



The Secret to Building a High Performing Sales Team

Companies that build world class sales operations can improve sales productivity by 20-30% according to consultancy firm McKinsey.¹ Yet in 2015, it was reported that 45.4% of sales representatives would not hit their targets.² VUCA³ conditions may be partly to blame for wobbly performance however wide scale change brings some positive news for sales too, in the form of artificial intelligence (AI). AI is expected to increase sales performance by improving processes, management of data, and lead follow up. But, in dehumanising the sales process, organisations may be gambling with the relational and emotional needs of their customers which are satisfied by human interaction. To get the best of both worlds, organisations can learn to strike a balance by embracing what AI has to offer at the same time as giving their sales managers the skills to build high performing teams.

So, is 1-to-1 coaching the secret to building high performing sales teams?

No, not quite.



With 73% of sales managers spending less than 5% of their time on coaching⁶, the move from managing to coaching is a bigger challenge that one might expect. 1-to-1 coaching requires a substantial change to the way sales managers apportion their time, particularly for those with large teams. Also, what happens behind closed doors in a coaching session may be at odds with the reality of what happens on the front line. This dichotomy may reduce the return on investment and hamper the chances of coaching gaining traction and getting the results it is capable of.

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Upskilling Sales Managers is Critical

Typically, great sales representatives are promoted into key sales management positions based on their “selling” skills rather than their ability to manage teams of people. As a result sales managers are likely to lean in on what they already

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know - targets, analysis, forecasting and reports - while neglecting the people aspects of their role. When they don't get the results they are used to, they may experience a dip in confidence, which may damage the performance of the team. If they don't get the support that they need to step up to their leadership role, the longer term sales performance will be put in jeopardy too.

Consequently, training sales managers in the people aspects of their role is a critical challenge for organisations to overcome. In fact, according to an InsideSales research paper the top challenges faced by the sales industry are related to developing the sales team and not sales processes.⁴

There appears to be a growing understanding that helping sales managers to transform into effective people managers can turnaround sales teams results. According to Knowledge Tree, sales representatives that receive at least three hours of coaching per month exceed their selling goals by 7%, increase revenue by 25%, and increase close rate by 70%.⁵

Operational Coaching is a Powerful Alternative

1-to-1 coaching has its place but to really help a sales team to increase its performance, coaching needs to escape the meeting room and become a part of the culture of the sales organisation. To achieve this cultural shift, sales managers must cast aside their task master persona in favour of an ‘Operational Coaching’ style of leadership. ‘Operational Coaching’ differs from 1-to-1 coaching because it happens in the moment, in everyday operational settings, and at the point of need. It is perfect for sales teams where high levels of agility can make all the difference and it doesn't require time away from the day job.

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When sales managers adopt an ‘Operational Coaching’ style of leadership they increase the level of enquiry that occurs in every interaction. They ask better questions of their sales representatives, which generates far more options, and ultimately better solutions to problems. At the same time, sales representatives learn to think more independently, more creatively, and feel more empowered to act and make decisions.

The impact on the sales interaction is also phenomenal. Sales representatives that learn how to replicate the coaching approach with their customers will get better results. An

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analysis of 519,000 discovery calls showed a clear relationship between the number of questions asked and the chances of success.⁷ Instead of being intent on driving a sale, sales representatives that are used to an 'Operational Coaching' style are more likely to adopt an 'Enquiry-Led Approach™' themselves and are more likely to understand what

their customers need, be able to build better (longer term) relationships, and ultimately close the sale.

client relationship saved through 'operational coaching' worth £10,000



A £6,500 deal was closed as a result of one 'operational coaching' conversation with a team member

Clearly, Notion's live programmes are a great way to deliver 'Operational Coaching' skills to small to medium sized sales teams, and, to really make an impact on large sales teams Notion can also offer an exciting and innovative virtual blended development option through its acclaimed STAR® Manager programme.



So, is 'Operational Coaching' the secret?

'Operational Coaching' is one the most effective ways of changing manager behaviour in an operational setting. Through Notion's live training programmes, leaders and managers learn how to use 'Operational Coaching' skills to enable them to engage with people in a better way, for outstanding results. Repeatedly proving its ability to deliver up to **100 x ROI**, 'Operational Coaching' delivers an impressive host of commercial and social capital gains. Here are just a few of the results that were achieved by a leading recruitment company when they worked with Notion to enable their sales managers to use 'Operational Coaching' skills.

Overcoming core objections through coaching resulted in a sale worth £118,000



Better team approach to account management resulted in £12,000 revenue

A coaching conversation that led to a new customer approach resulted in closing a deal for £5,400



Daily team coaching led to £10,000 of business in one month



STAR® Manager for Sales Teams

STAR® Manager is a game changer, accessible anywhere, via any device, at any time - and importantly at the point of need. Sales managers can develop their skills on the job, complete live missions, and respond to issues as they occur in a way that is completely bespoke to them. A technological solution to a very human need, STAR® Manager ensures that people skills can be developed in synergy with new AI solutions. Furthermore, the speed at which STAR® Manager can be implemented means that sales managers can start making an immediate difference to how they engage with their sales teams and their customers, and begin to see the results in sales productivity and team performance straightaway.

Notion is a global expert in behaviour change. To talk to us about how 'Operational Coaching' or STAR® Manager can improve the performance of your sales team call us on **+44(0)1926 889 885** or visit us by [clicking here](#).

1 <https://www.mckinsey.com/business-functions/marketing-and-sales/our-insights/looking-beyond-technology-to-drive-sales-operations>

2 <https://pleinairestrategies.com/cso-insights-2015-sales-management-optimization-study/>

3 VUCA is an acronym for Volatile, Uncertain, Complex, Ambiguous

4 <https://www.insidesales.com/insider/research/inside-sales-challenges-research-2016/>

5 <https://www.knowledgetree.com/page/8/>

6 <http://blog.thetasgroup.com/smart-sales-blog/sales-managers-are-you-making-these-5-critical-coaching-mistakes>

7 <https://www.gong.io/blog/deal-closing-discovery-call/>

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