The will to sell

Skills, while important, mean nothing if a salesperson lacks the five essential components that fuels a salesperson's drive to sell. These are:

- ★ **Desire:** Does the salesperson have a strong desire to be successful?
- ★ **Commitment:** Do they have unconditional committed to doing everything they can to hit their targets? Are they prepared to do the stuff that will make them successful even if it is scary or uncomfortable? Whether that's picking up the phone (cold calling), presenting to a proposal to a group, or having a conversation with a CEO.

"A lot of salespeople want to be successful, but they lack that real commitment to do whatever it takes," says Paul. "Salespeople have to be tenacious."

- ★ **Responsibility:** Do they take responsibility for their activities, or do they make excuses? Do they blame external factors on their failure, or do they look internally and ask what they could have done better?

"Top salespeople have a huge amount of self-responsibility," says Paul. "Without these internal conversations, a salesperson will never get better."



- ★ **Outlook:** How positive are they? Do they look at a market and see an abundance of opportunities or a scarcity of them? A strong outlook tends to result in more resilient salespeople who can handle rejection.

You either have it, or you don't

These "willingness to sell" traits are the foundations of a successful selling mindset. Without them, salespeople are not just ineffective, but virtually untrainable.

2. Psychological competencies

There are several psychological barriers that can hold a salesperson back and prevent them from being effective. While they are common—especially in sales teams that struggle to hit their targets—they can be overcome.

These barriers include:

- ★ **Need for approval:** the need to be liked by others. This weakness gets in the way of asking tough questions to advance a sale. According to Paul, this weakness alone can have a 33 per cent impact on a salesperson's ability to close a sale.
- ★ **Self-limiting beliefs:** Selling is about belief. Belief in oneself, the product, the company and the value proposition and price point. Without it, self-limiting beliefs can form, such as "this sales process is ineffective" and "I can't sell on value". Even if it's never verbalised, it can have a massive impact on a salesperson's psyche.

"It can be a self-fulfilling prophecy. You start to buy into that self-limiting belief," says Paul. "It then limits the activity you do and how effective you are at it."

- ★ **Uncontrolled emotion:** Salespeople who get emotionally involved tend to act erratic and get flustered easily. Their decisions are not always rational, which can cause them to deviate from your sales process.
- ★ **Money weakness:** Being uncomfortable discussing money, budgets and finance is a major



issue for a salesperson. Not only can it prevent them from fully understanding their customer's needs, but they also tend to discount things and can't sell on value.

- ★ **Buy-cycle weakness:** This is the tendency to empathise with people who have a similar buying process to you. If you're an impulse buyer, you expect others to be as well, which could result being assertive at closing time, and likely to close more and faster deals. Likewise, if you prefer to spend time considering a purchase, you might miss an opportunity to close a sale, as you may think the prospects wants to think it over and comparison shop, resulting in blown out sales cycles and can impact closing by 50 per cent.

Add it all up...

These psychological conditions Paul refers to as the "human handbrake", as we are often not aware of them and they can slow us down. Combine these weaknesses together: the need for approval with a 33 per cent impact on closing, buy-cycle weakness with a 50 per cent impact, self-limiting beliefs, and money weakness, and it really starts to add up.

"When you look at it this way, it's easy to see why some salespeople simply aren't effective," says Paul.

4 tips to overcome a mindset weakness in your staff

1. **Conduct a sales assessment:** A sales assessment will help identify the type of weaknesses a salesperson has.
2. **Determine whether skill or mindset weakness:** Explore why a salesperson didn't do certain behaviours or activities. Do they know how to do it, or did they avoid it? If they don't execute on the skills they know, it's a mindset issue.
3. **Coach through the barriers:** Provide ongoing coaching and guidance to help your team member overcome their weaknesses. Pre-call strategising and post-call debriefs are a good place to start.
4. **Check your sales managers:** The mindset weaknesses of sales managers and leaders can in turn affect the rest of their sales team. Self-limiting beliefs and buy-cycle weaknesses, for example, can originate in a sales manager and spread to the rest of their team, i.e. instructing team members not to push to close a sale when in fact they should.

Step 8: Develop solid sales skills

Not having the right set of skills and knowledge will hamstring any team—no matter how good their mindset is.



Training up sales reps to ensure they have the necessary skills to perform in their role is vital, but it's not always easy.

The skills salespeople tend to lack

- ★ **Getting in front of the target market:** Selling does not rely on luck. It's about reaching the right person at the right time. It's something today's salespeople tend to struggle with—especially with the growing reluctance to target potential clients via the phone.
- ★ **Good account management:** Having strong account managers who know the techniques and strategies to upsell and cross-sell to existing clients to increase the amount they purchase is a huge asset to growing companies.
- ★ **Negotiation skills:** The ability to uphold price and sell on value comes down to a salesperson's ability to negotiate with clients.
- ★ **Consultative selling:** It's the one skill to rule them all. Consultative selling is an extremely effective selling method that encourages prospects to self-close. It's ideal for salespeople who are not strong at closing or handling objections.

Learn more: [See how salespeople in your industry rank on the 12 vital sales skills](#)

The importance of sales skills training

Sales skills training is a bit like sharpening a set of tools: without it, the tools are blunt and they're more difficult and time consuming to use. However, with the right training, a salesperson can learn to hone their selling tools for better efficiency and cut-through.

There's just one problem. More often than not, sales training doesn't work. [Research](#) shows that 85 to 90 per cent of sales training has no lasting impact. Moreover, [less than half](#) of the companies in Australasia actually have the sales skills they need to grow.

Therein lies the crux of the dilemma:
how do companies ensure their sales teams
can learn and retain the skills they
need for growth?

It comes down to your approach and strategy.



6 steps to building effective sales skills

1. Identify where your skills gaps are

Use a sales assessment tool to uncover the skills your team has and where they need to improve.

“It is far easier and cost-effective to analyse your team to understand what skills are missing from the get-go. It removes all guesswork,” says Paul O’Donohue, SalesStar’s Founder and CEO.

2. Make it relevant to the job and sales process

The training you provide should be based on your sales process. Map out the skills your team has against it. Are there any gaps?

“Skills training that isn’t related to a salesperson’s industry or role won’t sink in,” says Paul. “They need to be the right skills for the right job and the right process.”

3. Train as a team

While individual training is important, don’t forget to train together as a team as well. This ensures everyone is on the same page when it comes to skills, knowledge, process and best practice.

“We’ve gone into companies that have 10 staff who have done 10 different types of training,” says Paul. “There’s no consistency in their approach. The knowledge and methodology is split, not shared and this makes it hard for Sales Managers to coach the team”.

4. Embed it in your culture

The goal of sales training is to change behaviour, but that takes time. A one-off training event isn’t going to cut it. It’s all very well conducting sales training, but unless you incorporate the learnings into your workplace and encourage your staff to execute on them, nothing will change.

“A majority of sales teams lack consistent skill-based training. They just wing it,” says Paul. “Often

we hear “John Smith was trained 10 years ago, so he’s good to go”.

“High-performance athletes must continually train to stay competitive and at the top of their sport. It’s the same for sales.”

This is where coaching from sales managers is vital. With consistent, ongoing coaching, they can help turn learnings into everyday skills that their teams can call upon.

Tip: Aim to conduct skills training at least twice a month.

5. Use blended learning

Not everyone learns the same way, so why provide all training in the same format? Instead, use a variety of formats and mediums to cover all your bases. You can do this with the 70/20/10 principle. Here’s the breakdown:

- ★ **10 per cent** of training through formal training, such as live workshops.
- ★ **20 per cent** through ongoing coaching:
- ★ **70 per cent** through experiential learning in the field.

“Most of your training should involve getting your sales team out there in the field, trialling the tactics, making mistakes, learning from their losses and their wins, with their sales managers riding shotgun to observe,” says Paul.

6. Train your managers too

The best player doesn’t always make the best coach. Sales managers also need skills-based training. The list of skills is quite long, from the ability to run effective meetings to forecasting and planning. However, two essential skills sales managers are often missing are coaching and recruitment. Without these, a sales team’s ability to grow and improve is limited.

Read more: [Why sales leadership training is a must for 93 per cent of sales leaders](#)



Step 9: Coach for performance

Not coaching a sales team is like putting 91 petrol into a high-performance car.

Coaching keeps sales teams optimised for performance.



It's going to strain the engine, reduce its performance and make it less economical to run.

Why coach?

Coaching keeps sales teams optimised for performance. Their minds are set to win, their skills honed, and they are focused on executing your sales process—not veering off track. All up, it leads to strong, consistent sales. The kind that a growing business needs in order to scale.

However, to remain successful, sales managers need to spend **at least half their time** coaching.

There's just one problem: **97 per cent don't**. To add to the conundrum, only 7 per cent of sales managers have necessary skills to be an effective coach. Chances are, what coaching you're doing (if any) is probably ineffective.

Now for the good news. Implementing a performance coaching programme for sales teams can have far-reaching gains for a company.

"We've seen clients double their business," says Paul O'Donohue, SalesStar's Founder and CEO. "Performance coaching creates really effective people and top performing teams who celebrate success. It's an important part of creating a winning culture."

Top sales coaching methods

There's more than one way to coach a sales team. Here are a few of the most effective:

Role practice

Running simulations in groups or one-on-one will refine your team's skills. It's an excellent way to practice dealing with extreme situations and difficult prospects in a safe low-stakes environment. As Paul says: "it better to practice with your peers, than on your prospects".

Read more: [4 sales role play exercises to hone your negotiation skills](#)

Dual calls

There are three types of dual calls you can make:

- ★ **Demonstration call:** you demonstrate and your trainee listens. You debrief together afterwards.
- ★ **Dual call:** both you and your trainee do part of the call—but make sure you're clear on who is to do what!
- ★ **Observation call:** your trainee does it all, while you watch and listen. While it may be tempting to jump in, don't.



Ride shotgun

Go out into the field with your salespeople and observe their meetings and presentations. Later debrief using some of the strategies below.

Pre-meeting and pre-call strategy

Performance coaching is also looking at individuals and getting them in the right frame of mind before a meeting or phone call.

"Get them really clear on what success looks like, what their objectives are going into the meeting and anticipating the questions the client will ask," advises Paul.

Debrief strategies

Win-Learn-Change

What were the wins? What were the learnings? What would we change for the next meeting or call?

The GROW model

GROW stands for:

- ★ **Goals:** what were the goals?
- ★ **Reality:** what's the current reality? How are you tracking against your goal?
- ★ **Options:** what are our options? How do we get things back on track?
- ★ **Way forward:** what is the way forward? What are the next steps to take?

Tip: Apply your consultative selling skills to coaching. "Telling is not selling, but it is not coaching either," says Paul. "A good coach should be able to ask good questions and not tell."

Just like consultative selling, a good sales coach will also use [Socratic questioning](#) to get salespeople to reflect on their learning and make their own self-discoveries.

5 tips for implementing a performance coaching programme

1. Make it formal

Less than [one-third of sales organisations](#) have a formal or dynamic coaching process. Yet, the research shows that those that do, achieve consistently higher win rates than those that don't.

"Performance coaching is about coaching consistently with the group and individuals," says Paul. "The best way to achieve that is to establish a formal process and rhythm."

2. Make it dynamic

Having a formal coaching plan is the first step to creating an effective coaching programme. However, for the best results, use dynamic coaching: coaching that is **based on your sales process**.

"Your coaching should relate to your sales process and the skills it requires," says Paul. "Ensuring that your salespeople can execute those skills and are effective in each part of the process is critical."

Dynamic coaching has the most significant impact on a business. Sales organisations that use it see, on average, a [27.6 per cent improvement](#) in win rates.

3. Discipline is key

Just like sales training, sales coaching is about discipline. If you want consistent results,

incorporate it into your workplace culture and day-to-day routine. Sporadic coaching fosters inconsistent sales results.

"We recommend bringing it into sales meetings," says Paul. "When coaching is part of your routine it holds people accountable. Start to back off and even your top performers can become complacent, and you won't get the results you desire."

4. Invest in tools and resources

Having the right tools and frameworks on hand is a real asset. A good coaching course can provide these.

"Most sales managers don't have the toolkit or the resources, or the know-how," says Paul. "That's where we come in. We develop coaching cards for our clients to use at sales meetings. We provide sales managers with tools on how to coach mindset, how to coach specific skills, and how to have one-on-ones."

5. Learn from the best

If you are serious about becoming a sales performance coach, learn from those who have been there and done it. Real world experience far outweighs any theoretical knowledge.

"It's really important to query a sales trainer's credentials and coaching ability," says Paul. "You don't want to go to an institution where you're taught by someone who has never been a coach."






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