

What Salespeople Want Owners to Know

TEN POINTS TO EVALUATE YOUR SELLING ENVIRONMENT



BY TRISH BROCK

On a daily basis, dealer principals and managers lament the shortage of good salespeople. If they only had a few more salespeople—good salespeople—everything would be better.

Should you look outside your industry? Should you recruit and invest the time and money to train younger people who, once trained, tend to leave? Do you raid your competition? How can you identify a “winner” early in the process?

Attracting the good people you want requires having an environment that they want. If you’ve lost good or even poor salespeople, only to watch them succeed at your competition, keep reading.



1 Good salespeople want to do what they do well—sell.

How much of the day do your salespeople actually spend selling? Are they bogged down in paperwork, following up on other people’s jobs, and busy with numerous meetings? Sure, some paperwork and meetings are needed, but too many dealers expect their salespeople to support all the other functions in the organization when it should be the other way around.

People aren’t selling when they are checking/confirming product ship dates, tracking whether or not the chair was actually delivered yesterday, or checking drawings for the correct panel count. Evaluate how they spend their time and see if some of those responsibilities (and accountabilities) might be redistributed to others in the organization. Then they can get on with doing what they were hired to do—sell.

2 What is the best way to reward your top producers?

If you believe a salesperson’s commission is their reward, it’s a safe bet you probably have a difficult time recruiting quality salespeople.

I know of a dealer that had a top producer that was so good, she had trouble managing the business she generated. Her “reward” was to have accounts taken

away from her and redistributed to other, less productive salespeople.

Taking away business (and hard earned client relationships) instead of providing support to manage the business is punishment to good salespeople and suicide for you. Hiring strong support staff for your top producers is far easier and less expensive than trying to find another big producer. Chances are also good that you will experience an increase in sales.

3 Tap into your existing high-quality resources.

Keep in mind that a good salesperson knows how to do their job better than you do. Ask them what they like about selling and what they need from you to do it even better. Then listen to what they say and act on it.

Salespeople whine and complain, but they also have good ideas about how they can produce more. These are people that are inherently competitive and want to win. Let them tell you how they can.

4 Set realistic sales goals.

Goals are necessary, but they must be realistic, be consistent with a plan and be achievable. Even strong salespeople aren’t going to hit goals that are arbitrarily set high. And setting goals based on a percentage increase over last year’s sales is an eventual self-defeating effort.

That practice will ultimately impact morale, disenfranchise salespeople, create burn out, and, eventually, push them toward to the door. Salespeople are not an interchangeable commodity. Everyone wants increased sales, but high turnover, low morale and inconsistent performance will erode any increase you may achieve, as well as your reputation.

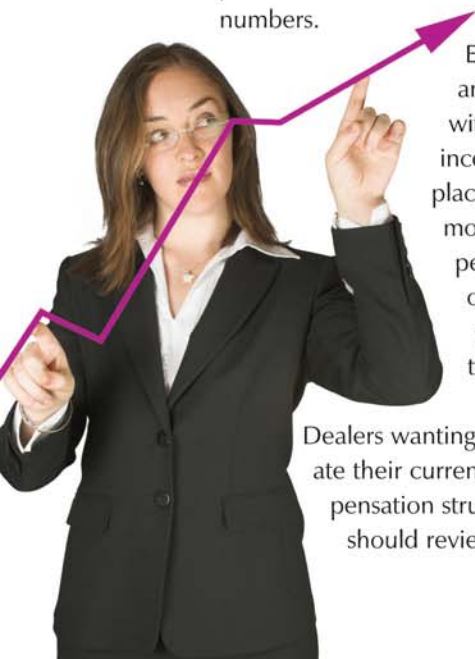
5 The world continues to change—how are you keeping up?

Baby Boomers, Gen X, Gen Y, gender and cultural diversity are factors that are impacting everyone—both you and your customers. Are you embracing this diversity or clinging to the way things used to be?

Instead of being frustrated with shifting values and norms, view this evolution as an opportunity to tap into additional perspectives and strengths and to create a competitive edge—you can't afford not to!

6 Is your compensation plan consistent with your business plan?

Your compensation package should be structured to support your objectives. For example, if your 2006 plan calls for 30 percent of gross revenues to come from new business, but the compensation plan rewards new business at the same rate as existing business, chances are good you won't hit your new business numbers.



Expecting an activity without an incentive in place to promote it happens more often than you think.

Dealers wanting to evaluate their current compensation structure should review the

annual OFDA Dealer Compensation and Benefits Survey. It's a great reference.

7 Do you promote training, learning and professional growth?

I don't mean an annual two-day sales training excursion. Sales training programs are great, but they are not going to fix your lagging sales problem and revolutionize your sales team. And training is not just for salespeople. Unless management is involved in reinforcing, supporting, promoting, and modeling a professional learning environment, changes taught in any training will be forgotten in hours.

8 Do you have a cap on earnings?

Good salespeople get into sales to make money. If you want the "best and brightest," don't expect to attract them with a "most affordable" mentality.

There is a lot of risk and stress in selling, and strong salespeople are lured by the possibility of catching the gold ring.

Minimize their ability to do so and you will minimize your ability to acquire and retain the best salespeople.

9 Are your sales support materials helping or hurting your selling efforts?

It's always embarrassing and does not lend much credibility for a salesperson to tout their company's trend setting, cutting edge abilities with old, tired and dated sales materials.

Is your competitive advantage a "me too" statement similar to your competitor down the street, but with a lower price? What really makes you better than your competition, and why should the prospect choose you? How invested are you in being sure your message and dealer image are communicated clearly?

High impact sales materials do not need to cost a fortune. Neither does an informative website, but going to market without them signals to the market, including prospective salespeople, that you aren't really that interested in your business or serious about being a player.




Remember, the good salespeople will go where they have the best chance of winning.

10 What is the physical environment?

Do your salespeople have the necessary tools and equipment to do their job efficiently and effectively? Since you're selling innovative work environments, are you walking the talk by providing the same? Do they have a good contact management software program? Do you provide Palm Pilots or Blackberrys?

There are talented salespeople all around you; some are probably already in your organization. Everyone wants them. Are you willing to understand and do what it takes to get and keep them?

If you provide an environment for successful selling, you won't have to look quite so hard for them. Your reputation will precede you and they will beat a fast path to your door. 

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