

Turning a Poor Sales Force into a Profitable Team

One of my favorite sessions at the SISO Executive Conference was the “The New Breed in Executive Sales Management”, moderated by Stephen Pia of Coach Media, with Dan Cole of CES and John McGeary of Reed. I had the pleasure of speaking with Dan, who is the Vice President of Sales for the Consumer Electronic Show, one of the most recognized association events, and certainly CES is an event I know a fair amount about since it usually took place around Macworld time!

The session discussed what the ‘new breed’ of sales force looks like in a company looks like, but I was also interested in how to **transform** a poor sales force into a great one, with specific steps.

Dan has had a lot of experience transforming sales departments in his career which in addition to CES, includes Advanstar Communications, so with that in mind, we started chatting.

We agreed that a poor sales force is poor for the some or all of following reasons:

- The leadership is weak
- You are not rewarding the right behaviors, and not punishing the bad behaviors
- Your staff are not working on the right things and/or not accountable
- The environment of the company is not revenue driven

So how do you turn this around? Simply reverse the above to get the following:

- Have a definitive direction-be aggressive, but reasonable, focus on the fundamentals, incentivize the behaviors you want
- Assess your current staff- are they coachable, flexible, teachable and entrepreneurial?
- Determine whether your company has the appropriate revenue centric environment
- Hire the perfect rep-identify the above tendencies
- Enshrine TRACER to keep a positive sales culture locked in

What is TRACER? Simply Dan’s way of ensuring that the sales team hits its long and short term goals:

- Training skills, Industry knowledge-focusing on the fundamentals, and knowledge of the customers market sector(s)
- Revenue focus organization wide-from the CEO on down

- Activity and accountability-measured by phone and face to face appointments, not on 'smiling and dialing'
- Customer focus-get in front of customers and prospects regularly, not just prospects
- Environment-get rid of 'bad apples' and encourage teamwork and healthy cooperation
- Recruiting the right people-attitude first, sales competence next

Dan said that he expects to see an impact of his actions within three months, which is very fast in my mind

In the end what does a profitable team look like?

- Paid well-because they do well when revenue goals are met
- Empowered-they can make decisions that serve the company and the customer
- Camaraderie-installed healthy competition between the sales reps
- Revenue focused organization

If you can pull all of this off, you are indeed 'cutting edge' in my book, I certainly see why CES goes from strength to strength....

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