

7 Habits That Sabotage

A Sales Manager's Success

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The Modern Challenge

Growing a business in today's world of hyper transparency and warp speed is a challenging enough endeavor in and of itself. The challenge is sales management inadvertently reduces the sales performance through one or more of the following seven habits that sabotage sales manager success:

1. Hiring salespeople who are not Sales Wolves – Sales Hiring
2. Shaping a sales culture that sales wolves loathe – Sales Culture
3. Failing to set the tone and standard during the critical first 90 days - Onboarding.
4. Using the same coaching strategy with every salesperson – Sales Coaching.
5. Allowing a fixed mindset where challenges, feedback and competition are reduced or avoided - Winning Mindset
6. Running and gunning without structure and accountability – Sales Systems.
7. Failing to pay salespeople what they are worth - Compensation

As you read through the following seven habits, be aware that if you have a growth opportunity in one area, you likely have several as they are intertwined.

HABIT 1: Hiring Salespeople Who Are Not Sales Wolves

The fastest way to the unemployment line for a sales manager is hiring salespeople who simply “pay for their seat,” or worse yet cannot sell at all. There is an inverse relationship between the amount of time, energy and frustration expended by a sales manager and the job fit of the salesperson.

Low-performing salespeople leave money on the table and fail to meet the sales expectations, robbing the bottom line of the company and the earnings potential of you and your team. Every company has a sales hiring problem to some extent. The question is, “Is your sales hiring program evolving or relying on a tired strategy that worked in the past?”

All problems start at the head.

There are three essential steps to solving your sales hiring problem.

1. Define what a “Sales Wolf” looks like in your sales arena and commit to finding and hiring them. Not sure how to do this? Give us a call.
2. Use a valid multi-science sales personality test to objectively identify top sales talent. If you are not using one now, you are missing out.
3. Use a sales hiring scorecard to ensure you are consistently-hiring salespeople who meet the required standards.

The salespeople you hire shape your sales culture.

HABIT 2: Shaping A Culture That Sales Wolves Loathe

As the CEO or sales leader, the culture is shaped by you. Your sales culture is shaped not just by what you say, but by your actions and inaction. To what degree does a mismatch exist between your sales culture and your vision? If you allow mediocrity and tolerate poor sales performance, the weaker performers will become comfortable while your stronger performers will grow discontent. If you really want to drive your Sales Wolves crazy, play favorites with low-performers. Sales Wolves HATE low-performers and will hate you even more if you love on low-performers.

Ultimately, a bad sales culture drives out higher performers who will look for a sales culture where they are challenged and surrounded by others who are like them. Sales Wolves seek to be challenged and they absolutely will not tolerate mediocrity. When your Sales Wolves flee for a true Sales Wolf culture, you will be left with the weak performers who stay because they are comfortable and were never pushed. Create and sustain a culture of performance and accountability by refusing to settle for salespeople who “kinda” “sorta” fit the job, and praying they work out.

All problems walk on two feet.

HABIT 3: Failing To Set the Tone and Standard During the Critical First 90 Days - Onboarding

Onboarding begins during the interview process where expectations are set and commitments begin. Have you ever hired a promising salesperson who lit up your sales hiring scorecard - Experience, Personality, Drive, etc. only to leave within the first 90 days?

A lack of an onboarding plan and execution translates into two equally significant problems:

1. Floundering Sales Wolves become frustrated, do not make the compensation they hope to and become a flight risk.
2. Floundering low-performers distract sales management and miss sales over months and years.

Whether you're hiring freshly minted college grads, or experienced sales professionals, a certain level of communication and structure must be set early in the onboarding process.

Keys to Success

- ✓ Get clear about your expectations. Back expectations with data.
- ✓ Outline the key milestones for the first 15-30-45-60 days for the new team member. Remember that both Activity Levels and actual Sales Achievement expectations should be discussed.
- ✓ Clearly define any non-negotiable activities / processes that he/she will be held to.
- ✓ Schedule a series of one-on-one follow-ups at certain intervals to ensure fast and efficient feedback loops (see 331 example on our Resources page.)

HABIT 4: Coaching Every Salesperson the Same

While it may seem fair to treat every salesperson similarly, the fastest way to torpedo your sales team is to engage, inspire, and motivate every salesperson the same. Salespeople are human capital. It is essential to understand the unique behaviors, motivators, acumen, and competencies of each salesperson in order to maximize each salesperson's unique potential.

This isn't about giving some salespeople preferential treatment. The best sales managers customize their coaching to the unique needs of each salesperson. The best sales managers understand how and why each salesperson behaves and performs the way they do. They do not guess.

It is coaching malpractice to coach a salesperson without an objective, valid, multi-science sales personality test. Coaching salespeople without this critical information results in wasted time, energy and frustration.

Your Sales Wolves expect to be challenged.

Your Sales Wolves expect candor.

Your Sales Wolves are striving to achieve a set of goals uniquely set with them. They expect you to encourage them in the manner that best works for them and to hold them accountable for milestones along the way. Sales Wolves want strong sales management to help them take ownership in their own professional/personal development.

HABIT 5: Fostering a Mindset that is Incapable of Winning

The mindset of a sales team is directly influenced by:

- The job fit of the sales team and sales management
- The code of conduct – the way things are done (or not done)
- The language

Salespeople and sales managers who are not “wired” to sell foster a mindset filled with excuses. They lack accountability and transparency. Strong salespeople and sales managers seek accountability, transparency and feedback.

Code of conduct covers everything from whether or not it is acceptable to be late to being allowed to not follow sales systems.

The language spoken by a sales team speaks volumes with regard to mindset. A language of blame, victim thinking and procrastination predicts low personal accountability. While pragmatic, Sales Wolves are optimists. Sales Wolves focus on what they can rather than on what they cannot do. Sales Wolves look in the mirror to see the one person that can directly impact their current and long-term outcomes.

HABIT 6: Running and Gunning Without Structure and Accountability

Many small-to-medium companies pride themselves on being nimble. They also pride themselves on not “micromanaging” salespeople. The truth is, this mindset is often a cover for a lack of discipline or the ability to stick to a structure or system. It is also the type of mindset that often fails to hold salespeople accountable for doing the work.

What got you here will not get you there. Growing sales requires solid talent coupled with solid systems and culture. It is essential to define a concise set of sales systems that facilitate sales team members to be effective and efficient in their roles. Structure and accountability facilitate the ability to predictably and sustainably scale your business.

HABIT 7: Failing to Pay Salespeople What They Are Worth


Consider your best and low-performing salespeople. How much do each earn? Are your low-performers bringing in enough profitability to cover their compensation?

In most companies, high-performers are essentially paying for low-performers and everyone knows it. While this is a very common practice, it is fundamentally unfair to high-performing salespeople.

Three sales compensation actions you should continuously take:

- Create a compensation structure that your sales people understand.
- Remove low-performers.
- Properly reward sales performance.

Ask any salesperson on a sales team who the Sales Wolves, middle and bottom performers are and they will tell you what you already know.



What You Need To Do Next

The status quo is no place to be. Something compelled you to seek information. Make it your wake-up call. Doing something is almost always better than doing nothing. The natural next step is to decide on which incremental change to make (singular). It is important to begin small. New habits take up to six weeks to establish. Build a foundation to gain momentum and energy.

Which of the 7 habits in this document are holding you back? Which seem to be root issues that require focused attention? Dollarize your problem. Then begin.

We Are Here To Help

Congratulations. You and your flat forehead are normal.

If you are sick and tired of being sick and tired and want a partner who is as passionate as you are about getting to the next level, give us a call.

We have been in your shoes and are here to help.



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About Chris Young

Chris Young is the founder and CEO of The Rainmaker Group. He is dedicated to building high value companies through Sales Search, Sales Selection, and Sales Performance. His direct nature and data-driven approach proves to be very effective in maximizing sales teams. The Rainmaker Group has worked with hundreds of companies from small family businesses to F500. Chris is a trusted advisor to CEO's and sales executives who are passionate about results. Chris holds a BS in Economics and a MS in Applied Economics from North Dakota State University.

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