

Sales Coach Series

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Developing a consultative selling culture

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The Dilemma

The company is targeting major growth. This requires greater product diversification and focus on consultative selling. As Sales Director I need buy-in from the sales team. I've changed the commission structures but it's not working. Help!

The Coaching

The key is buy-in. Salespeople are expected to demonstrate initiative and self-motivation. Unsurprising then that they resist enforced change!

Engage the team in the company's business challenge and involve them in the solution. Encourage creativity - the target may not be negotiable but the means of achieving it probably are.

- Hold regular group meetings. Don't 'sell' to the team. Act as facilitator - outline the situation and encourage discussion. Don't quash ideas that don't fit with yours. Ensure everyone has their say. Maintain a workplace culture of openness to ideas and feedback.
- Hold regular one-to-one sessions with individual team members. Explore non-judgementally how they are managing the change and how you can assist them.
- Handle negativity positively. Don't let it fester by driving it 'underground'. Respect individuals' concerns. Be open and pragmatic about the risks and the opportunities and identify a practical, positive way forward.
- Keep everyone informed of progress
- Acknowledge successes. Recognition is a major motivator. Publicly congratulate small successes which support the change
- Invest in the future - use training and coaching to develop key skills
- Remember that everyone finds it difficult to move outside their 'comfort zone' and break old habits. Changing working structure and remuneration helps as long as it isn't seen as enforcement!
- Finally, not everyone will adapt. Be prepared to lose people but ensure you give each other a fair chance.