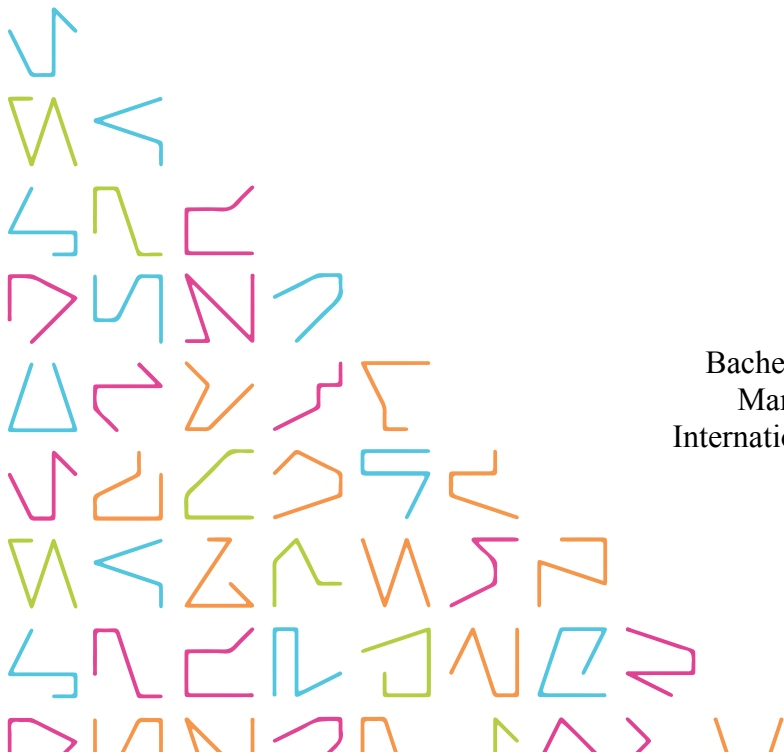


SALES TRAINING GUIDELINE FOR SMALL AND MEDIUM-SIZED COM- PANIES

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Bachelor's thesis
March 2018
International Business



ABSTRACT

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Sales Training Guideline for Small and Medium-sized Companies

Bachelor's thesis 50 pages
March 2018

This bachelor's thesis was written in a purpose of creating a convenient sales training guideline for any small or medium-sized company to implement in their business. The author studied sales books and academic literature, and blogs from different sources and used his own experience in sales to gather information for a proper core for the training. The research was conducted with literature and personal narrative.

The thesis introduces author's experience and explains the current situation when it comes to companies' ability to offer sales training to their staff. The author's view is that sales knowledge is insufficient and online sources were able to strengthen that. After introduction there are chapters that involve knowledge on different parts of a sales process. These consist of different technical and mental skills that a sales person should have in their tool set. The thesis also highlights the role of sales management in implementing the training.

The author also points out importance of attitude management when it comes to sales team. The thesis introduces some factors that need to be considered when handling individuals or teams. Not only is it important to have all this knowledge, so the author suggests a way to implement this training into company's operations at the end of the thesis.

The author was able to create a sufficient convenient sales training guideline that provides a good base for any company to improve their performance in sales. There was a concern that using personal narrative in research might be biased, but the author was able to remain objective by finding sales literature to back up his claims.

Key words: sales, training, management, sales process

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

In the experience of the author, some businesses put an emphasis on their product or service and tend to forget about the importance of sales. Entrepreneurs believe in their end product and hope that it will eventually sell itself. Lonni Sciambi writes in her blog that it is one of the myths in sales that products sell themselves backs this up. She says entrepreneurs often see sales as just a function of having an excellent product that customers flock to (Sciambi, 2013). If the results will not follow the expectations, they are left stunned and wonder what is wrong with the product and how to improve it. If they have put focus on selling, they try to sell the product, where they would need to be selling the benefits and solutions that it could bring to consumers.

The author of this thesis has experience in direct sales, telemarketing and business-to-business (later in the thesis referred as b2b) sales in five different national companies over close to five years time. At Hedengren Direct he was the best new salesman in Finland in 2010 while selling vacuum cleaners door-to-door. Three of the firms he worked in had the focus on telemarketing. The author was able to excel in roles of selling air duct cleanings and Internet solutions. He quickly rose to be one of the top salesmen in the companies.

During those years he has witnessed one company, namely Hedengren Direct, providing exceptional and comprehensive sales training that has lead to a huge success over decades thanks to the knowledge on sales the company possesses. Other companies have failed to build selling skills of the employees and instead have focused on volume. They seem to concentrate on having more contacts to gain more gains, where they could focus on quality and through that increase revenues and profit et cetera.

The goal of the thesis is to create a clearly structured sales training guideline that covers all the important elements that need to be included in a sales process. These topics will include everything from sales techniques to objections and mentality aspects. Not only will it include the tools of a sales process, it will emphasize the importance of a follow

up, analysis of sales results and continuous training, highlighting the importance of management.

1.2 Project

The main focus of the thesis will be on creating a sales training guideline that any small or medium-sized company could use in their businesses. The end result will offer basic knowledge on various elements that are included in sales. The research will study sales literature, different blogs of influencers and material from the author's previous sales trainings and observations in working life. After introducing elements of the sales guideline, the author will give examples on how to use them. This will create a smaller part in the project.

1.3 Objective

Every business organization is looking to make profit. In order to do so, a lot of pieces of a puzzle must be in the right place. One of the most crucial aspects in search of a bigger revenue and profit is how you are able to sell your product or service. The basic mathematics tells you that the more you have sales, the more you have revenue.

The sales training guideline that will be introduced in this thesis is looking to give simple tools for sales to companies, in order to have a basic structure that they can build on. Not only will it give more vast knowledge on sales, businesses will benefit on having more quality in their processes. The thesis focuses on core features of selling and managing sales teams that are good to master in a successful company.

The author has learned through experience that some managers and firms spend a lot of money outsourcing their sales training. The objective of this sales guideline is to decrease the need for training from outside the company. The thesis will try to make managers learn that the sales knowledge can come from within and therefore the business will run smoother and more profitably.

1.4 Structure

The content will consist of analyzing the observations that the author has had during his working life. He goes through his experiences in different companies that he has worked in and shares his opinion on how much there would be room for improvement. There will also be an analysis of a current situation within companies on how they are delivering sales training for their employees and if the training is targeted for only sales people.

From there the author continues to different phases that should be included in a proper sales process. Different sales skills will be introduced. These will create a core for a sales training. As only skills are not relevant, the author will emphasize the role of management in executing the training. The thesis will include a chapter about attitude management and how to get started with implementing the training within a business. Inside different chapters there will be examples of real life situations and how one could use the content of this guideline during those moments.

The research methods used in this thesis are literature based research and personal narrative of lived experience. Strength of collecting knowledge from personal experience is its authenticity. However, there is criticism that this kind of research method might be biased and subjective. The author will try to remain objective and find sales literature to back up his views.

2 BACKGROUND

2.1 Past experiences

As previously mentioned, the author has worked in five different sales companies for 4,5 years before current studies. He has been able to learn a lot about sales through those years, but also acknowledged that there is a general lack of understanding on both sales and how to train it.

The first experience in sales was working for Hedengren Direct selling high-end expensive vacuum cleaners door-to-door. During that time the author accomplished Lux Business School (12 months) and Lux Team Leader school (6 months). These courses included theoretical studies as well as practical ones, which was the actual job on the field. In that time he found out how to train anyone how to sell and what it takes to become a good or a great sales person.

The trainings were plenty and continuous and all the teachings came from within the company. So the knowhow of sales techniques, psychology of sales, man management, motivational skills and all that were found in the management staff. The author sees this as a major factor for Hedengren Direct to have been able to be so effective and profitable in a difficult market. Although the training is viewed to be excellent in the company, there were some things that needed to be fixed. The learning material of Lux Business School will be researched for this thesis.

Later jobs took the author to telemarketing and b2b sales and he found out that the sales skills and knowledge are rather insufficient. Sales people had no belief in their sales skills and they kept blaming prospects for not selling enough and so on. The staff, managers and trainers did not have skills to teach employees better. Therefore sometimes they outsourced sales training. The problem with that was that the sales staff was not too interested in them and did not really take the taught skills in their work. There was no sufficient follow up and the team leaders did not have a real interest in them either.

2.2 Education

During the degree program of International Business the author has learned about sales and marketing that are useful when pursuing the thesis. The course of sales and negotiation skills (5 credits) offered practical advice on sales operations. The author was also asked to act as a teacher for one lesson on the topic of need definition and sales techniques. The courses of operations management (5 credits) and project management (5 credits) provided understanding the role of management. The author's module was TAMK Consulting Academy, in where he was able to work in teams in order to help out businesses or organizations in their needs.

3 CURRENT STATE OF SALES TRAINING

3.1 Common training methods in companies

In an ideal world each company had knowledge on all the aspects when it comes to selling. They ought to know everything from sales processes, training, follow up, manhandling, analysis and reactions et cetera. Obviously this is not the case, even in businesses that's main purpose is selling. In many cases, firms turn to sales consultants to pay a visit. This, however, has turned out to be problematic. Mike Kunkle points out in Richardson sales blog that attendees tend to learn from the trainings, but when it comes to taking those skills into their work, they fail to do so. There is a belief amongst them that they already know how to do the job and will not change it. This sort of situation does not bring any value to companies. It is not only the sales people who fail to implement new sales skills into their work. Also managers and leaders do so. (Kunkle, 2013.)

During his times in telemarketing companies the author has found out that there is a lack of understanding of selling in the businesses. He has seen leaders who do not have enough skills and that leads to sales teams that do not have enough skills to compete. There is no way a leader can teach selling efficiently if he lacks knowledge himself. This leads to a situation where there is a sales team that blames prospects for not making enough deals, instead of trying to find answers how they could improve their results through better work. Supervisors nod their heads and try to motivate them to make more calls and the buying customers will be there. Focus tends to be on quantity, rather than quality.

The author's view of companies lacklustre sales training is backed up in an article by Frank Cespedes and Yuchun Lee on Harvard business review. They write that from curriculum-based trainings 80 percent of the information are forgotten within three months. The result is not surprising if you take a look at how trainings are executed. The article also says that training should be offered whenever needed and material should be provided to sales people at all times. (Cespedes, F.V. & Lee, Y. 2017)

In the companies where the author worked, the sales training was given during the first days of employment. Even then, the emphasis was on the products and numbers of different sales results. An in-depth training on sales process was lacking. After sales people started the actual work contacting prospects, trainings were put aside. At times there were occasional trainings, mostly about products and their features, not about benefits. Follow up was basically showing numbers of sales to the team and telling them to work well. There were no concrete examples on how to improve. Same old empty phrases were repeated and sales team quickly learns that it is pretty much in vain and there is nothing to learn.

There were some top sales people amongst the teams. It seemed that they had either received a great sales training somewhere before or that they were natural sales people.

3.2 Role of management in selling

Sales training responsibilities have mainly been left on sales team leaders' shoulders. When talking about medium-sized companies, the author have noticed that people in higher management positions do not pay a lot of focus on the sales knowledge of the staff that actually executes training to sales people. They are looking for results and expect outdated training material to do the trick as long as trainers follow them. The author of this thesis wants to point out that in all levels of management it is vital to understand the importance of a proper sales training. It is equally important in all levels of company operations. The guideline in this project gives tools for all the staff members who are involved in sales.

4 SALES SKILLS

4.1 Key elements

For a sales training to be effective, it needs to be clearly structured. This creates a great platform to build on. Trainers need to be able to logically explain to staff each and every part of the training. Once the groundwork and preparation are done well, it will become a lot easier. As a manager one needs to know what makes a good sales process. It starts from the first impression, goes through a successful need definition and closing and continues with a communicative follow up. This guideline focuses on putting all this in one clear package.

A comprehensive sales guideline alone is not enough to improve your organization. There is no point in having all that information available if there is not a desirable execution. In an ideal world the managers and trainers have plenty of knowledge on sales and continue to develop their skills and then move it on to sales representatives. The author wants companies to understand that the training consists of three important factors: 1. Knowledge / constant learning 2. Teaching skills 3. Follow up and continuity. David Mattson, CEO of Sandler training, writes that it is important to keep a long-term plan in mind. He also highlights importance of patience, one does not become a sales master over night. Sales staff need to first gain the knowledge and skills, then take it to real-life situations, and move on to frequently apply the skills. This will turn into a routine and eventually lead to mastery. The mastery gives them the knowhow to then teach others. (Mattson)

4.2 Sales technique / process

People view the phrase 'sales technique' in various ways. Some put focus on sales persona, some to small details inside the sales process. This thesis views sales technique as a whole process. It will introduce a sales technique called DAPA (define the need, accept the need, prove the need, accept the proof), objections and buying signals amongst others. To be more specific, the first contact with a potential customer can be considered as part of a sales technique, so can different ways of closing a deal. The concept of the

topic is not as simple as it sounds and the thesis is going to explain the different aspects. The following subchapters go into details in important categories in the sales process. A salesperson has to be the one who leads the whole process. Understanding all the elements of a sales process helps leading become more naturally.

4.2.1 Building trust

Importance of a first impression needs to be taught to sales people. That is a key moment in building a trust with a prospect. There is only one time that you can make the first impression and if you do not satisfy the prospect, the deal is likely dead, even this early in the sales process. There are several elements what make a sales person likable enough for prospects to make a purchase. You can even end up doing a lot of work in the sales process after the beginning has gone wrong and you do not even realize it. At the end of the interaction a sales person might be left wondering what went wrong. Simply put, it could be that one did not smile or impress with a handshake to begin with. A prospect might not be in a mood to buy or hear a sales speech, then it is good to convince the customer that you are there only to show your product and demonstrate a little bit to share a few benefits the product might have. This way it is easier to continue and the prospect becomes more relaxed. The sales person who offers solutions to prospect's problems and provides useful advice is in pole position when building a great buyer-seller relationship. (Jobber, D & Lancaster, G. 2015. 225.)

Another key thing to remember is to introduce the company you are working for. For a prospect it might be suspicious if he has not heard of the company before. Even if he has, it is good to give a brief information package about the company's operations. During his time in door-to-door sales, the author was able to see that prospects start to trust the seller when they hear that a company is legit. Once a sales person introduces the company, the prospect's awareness about its product, values, organization and brand rises. The focus should be on the company's strengths and the benefits that it can offer to a prospect. A prospect can sense if a sales person shows pride for working for the firm. At any point during the sales process, a sales person can come back to company's operations once he has learned more about prospect's values.

Even if a sales person masters all the sales techniques in the world, it is worthless, if one does not convince the prospect of his reliability. People buy from persons they like. It is difficult to even continue to demonstration or your sales speech if the atmosphere is awkward between the two parties. Once you get to know a prospect and are able to enter to more like a friend zone, the rest will become easier. You can even sense it if you are selling door-to-door when you are allowed to step in through the door to potential customers apartment. Once inside the house, the tension breaks and both parties are likely to become more relaxed. Sales training advice by a business speaker and entrepreneur Josh Hinds is that people do not buy from people they do not like. A sales person should strive to be likable. (Hinds, 2017.)

In all its simplicity, making a good first impression comes down to being likable. However, what likable means to other people varies. There are some factors that are out of your control. Each person has natural characteristics that make them appear likable for others. On the flipside, those characteristics can be a deal breaker for some. In sales you are going to have to deal with prospects that are not naturally attracted to your personality, looks, charisma or other features you are carrying. While a person is out of control for some aspects, there are some ways to take control of the perceptions. The following introduces some ways on how to be more likable to others. (Blount.)

1. Smile

There is no denying the importance of a smile when you are trying to be likable. It is said that people make their opinion of you within the first few seconds after meeting. A sincere smile helps with that opinion being a positive one.

2. Be confident

When talking about successful sales people, there is a tendency for them being confident. Good records are followed up by new deals. This confidence comes naturally for those who have had success. A prospect can also sense this. With confidence you are able to convince the customer of yourself, your company and your product. On the other hand, there is a risk that a seller might confuse confidence with arrogance. Arrogance is not considered a likable feature in a salesman.

3. Listen to the prospect

The author has heard an argument that a seller has two ears and a one mouth on more than one occasion within sales people. With that it is implied that listening to a customer is way more important than being a talkative person. If a prospect feels he is being listened to, it is more likely that he trusts and respects the sales person.

4. Have a neat appearance

People will judge a sales person by its cover, as they do other people too. For this reason it is important not to forget to dress well or be hygienic. It does not mean that there is a need to wear a suit in every sales occasion. People find others more reliable if they have a clean and tidy outfit and appearance. A sales rep should always have clothes that fit, a cologne that is not overpowering and a fresh breath. Elements that are needed in every situation in life to make a good impression can become assets in negotiations.

4.2.2 DAPA sales technique

This part of the manual could be described as the most crucial one and something that is not easy to master. With this technique a sales person is able to dig out information of a prospect that he can use in closing, dealing with objections and convincing prospects to make a purchase. When you have learned how to receive data that matters, your sales process becomes easier. The trick is to find right question, get answers and remember them. Open questions should be used so you will get right answers.

There is one certain sales technique that this thesis takes into the guideline. This technique is called DAPA. The author learned this technique in Lux Business School, a sales program known all over the world and is well appreciated. Many top leaders in Europe have taken part in the training (Hedengren Direct: Lux Business School). The word comes from the phrases ‘define the need’, ‘accept the need’, ‘prove the need’ and ‘accept the proof’. The author got familiar with DAPA during his years in direct sales for Oy Hedengren Direct Ab. This technique will be explained with more details in this chapter.

It is worth noticing that understanding DAPA helps in all parts of a sales process. A sales person can use the learned information about a prospect when dealing with objections, buying signals, closing and follow up.

Define the need

Selling a product to a prospect is a lot easier when you know something about his situation. The more information you can dig out, the better. People can want a product or see a product as something they could benefit from, but if you are able to make them feel that they need it, you are on a different level. Job of a sales person is to convince the customer to buy. If they feel they need the product, the job is done well. Many times a prospect already has a need for a product or a service if he has gone to a shop. In these cases the process is usually more straightforward. Selling becomes a lot harder if you are selling a product that prospect does not know he might have a need for. DAPA technique comes handy especially in these situations. When you are able to create a need out of nothing, all kind of selling will become easier.

It is important to use open questions during need definition so you can figure out the real answers. The questions that a prospect can answer with 'yes' or 'no' should be avoided in this stage. With these kind of questions there is a danger of leading a prospect to some direction. Therefore a sales person will not have correct information. Good question words in this phase are the likes of 'why', 'when', 'how often', 'who', 'how'. What is also useful is to know the current situation of the prospect when it comes similar products that he already possesses. This is backed up by Jobber and Lancaster as their so called need analysis approach suggests that early in the sales process a sales person should focus on asking open questions and listening. In their book there's also a mention that sales people should always avoid the comfortable way of presenting a product the same way with each prospect. The needs of a customer should always be found out. (Jobber, D. & Lancaster, G. 2015. 244)

Another key thing to remember is to find out whether the person you are talking to is the decision maker. From experience, the author learned that especially in b2b sales it is crucial to find the right persons to demonstrate a product to. All the work goes in vain if a sales person does everything perfectly in the sales process but in the closing phase realizes that this prospect is not in a position to take the deal farther.

Examples of good questions and why to use them:

‘Who uses the product or service?’

A common assumption is that the person who comes to buy a certain product will also be the end-user. However, not every time is this true. A mother can be buying a new cellphone or a car to her son et cetera. Once you know who uses the product, you are able to ask right kind of questions.

‘How often do you use the product?’

Behind a lot of purchases, there is a need for people to make their life better or easier somehow. For example, not many like to clean up the house, so if there are cleaning products that can reduce the times you have to clean, a prospect would naturally be interested. If a seller learns in a beginning that a prospect spends a lot of time doing unpleasant tasks, it becomes easier to convince the need and benefits later on. This information is also useful if something that a prospect does often and it is pleasant. For instance a lot of people like sleeping well and spend a lot of time in bed. If you have confirmed this information from the customer himself, again it is easier to convince of the need and benefit later in the sales process.

‘Why are you looking to purchase this?’ / ‘Why would you need it so often?’ / ‘Why do you not like cleaning?’ / ‘Why do you like drinking coffee in the morning?’

Why questions are extremely powerful if you are able to get an answer from a prospect. Answers to these give decent insight to prospect’s real needs. You might learn on how many times he uses some product, but if you learn would he do it so often, you are on a different level and the prospect also realizes the need better.

Accept the need

Once you have acquired enough knowledge from a prospect, make sure that he will confirm that all of it is accurate. This phase is to take a step back and review the situation and it serves to two major purposes: 1. The sales person can make sure he got it all right

and some time to process the information 2. The prospect rethinks the situation and starts to actually think if any improvements are needed.

A sales person should make sure to take a breath and review the gathered information with the customer. That alone is not enough though. You need to make the customer accept and confirm that everything you said is correct.

In the beginning when a sales person has asked open questions, the answers are all prospect's words. There is no taking back and you can take advantage of whatever he has said.

1. Go through customer's answers
2. Make sure he agrees on all of it
3. If he agrees, move on to the next phase
4. If he does not agree with something, revisit the first advice
5. Again make sure you got all the answers right and make the customer confirm
6. Once all is confirmed, move on to the next phase

Simply put, this staged is reviewing the 'define the need' part and making customer agree on it.

Prove the need

Now that a sales person has some information about customer's situation, he can move on to introduce and demonstrate the product he is selling. The more comprehensive questionnaire to the prospect, the better equipped the sales person is to execute this phase. It is worth remembering that you have to know the features and benefits of your product in order to achieve the best results. There will be more about product knowledge in later chapters in this thesis.

A sales person should use what he has learned from a prospect and tell him why your product helps his situation. Through observing sales people, the author have noticed that some sales people talk about different features and technical qualities that a product has to offer, not about benefits. Selling and sales management book by David Jobber and Geoffrey Lancaster states the same claim that knowing product features alone is not

enough. Sales people should look at the product from prospect's point of view and focus on benefits (Jobber, D. & Lancaster, G. 2015. 228). Another common mistake sales people make is that they talk about benefits that are irrelevant to the prospect. This kind of approach does not convince customer at all. It is vital to use the collected information and answers received during need definition. It makes it nearly impossible for a prospect not to agree on your argument if you only use what the prospect has told you before. If you are able to convince one of a need, you have reached a stage where the potential customer starts to desire the product. If you can make someone feel your product is essential in their lives, they are much more likely to turn to your product.

The sales speech about proving the need should include the following elements:

1. Explain the feature of your product or service and its benefit for the customer
2. Prospect has told in his own words about his situation, go back to those words when proving that your product is the solution. A tangible example would be: "As you mentioned earlier ... you really need this product..."
3. Use the word 'need' instead of 'benefit'

Accept the proof

By accepting the proof this sales technique suggests that a sales rep must ask if the customer agrees on the proof. It can be simply asked after proving the need: "Do you agree?", "Don't you think?" "We are probably on the same page about this". Whatever phrase suits your way of speaking or the occurring moment.

This part of DAPA technique is short but really important. When customer has confirmed that he agrees what has been said, the salesman can move on to closing smoothly, if he sees it is a good time for it.

If the customer disagrees with the argument, the sales rep should go back to P(rove the need) phase. That way you can come up with a new benefit and convince the customer with that. This circle can go on as long as salesman thinks it is necessary.

4.2.3 Buying signals

The author learned the following information during Lux Business School. Buying signals are verbal or non-verbal signals that prospects give to sales people. Some of these can be difficult to spot while others are extremely obvious. An experienced sales person sees way more buying signals than a new one. This comes with the experience of dealing with various types of prospects. It is crucial to act on buying signals and close the deal. Otherwise you risk losing your sale. A sales person must be aware that buying signals can come up at any point during the sales process.

Verbal signals consist of different questions related to a product in search of more information on it or the purchasing process of the item. Buying signals are clear signs for a sales person that the prospect is thinking of buying. However, this does not necessarily mean that they are ready to make the purchase. A sales person needs to recognize the strength of the signals. As an example, if a prospect asks about delivery time, it means he is already thinking the practicalities after purchase. This can be considered a strong buying signal. This manual introduces four categories of different kind of buying signals.

Questions

A potential customer wants to learn more about the product or service. He wants to know how it could fit in his plans.

Typical buying signal questions:

“How much does it cost?”

Early in the sales process, it is often smart to avoid answering this question by telling that you will get back to it later, especially if the product is on a higher end of a price scale. It is better to make prospect desire the product first. Otherwise the level of interest might take a big drop. That being said, it is a good sign that prospect is interested in the price and the sales person should be encouraged for hearing the question. Strangely enough many sales people mistake this signal as an objection.

“What is the delivery time?”

In his head the prospect is going through the process after purchase. Most likely he will want it to be convenient and he wants to make sure of it by asking this.

“What kind of warranty does it have?”

People look for security when buying new stuff. A prospect needs to be reassured that he is dealing with a reliable product and company when answering this question.

“Could you explain it one more time?”

Something is bothering prospects mind of an earlier part of a sales pitch. This question implies that the prospect is really interested on some of the features of the product or service. This can be considered as a powerful buying signal.

“How do we proceed?”

If a sales person hears this question, he should be certain of closing the deal. Most likely the deal could have been done earlier if the sales person would have suggested a deal. The prospect had to make the move towards the deal and the sales person just needs to follow through.

Conclusion:

As can be seen, questions can be about various of topics. A sales person can always be encouraged every time a prospect asks a question about the product or service. It is down to the sales person to act on a right way.

Positive statements

If a prospect talks up the product during a demonstration, it is highly likely that he is keen on having the product for himself. A key thing to remember is that sometimes it is down to a customer persona that he says these things.

Typical positive statements:

“The price is reasonable”

The most common objection a seller gets is that a product is too expensive. If a prospect tells you that a price for the product sounds good, this is a strong signal that he is interested in purchasing the product.

“It does look really great”

Whether or not the appearance of a product is a deal breaker, by this sentence a prospect suggests his enthusiasm towards the product.

“It would serve my needs for sure”

When saying this, a prospect indicates that he has thought about how he could benefit from the product. A seller should be able to close the deal in a case like this.

“I am sure my partner would love it”

A prospect is looking for support and sales person’s task is to agree on the statement and move forward to closing.

Disguised buying signals

Prospects can be difficult to read, as they want to hide their willingness to buy. They might be interested in the product but want to keep it to themselves in order to gain advantage. An experienced sales person can see through this kind of behavior. One of the most difficult buying signals to spot is an objection. A new sales person easily interprets objections as obstacles that are impossible to overcome. In truth a prospect might be looking for more information about the product through making objections.

Typical disguised buying signals:

“This would not even fit in my house”

This objection tells you that a prospect is looking for more information and possible solutions for his problems. He does not mean that he is not willing to purchase, he is looking for support and answers from a sales person to solve how the product could fit in his house. Once a seller finds a solution, it should be a done deal.

“I do not have enough money for this right now”

As either current financial situation of a prospect and price of the product are the most common objections, this phrase tells that a prospect would like to make the purchase. He sees his financial situation as an obstacle for a purchase. It could be that the prospect actually thinks of not having cash for the product and a solution is to make a card payment. Most of the times it is not this simple. A prospect is in fact asking if a product can be purchased through installments for a suitable period of time.

Gestures

Prospects can make some non-verbal buying signals and for many they are hard to recognize. Non-verbal signals comes in forms such as body language, vocal inflection and voice tone. Inexperienced sales people have a tendency to focus only on verbal signals (Rogers, 2015). As a sales person it can be vital to keep eyes open throughout the sales process so that non-verbal signals will not be unnoticed. A simple gesture as brining out glasses to see better can be viewed as a sign of interest in a product. Sometimes a prospect does not feel comfortable listening to demonstration and can be seen hands crossed. This is a typical sing of being protective and not approachable. It is as if a prospect is keeping a wall around him. A salesman can feel easier when the prospect opens arms. It implies that the prospect is more open towards salesman. Therefore it is more likely he might be keen on the product as well.

4.2.4 Objections

Prospects are not meant to make a sale easy. Objections are a natural part of a sales process. A sales person need to overcome a fear of rejection and objections in order to succeed in a sales career. With objections a prospect is giving hints on which things are important for him. Some sales professionals even suggest that selling starts when cus-

tomers says no, Richard S. Seelye even going as far as writing a book with the phrase as a title. This claim bases on the fact that a salesperson must know how to negotiate. Negotiation skills are vital when trying to turn a 'no' into a 'yes, please'. Many objections are prospect's expressions of interest. It might mean the prospect is not yet convinced and need more information. (Jobber, D. & Lancaster, G. 2015. 251.)

There are ways to minimize or even avoid objections during your sales process. If a salesperson does his work well, objections might never come up. This makes taking a sale into conclusion smoother. Going back to DAPA technique, once a need is defined perfectly, prospect do not have as many options for objections. A seller can always refer to what the prospect mentioned earlier, therefore eliminating the objection. It is important to emphasize that the need definition must have been done with open questions and while accepting the need a sales person must make sure of having gathered accurate information about prospects situation.

There can be different kind of objections with different purposes. As mentioned in the chapter about buying signals, objections can be used in order to find more information about a product or a service a seller is promoting. People have an in-built mechanism to block sales approaches, so objections are served as a tool to stay in a comfort zone. Sales person is advised to be cautious when taking action after an objection from a prospect. It might lead to a disaster if a sales person tackles an objection with an opposite argument to the one of prospects. People do not like to be proven wrong, so simply winning an argument will most likely lead to an uncomfortable tension and a failed deal. (Jobber, D. & Lancaster, G. 2015. 251.)

Another tricky situation arises when a prospect hides his objections. He might stay quiet in a purpose of avoiding prolonging the sales interaction. People with this kind of behavior think that this tactic is the best way to remain on friendly terms with the sales person. By this they are looking to end the interaction with a friendly no and that they will think about the proposal. Once a sales person realises this is the case, he should react by asking questions so that the prospect would reveal objections. It is extremely difficult to convince someone if you do not know what he needs to be convinced of. Couple of good questions to use would be: 'is there anything so far which you are unsure of?' or 'is there anything on your mind?'. (Jobber, D. & Lancaster, G. 2015. 255.)

Dealing with an objection:

The first thing a seller needs to figure out is whether an objection is real. There is no gain for dealing with objections that a prospect has just thrown in as a defense mechanism. Once a seller has identified an objection as something that prospect really think is an obstacle for making a purchase, he or she must take it into account.

There is a simple way of recognizing a false objection: the prospect keeps changing it. If a prospect uses more than one objection, it is often that he is not convinced on needing the product and tries to push the deal away with excuses. However, this claim is not bulletproof, a seller has to observe all the time. As a sales person you need to remain calm and understand the prospect and then move forward in the demonstration. DAPA technique is very useful in these sorts of situations. Keep going back to finding new benefits of the product for the prospect.

Once a prospect has mentioned the same objections for more than once and it seems like a genuine objection, a sales person can move on to solving it. The prospect is looking for answers or thinks in his head that he cannot make a purchase. This does not mean the deal is impossible. It is for a sales person to solve it and move forward.

The book *Selling and sales management* 10th edition introduces a technique called 'agree and counter' as a good way of handling an objection. As previously mentioned, there is no point in starting an argument with a prospect. What a sales person must do instead is to understand and agree on the concern than the prospect has. After agreeing he should offer an alternative point of view (Jobber, D. & Lancaster, G. 2015. 253). Jake Newfield goes as far as comparing the role of a sales person to psychologist. When a prospect is shown empathy towards his worries, he is more open to hear solutions. At times a prospect is alone when purchasing so the only support is the seller, a sales person has to acknowledge this. (Newfield, 2016.)

An example of dealing with an objection:

Prospect: I do not think I can afford this smart phone

Sales person: I understand your concern. If we put the price issue on the side for a moment, you mentioned that you what you appreciate in a smart phone is that its battery lasts long and it needs to have a high quality camera so you can have better pictures on your social media accounts. After demonstrating this phone to you, would you agree that this product is exactly what you need?

Prospect: I agree.

Sales person: You do not need to worry about the price, as we can offer the phone for you in installments. You can determine the length of the contract. Now let me show you...

The example above follows the guideline: 1. Understand prospects concern 2. Show that you have listened and remind the prospect of what he has been looking for (Agree and counter) 3. Ask if he agrees on the need 4. Offer a solution. This is a simple pattern that can be repeated many times during a sales process.

4.2.5 Closing

A sales person can do everything right in the sales process and can still fail if he does not have the courage or knowhow on how to close a deal. Closing is one of the most feared moves for new sales persons when dealing with a prospect. One of the reasons is that people tend to have a fear of rejection. One must understand is that hearing 'no' is part of selling'. However, what needs to be understood is that prospects are smart enough to know that sales people are trying to sell and closing is part of the process. It is even being considered strange if a sales person does not try to finish a deal with some sort of closing technique. A sale can even fail due to sales person not offering a deal when a prospect is willing to buy. It is a rare case that a prospect makes the suggestion to finish a deal. It is worth noting that a sales person must try and close a deal for more than once, most preferably several times. The first closing attempt activates both the seller and the prospect to negotiation mode. If the prospect has agreed to a need suggested by the seller, his guard is the lowest and that is a perfect time to try and close the deal. Naturally prospects have a high sales resistance in the beginning, but when doing your job well, in the closing phase the resistance is lower. That being said, closing can

be done at any point during the sales process. However, a sales person should observe when the interest of the prospect is high. This changes during the sales process. If a prospect hears about a key benefit to him, his intention to purchase rises. In these moments a sales person is likely to spot buying signals. Early in the process it is also good to activate customer's purchase senses with soft closing efforts. (Jobber, D. & Lancaster, G. 2015. 258).

A sales person might have his focus on the price and he might try to conclude a deal by negotiating a good price for a customer. If it comes down to this a seller usually have gotten something wrong in the process. It could be that trust was not built or DAPA was not used as it should have been. Once you have made a prospect need a product, the price becomes more and more irrelevant. Therefore in certain situation it is possible to close a deal without agreeing on the price yet.

An example of moving to closing after proving the need:

Sales person: As you mentioned before, you are cleaning your house twice a week since you do not like being in a dirty house and there is allergy in your family. Now that you have seen what this cleaning device can do for you, you really need this product, do you agree?

Prospect: I agree.

Sales person: Ok, here is what we are going to do... (moving on to one of the following closing techniques)

For these to work most efficiently, a sales person must use the latter part of DAPA as shown above in the example. Closing is natural if a prospect is convinced on needing the product. A sales person has closed all corners so that the prospect has no other option but to agree on the need. If there is an objection, the prospect will tell you after you try to close the deal.

In the experience of the author having learned these during Lux Business School, here are six closing techniques that are proven to work.

1. Give prospect two options – each directed towards a deal

This technique provides a smart way towards closing. A seller gives prospect two options to move forward. For example a salesman can ask if a prospect wants to pay in installments or all in once. Whichever option the prospect chooses, it leads to a sale. If this technique is used, the prospect needs to be genuinely interested in purchasing to make it work the best. Jobber and Lancaster offer a warning that with this kind of closing a sales person must be cautious as professional buyers understand what they are up against. (Jobber, D. & Lancaster, G. 2015. 260.)

2. Offer a hand

To this day a handshake remains a sign of an agreement where there is no turning back. A handshake is also a form of a deal that is widely considered as an agreement without an official signing. It is based on trust between all parties. However, this training suggests a handshake closing as a smooth method towards signing a deal on paper. You should offer your hand confidently, most preferably with a smile and a nod, and then wait for the prospect's response.

3. Closing with action

If a sales person is trying to close with a phrase that includes action, he should act towards it. For instance, if a prospect agrees to a need, you can move forward with “Ok then, I will write the contract” and start taking the paper out or move towards a table or office table. This way you will show that you mean business. The prospect will find it difficult to turn back after this. Another situation would be if a sales person suggests wrapping up a product and starts doing it. This is very handy when selling inside a store for products you can carry. Every time words are not needed necessarily. Once a prospect agrees on the need, a seller can move forward and write a contract or wrap up a product.

4. Create a sense of urgency

For a salesman it is good to create a situation where a prospect thinks the sale is happening now or never. There are different ways to suggest this is the case. Using DAPA

technique you can go back to prove the need if a prospect hesitates. You can tell him that a need is there for all to see and there is no reason to hesitate on the purchase as later it might not happen.

Another one that is not highly recommended is to give away something extra or a discount on the product. This kind of habit decreases the eventual revenue and profit, but on the other hand, can be effective if there is nothing else that can get a prospect convinced. If nothing else works, in the end a sales person can offer something extra to push the deal through.

Smarter way to approach this closing is not to tell about some extra product or discount that is actually included in the package. For instance, if you are selling a smart phone that includes earphones, do not tell this when demonstrating. If a prospect is interested in buying but not there yet, you can throw in the earphones as an extra to customer so that he thinks he has received a bit of a discount or a gift.

The author has learned during Lux Business School that another smart move is to show a price with interests in the beginning, but not mentioning it is a price with installments and interest. A prospect automatically thinks a sales person is talking about cash-in-hand price. Once a sales person finds out that a prospect wants to buy the product without installments, he can show the real price and the prospect feels he has been given a discount.

5. Soft closing / suggestion

If a sales person is not sure a prospect is interested in buying, it is worth trying a soft closing. There are times when a prospect does not speak much or let a seller know much about their thoughts. In these situations if you suggest a deal, you are more likely to receive more information, whether it is an objection or a question related to the product you are offering. Using the words like 'would' can be useful, in order to avoid prospect becoming uncomfortable with aggressive selling.

This technique should not be used when customer is eager to purchase, as this is more of a hesitant type of closing. A seller's hesitation might transfer to prospect and it might kill the deal.

6. Door knob technique

This closing technique can be used when a sales person feels there is nothing else left to do and it feels like a deal is dead. Sometimes it is left unclear what is the actual reason for a prospect not to make a purchase. Either a prospect keeps it to himself or he lies. A seller just has not been able to find a real objection, even with best efforts on need definition and trust building. When a situation like this appears and a sales person is ready to give up, he should imply to a prospect that he is leaving now and start packing his stuff. In this moment a prospect loses his guard and sales resistance since he is not being persuaded to buy, he thinks. So prospect will feel more relaxed. The moment you reach towards a door knob, you ask the prospect that what was the real reason why he did not want to buy as if you were asking it in order to improve your skills as a sales person. A prospect might tell you the truth and a real objection at this point. Sales person's job is to understand it and apologize he did not realize it earlier and then offer a solution. For instance, a prospect might say: "Well I do not have that amount of money on me right now". A salesman's reply could be: "I understand now and I do apologize for not seeing that before. Actually this is not a problem as you do not have to pay for the product immediately." If the prospect gets excited, a salesman should move forward to closing. (Sales-technique. 2014.)

4.2.6 Networking and leads

Especially in b2b sales it is crucial to network effectively in order to become a successful salesman. It is easier to contact a prospect and make a good impression if you already know him a little bit, or that the prospect knows about you. Already after a few months in the business you can find advantages of a growing network. Everything comes down to a sales person to do his job well in the first place. Leads can help you grow your network. After every successful sale, ask customers if they know anyone who could also benefit from the product. Usually he will come up with a few names. Ask if you could contact them or even if the customer could give them a heads up beforehand. Once you approach a prospect that knows you have done your job well with his friends, building trust has already started before the actual sales process.

4.2.7 Practical training

Teaching sales skills to staff is not alone enough to make them learn. As in any aspect in life, learning in practice takes the skills inside a person's backbone. The more a sales person repeats exercises, the more he gains understanding and confidence. What teaches you the best is when you work on the field with real potential customers. Before that, however, it is good to go through the process inside your company's premises together with trainer. There you can find out if the basic structure of a sales process is in right condition to move forward to field.

In the early phases in sellers career, a trainer should be able to be beside a trainee to see how he is coping in a real selling situation. It is better to correct the flaws as soon as they are spotted. Once the core of the taught sales process comes naturally for a sales person, supervision of his actions should decrease. Salesmen need to feel trusted that they can do the job on their own. Later on a manager can tell from results what kind of training and how often is required. It is worth nothing that even experienced sales people need to be directed back to basics if they are suffering a dip in results.

5 PRODUCT / SERVICE TRAINING

A pride towards your company and its products is a driving factor towards being a motivated employee. When it comes to sales staff, not only does good motivation keep the employees in the firm, it also increases the sales, therefore brings in more revenue. When a sales person feels the utmost pride of the product he is selling, a prospect can sense it and it is contagious. It is common for new sales people to turn a product pride into enthusiasm and it is possible to achieve great results in selling just with that. Over time the enthusiasm tends to decrease, that is when sales skills are going to have to play a bigger part. It is company's job to make their sales staff like their products and it is good to acknowledge its importance when planning a sales training.

5.1 Learning key features and their benefits / from knowing to understanding

A vast majority of sales experts agree that knowing basics of your product is highly important in successful selling. Wendy Connick suggests that understanding the product is way better and more helpful. It needs to be learned what is the difference between knowing and understanding. 'Knowledge' is the facts, figures and features, whereas 'understanding' is when you can tell how a product owner can benefit from those. Comparing knowing and understanding is similar to features and benefits comparisons. Better results are achieved when selling benefits instead of features. The author of the thesis has seen a lot of sales people focus on knowing about products. Some of them even mainly tell prospect about the features that they appreciate themselves. This kind of selling does not bring any value to the prospect nor lead to great results. For that reason the author wants this to be taught to sales staff. (Connick, 2017.)

Connick also argues that the best way for you to get to know the product is to use it yourself. Plenty of companies offer that possibility for free to their sales staff and it is useful to take advantage of that. Only when you use it you get to know the real advantages and disadvantages a product may carry. This is what management also needs to be aware of. If a company is able to organize products for sellers to use, it should be done. However, this is not always a possibility and you have to turn to market research. If you

have a customer base already, select a few good customers and talk to them how they feel about the product. (Connick, 2017.)

Handling a product gives practical feeling towards the usage of it. Soujanya Tiruvengala from CommLab India lists what prior knowledge a sales person must have of their products. These are: price range, availability of colors, capacity in terms of power, build (material et cetera), number of models, uses, limitations, servicing and warranty terms. Knowing these features gives a basic core towards understanding the product. A prospect is likely to want to know answers to the mentioned elements. Once a sales person is prepared and has learned it, sales process comes easier. (Tiruvengala, 2011.)

5.2 Updates and new products

Whenever a company introduces a new product to collection or updates on existing products, a sales team should be informed. Often times this is the case. However, the author has noticed that benefits of the products are being handled superficially. For product training, management should find enough time to go through features, benefits and how to use them in a sales process. The training should include common objections, needs, buying signals, closing and DAPA techniques and how to implement new products and their benefits in each phase. This will prepare sales staff for real life situations with prospects and they are ready to deal with them.

5.3 Competitor's products

Prospects look for best solutions for their needs and as a salesman it is good to remember that your product is not the only one on the offer. There can be direct or non-direct competitive products on the market and it is good to know at least about the direct competitors. This knowledge gives an edge when demonstrating your product's features and benefits. It is also useful when dealing with prospects objections, as they would not come as a surprise. Even though it is not good to talk down prospect's current products or those of competitor's, it is good to know the disadvantages and bad features that they have. Some key things to learn about competition are price, strengths, weaknesses and service. For best performance, a sales person must be smart on how to present that in-

formation of other products. You need to be respectful towards prospects and competitors, otherwise you might appear arrogant and it puts off possible customers. David Baars suggests in his blog that talking down competition also gives an impression that you are weak. In addition, a sales person is able to show his expertise when it comes to market, therefore creating a credible and reliable impression for prospects. While it is good to acknowledge competition, it is more important to put emphasis on building relationship with prospect and focus on what your product has to offer. (Baars, 2016.)

Jobber and Lancaster talk about two certain advantages that knowing competitor's products offer: 1. Sales person is allowed to offset strengths of those products against their weaknesses. Prospect might mention that competitor's maintenance costs are lower. Sales person can then mention that another feature of his products offers greater savings in the long term. 2. For instance in an industrial environment a sales person might have to deal with a technical problem that customer has. If he knows the strengths and weaknesses of competitor's products, he has an advantage in emphasizing the right benefits of his product. (Jobber, D. & Lancaster, G. 2015. 229.)

6 ATTITUDE MANAGEMENT

The worst enemy of a sales person is his or her own mind. Successful salesmen are very self-aware of their strengths and weaknesses. Sarah Corrie has written a book *The art of inspired living: coach yourself with positive psychology*. In the book she explains that once you have a good understanding of the core areas that you are stronger or weaker, you are better positioned to coach yourself to success. Corrie introduces a questionnaire as a tool to figure out these core areas. After learning to better understand yourself, you need to have a plan on how to continue from that. The book's MAP (Mission, attitude, process) model is one way of carrying it out. Corrie tells that figuring out your mission, attitude and process for success helps you control your progress (Corrie. 2009. 7-10). A sales manager should have a plan to coach sales people to coach themselves. In order to sustain a high level performance, you need to be able to control your mindset. Negative thoughts feed themselves and it brings a cycle of failure. For that reason it is important to see solutions through the problems that may occur. Rick Farrell in his column suggests that a sales person has a need to feel approved. Even to an extent that they are not willing to jeopardize it even if it might lead to an unsuccessful sales effort. It is crucial for management to understand the importance of motivation and different psychological factors when dealing with sales staff and know how to drive them towards great results. (Farrell.)

6.1 Goals and visions

Before starting to set your own goals and visions, one must understand what is the difference between the two. Sromona Bhattacharyya explains the difference in words: "Vision is the destination that one visualizes and wants to achieve, but the path is unknown. This is where goals come into play. They help you to set the path for the rightful achievement of your vision, acting as milestones." In other words, once there is a clear idea of a vision, a plan in the big picture, it is needed to have separate goals along the way. Vision might be changing form along the way and most likely will not ever be achieved completely. As a manager one must be able to find a vision to each sales person according to their wants, needs and desires and find realistic goals together. It is

worth remembering that goals should not be too overwhelming as it might demotivate the sales person, thus leading to an undesired situation. (Bhattacharyya, 2016.)

Having a clear idea on targets gives you a purpose for your sales. Even when an assumption is that most of sales people say money is their main motivator, if you go deeper, it is actually not. But what you can get with the money could be. There are other factors as well. Sales people want to show either for themselves or others that they can succeed. They are driven by recognition and accomplishments. Goals should be set higher than what seems realistic. Only this drives towards improvement. Managers and trainers need to take care of each sales members targets, and more importantly keep track of them. (Keenan, 2009.)

Jack D. Wilner, in his book *7 secrets to Successful Sales Management: The Sales Manager's Manual*, states that sales managers who have a vision can see the future because they create it. When a person has a vision it means there is a long-term target in his head. There is invention, curiosity and adventure involved. Big leaders throughout history have shared a common thing by having a bigger vision that drives them towards goals. Wilner says that sales managers with a vision have no horizon and those companies with room for visionaries have no limit to achievements. As a sales manager if you are able to share the vision with your sales staff and help them create their own personal visions, you are steps ahead of others. (Wilner, 1998. 13.)

Motivation is crucial in succeeding, no matter whether it is in working life or in other parts. Goals are stepping-stones on the way to vision. Once a person has a goal, there is a clear reason for being motivated. It can vary on how one sets up his goal. Wilner quotes Hal Wright, who is an author of *How to make 1000 mistakes in Business and still succeed*, and says that unwritten goals will often be forgotten, so it would be useful and effective if one wrote down his goals in order to keep track of them. He writes that goals in our minds are only vague dreams. It does not create tangible enough objective. Another important factor in setting goals is to keep track of them. One could say his goal is to increase his sales by four units per month. It can be divided into one unit per week to make it more approachable. A sales person can achieve this by improving closing rate or doing more demonstrations or making more calls. Whether it is better to focus on quantity or quality in sales person's work, it should be down to sales manager.

As a supervisor one must understand personalities and driving forces of his sales staff and act accordingly. (Wilner, 1998. 34.)

Wilner also introduces a goal setting formula called SMART in his book. It comes from the words specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, time-bound. The following introduces the content of each category in short. (Wilner, 1998. 35.)

Specific – Sales manager could have a target of reaching a goal of 100 sold units in a month. Setting a number behind a goal is being really specific. Another one could be making 1000 sales calls in a month. If a goal is more or less vague, it is hard to define whether it was achieved at the end of the month. An example of such goal would be just to have a goal of having a better month in sales than the one before. Manager should share this goal with sales team and then set a goal for each member, for instance 10 units sold per sales person. (Wilner, 1998. 35.)

Measurable – If a goal is specific, it is often easy to measure the success on achieving it. Wilner names examples of common dreams people have, such as wanting to be more successful, happier or financially secure. All of these sound good, but they do not really mean a thing. Successful how? Put a number or a prize on the success. What happiness means to each varies a lot. If it is reaching a prize of sales person of the year, it makes it measurable. (Wilner, 1998. 35.)

Attainable – One must not set the bar too high. If your sales has been around 50 units a month on a regular basis, it is not smart to set a goal of selling 500 units next month. It sure is not attainable realistically and motivation might work in a reversed way in such cases. Sales manager should set goals to sales staff that they can achieve. It is good to go through results of previous months and take sales person's personality and life situation into consideration when planning ahead. Setting goals too high demotivates people because soon enough they get frustrated once they realize they are not achieving them. (Wilner, 1998. 36.)

Realistic – This one goes hand in hand with attainable. Realistic does not mean to not increase one's standards. It is better to set a goal above regular sales results. This drives sellers to do better and makes them feel like they are able to improve. Again, it is good for a sales manager to understand sales members' life situation in addition to sales re-

sults. Given the time, effort and skills of a sales person, a manager together with a sales person should set a realistic goal. (Wilner, 1998. 36.)

Time-bound – A goal should have a time frame: beginning, middle and an end. Goals should be set with a target time. It helps sales person to have long-term goals as well as short-term goals. The latter ones help measure success along the way. (Wilner, 1998. 37.)

6.2 Positive versus negative mindset

Successful sales people are better at keeping up a positive mindset and refusing negative thoughts to bother for long. Diane Coutu conducted an interview with psychologist G. Clotaire Rapaille for Harvard business review and Rapaille introduces the concept of so called happy losers working in sales. He says that successful sales people are after the thrill, they like the game and do not mind rejections as much. They do not develop low self-esteem and are happy even if they lose (Coutu, 2016). It is also easier to keep up the positivity if your results are great. A salesman's job can feel like the best job in the world if deals keep on coming. On the contrary, it can feel like the worst job in the world when sales are close to zero. There are some tools on how to master controlling your mind. Management also has to have knowledge on identifying possible issues within staff and how to deal with them. A key thing to remember is to make a sales team understand to put a focus on things they can control. The founder and CEO of Porch, Matt Ehrlichman points this out as one of the five things that separates successful sales people's mindsets from others. It is possible to teach any person to sell with a proper sales training, but the ones who stand out are the ones with the most driven mindsets. (Ehrlichman, 2014.)

As mentioned, a sales person should understand the things in sales that they can have control of. These are attitude and effort, according to Mr. Ehrlichman (2014). The author of this thesis has learned during his working years in sales that one of the major flaws amongst sales people is that they look for excuses from things that they cannot control. They find something to blame in prospects, surroundings, environment, economy, weather and food they are having and the list goes on. For instance, the author has witnessed a situation in a telemarketing company that a sales person blames to

call lists for not making a lot of deals. The lists are given to each member more or less equally, but if one cannot find plenty of so called easy deals, he complains. This starts a snowball effect. Others start to think like that and see obstacles in making sales. So the deals are dead a long before they start making the calls. The same sellers' next step is to find reasons for bad results in prospect's having a bad day or having to make calls during a certain time of day. All of these are reasons one cannot control. If you are having the right kind of attitude and effort, you do not find these excuses and you start looking for solutions. However, no one can dodge these issues all the time. Management's job is to ensure that focus is on the right things. If a sales person is feeling low, a manager must advise him not to share these thoughts with a sales team and instead go and have a man-to-man talk privately.

6.3 Effects of an individual on a sales team

A bad apple can spoil a whole bunch. This age-old quote goes with a sales team as well. Negativity of one is contagious and can spread to others if you are not paying attention and deal with the issue. On the contrary, positive attitude of an individual can also spread to others and thrive teams into more success. As a supervisor one must pay attention to this and if there are some sales people who continuously spread bad atmosphere, he must take action in a right manner. When taking everyone in consideration, a negative feedback should mostly be given privately. It is not a manager's job to humiliate employees, therefore it is best to confront them somewhere where there are no others. This helps managers to avoid spreading negativity themselves. If a sales team member deserves praise, a manager can do that in public. This raises the person's confidence and other members see a good example to follow. (Lucas, 2015.)

7 IMPLEMENTATION OF THE TRAINING

7.1 How to get started

The sales training guideline of this thesis include the basic knowledge on sales process and importance of mental things if one wants to be successful. Sales manager should study the guideline, learn and understand it and then pass on the knowledge to staff. It is worth mentioning that having a thick manual to hand out to sales people is becoming old fashioned. Sales manager should gather key points from the guideline and create, for example, PowerPoint presentations on each topic and separately teach the content whenever needed. It is to each manager to determine how often they think they should train the staff and how to train each individual according to their experience, success and needs.

Mike Schultz together with John Doerr has created their own version of sales training and its implementation methods and they have a concept they call sales university. In their book *World-Class Sales Training – How to Build and Implement Your Own Sales University* they share statistics on success levels of different sales trainings within companies and offer useful information on how to improve sales performance, and most importantly the sales training. In the book they state that as much as 85 to 90 percent of sales trainings fail already four months after delivery. This statistics goes hand in hand with this thesis' author's experience during his career in different companies. Outsourced trainings are rarely efficient. Schultz and Doerr introduce an idea of five key focus points companies need in order to achieve a good implementation of a sales training: define, develop, deliver, enable, measure. The author of the thesis sees this as a good platform to begin this guidelines implementation as well. The titles of these five points remain the same but content changes slightly in order to make the training guideline fit in it, these points break down as follows. (Schultz & Doerr.)

1. Define – Goals and objectives for sales training need to be defined by a manager and how those should affect sales results. A purposeful goal would be to establish a successful and functioning sales training program within a company. Other good goals would be making training material easily available in need, creating an effective recruiting process and creating a common approach on sales in your company. (Schultz & Doerr.)

2. Develop – Sales managers must understand the training guideline and make it fit into your environment in sales. One must consider aspects from sales process to sales management. Also he must take each individual into consideration and use the elements of the training that are needed in order to develop each. It is also important to match the aspects into company's surroundings and products or services. For instance, use your product's benefits as an example on how to deal with objections. (Schultz & Doerr.)

3. Deliver - Make sales training a part of a common training cycle. Find time to deliver the trainings and prepare yourself to be an interesting and engaging teacher. Satisfied training participants are open to apply what they have learned, willing to accept coaching and eager to come back for future training. Content of the trainings should not be general stuff about sales, sales staff need to feel they can actually use something out of it in their own work. The best way for this is to continuously tell them how each part can help with their job. (Schultz & Doerr.)

4. Enable – Sales manager should enable sales people so that sales training brings in a desired change in behavior. One must help sales staff to understand what has been learned, how it can improve skills and why each feature of the training is useful. It is worth remembering that a company might already have some top sales people with brilliant results. Sales manager must handle these masters carefully and not to mess with their job. Even though you would be bringing in completely different guideline to help your sales staff, you should not force the change in those who already perform with a high standard. Instead they can take something from training that they find useful. (Schultz & Doerr.)

5. Measure – In order to be aware of a company's situation, managers should be able to keep record of statistics. Whether it involves customer contacts, demonstrations, closing rates or whatever it might be in one's company. For a manager to be able to improve, he needs to have statistics available for analysis. According to these analyses one must take decisions to take the business into a desired direction. Not only sales results should be measured. Different aspects within a business should be as well. It is useful to know how staff learns from the trainings, how do sales people learn the skills of topics et cetera. All of these measurements create a base to build on when a manager gives feedback and gives further training and motivation to his staff. (Schultz & Doerr.)

Previous steps should be followed when implementing the guideline of this thesis into a business.

7.2 Consistent and continuous training

In the experience of the author, sales training in some companies is provided during the first few working days of a new sales person. Often a sales process is touched only on the surface and there is no comprehensive package offer for new employees. This does not provide a sufficient base on a way to become a successful seller. The new staff might not have any experience on sales and therefore they will rely solely on the material provided. Later on in their career they are influenced by colleagues who have received a similar training and who have learned the obstacles in their work. These obstacles are considered being so relevant that a sale is impossible. This creates a cycle where sales skills are not considered to be something one can improve and the main reasons of not being able to conclude deals comes from prospects.

Learning is a lifetime process. If a manager can find people who have learned in the past and are eager to constantly learn something new, he has a better chance to improve results. Pat Wadors tackles this topic in Harvard business review article 'To stay relevant, your company and employees must keep learning'. He is often asked a question from universities that how can you prepare students for the so called real world. His view on this is that skills learned during studies alone are not enough. One must continue learning throughout whole working life. If organizations are looking to ensure full productivity, they have to find a way to encourage employees to continuously learn. Wadors highlights the importance of hiring lifelong learners and having materials and training available for employees at all times. (Wadors, 2016.)

Once a company has a steady training program in place, which teaches necessary elements in succeeding, managers must follow through with continuous training. It is important to convince managers and trainers of the training guideline first. They need to learn it and understand it. Most preferably the managers have gone through similar training earlier and have experience in using the tools in practice. A training guideline creates a simple structure for operations. In the early days, sales training should be taught to

new staff according to this guideline. It is to each company to decide on how long the training should be as different products and services require different amount of knowledge before being able to sell them. However, it is important that sellers are able to sell to real prospects as soon as possible. The author have witnessed cases where fresh telemarketers are getting more afraid of sales calls if the training is unnecessarily strong. Even if a sales person have not learned all the aspects, one should be able to get into real life situations so he can overcome any fears he might have.

People do not learn new skills in one sitting. Still companies do not focus on training them more often, at least comprehensively, the author has noticed. Also studies suggest that 77 percent of learning from one training session is forgotten after six days (Schultz & Doerr.). The mentioned statistic strengthens the idea of the need to continuously train sales staff. The author suggests the following steps when it comes to new sales staff's continuous training:

1. Teach the content of the sales training guideline in the first few days.
2. Get your sales people into field, even if they have not fully learned or understood all the parts of the training.
3. Follow the sales process and give feedback individually after the sales situation or working day. If possible, give experienced sales members or team leaders the task.
4. Gather information on issues, common objections, questions sales people might have et cetera.
5. Go through the answers during training sessions in the future
6. Pick one or two topics (objections, closing, DAPA...) from the guideline to teach for each training session

The goal is that every sales person in the company would master the content of the training after a certain period of time. Managers should define the period accordingly. Dan Marzinotto in his blog suggests that there are three areas of development in sales training program: sales, product, system and process. And these areas have three levels of achievement: Foundation / beginner, intermediate, advanced (Marzinotto, 2016). When a company only offers training in the beginning, they should not expect sales people to achieve the advanced level in skills. Once the training is continuous, sales people have the chance of taking necessary steps from beginner level to advanced. In order to successfully implement this training, managers should find the time to have trainings. The

author have found that a short meeting with a training once a week to be effective, but each manager should keep an eye on results skills and motivation levels and decide the amount of trainings based on that observation.

7.3 Engagement with sales team

The staff in hand is an important asset to any company. If a firm does not have any sales people yet and they hire new sales people to train, the sales training guideline is easy to follow through. Everyone is new to the company and starts from the same spot. It does not matter if some have previous experience on sales or not, a manager will spot and find out those differences during the training or while working at some point. Implementing the trainings becomes slightly trickier when a company already has a sales team. A manager must be able to convince the staff that a change is needed and tell the strengths and opportunities of new training. If some of the sales people are already at a high level in their results, a manager should approach changing ways with them carefully. They must be involved in the training of course, but only take small portions of the training at a time into their work.

Ryan Estis partnered with Modern Survey to conduct a research on employee engagement. They found out that sales people are much more engaged than non-sales employees. On the other hand, the study suggested that 42 percent of sales people are also actively looking for new opportunities. These results alone should leave managers thinking what they could do more to keep their valued assets. Estis's suggestion is to build a culture of engagement. Three elements for a strong working culture are: values, trust and consistent communication. If an organization does not have clear values, only 1 out of 87 employees are engaged fully. Not only a company need to have values, they must have an impact on hearts and minds. A sales manager can create an environment of trust simply by doing what promises and to do it consistently. Communication must work both ways. Managers should be open to sales people's opinions while also making no excuses and being honest about results. (Estis, 2015.)

A manager must have all the knowledge on products, common objections and so on, but it is also good to receive information about them from your sales team. They are doing they sales on ground level and are able to give wider options. A smart manager adds

these pieces of information into training, for two main reasons: 1. Have more material and tangible examples for the training 2. Sales staff feels important and listened to when they are able to share their experiences. This sort of engagement brings trust and credibility and keeps employees more satisfied.

The author has also learned during Lux team leader school that even experienced and successful sales people have dips in their results and often this is down to them forgetting the basics. Therefore it is equally important to involve these sales masters in the trainings as well when needed. Sometimes it may seem in vain if they have been going there for many times, but a good manager need to drag them down to ground level occasionally and see if there is something that needs correction. It can be something as simple as a sales person does not smile anymore. This could lead to a downfall in sales results. Sales masters need an outside perspective sometimes and this training can offer a solution to find the flaws in the sales process.

7.4 SWOT analysis

Strengths

- Strong core for sales training
- Helps with b2b, b2c sales and with any person contacts
- Everyone will be offered a similar skill set
- Saves time
- Offers knowledge on many factors of a sales process
- No need to look for sales consultants
- Helps with b2b, b2c sales and with any contacts with people

Weaknesses

- Lacks understanding of different customers
- Social (media) selling is not touched
- Does not explain how to deal with different types of prospects

Opportunities

- Increasing revenue due to better sales results
- Makes every sales person understand the need to improve

- Motivation skills improves, more long-term employees
- Creates a more satisfied working environment
- Outplaying competitors by offering a better training

Threats

- Sales people do not buy the idea of new type of sales skills
- Training will be listened but not learned and understood
- Managers are not able to understand the concept or to teach it forward
- Sales people might overthink the sales process in case of a hot prospect

8 CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSION

8.1 Outcome

The purpose of the thesis was to create a convenient guideline that offers all the basic elements needed in sales training. Material was collected from online material and sales literature to compile a comprehensive sales training guideline. As the author has years of experience in sales, a personal narrative of lived experience method was used as well. The author's view was that companies lack in this department so he thought that there is a need for this kind of opus. The end result of the thesis covers the issues that companies and managers should tackle in order to achieve better success in sales. The thesis also features the tools that a company needs when implementing the training into their operations.

The author believes that this sales guideline is a useful tool for companies to implement in their operations. Different sources that were studied for this thesis confirmed that sales trainings are not perfectly executed in some companies. That together with the author's experience suggests that there is a need for this kind of guide in the market. The thesis consists of useful information on sales skills, training methods and implementation strategies. Not only was the author able to provide his intel on different aspects on sales, many of the claims were backed up by various of professionals in the field. This guideline works as a well structured and convenient training plan for sales managers.

In the beginning of the thesis process, there was a concern that using a personal narrative of lived experience might lead to a subjective approach to the topic. However, as the author found articles and books by professionals to back up his claims, the outcome of the thesis was not only created from personal experiences and observations.

8.2 Development ideas

This guideline alone is not enough to create sales masters. In order to achieve higher level of selling and training skills, one need to learn about some different topics and

implement that knowledge in their skillset. Whereas this thesis offers a good package of basic knowledge in sales and how to train it, the author reminds that no one will ever be a complete sales man. One must be willing to learn all the time.

There are two topics that the author sees companies' might find useful in their training after topics of this thesis have been learned and understood. These topics would be introducing the sale tactics when it comes to social media and understanding different types of prospects so sales people would know which tactics to apply in each situation.

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