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How Do You Make Your Selling Process Sustainable? Sales Management Holds The Key!

Everywhere I go, in practically every organization, I witness sales managers struggling with trying to standardize a selling process. Eight out of 10 (80/20) companies do not follow up, reinforce and coach their salespeople before, during and especially after the call. Alright, six out of 10 then, at least! Hence my frustration as the training provider is the first one to blame. Several years ago, three months after facilitating a three-day sales training boot camp, I met with the president on a follow-up call. He started off the meeting and said, "Your process isn't working!" Much to my surprise, I restated and asked, "What do you mean?" He said, "I mean no one is using the selling process." Then my probing kicked in and surfaced the real motives. "Why not? What follow-up have you provided? What action items are you working on? Did you even hand out the Playbooks 30 days ago?" Nope, notta, nothing.

I went home that night, frustrated as all "get out," mainly because I "failed" in his eyes, regardless of whose fault it was, so I was driven to lay out a step-by-step, detailed outline that I call, "**Coaching The Sales Professional®...a process for life!**" That's right! All levels of a sales organization must be coached to continually reinforce and follow up, to see if the selling process is in place, in working order **AND** being used. Every 60 to 90 days, you must do a "check up" and figure out what needs to be fixed, quickly. Flexibility is the key as you continue to adjust to fit **YOUR** sales culture. A "one size fits all" is no longer acceptable. The selling process must be custom to your sales culture, otherwise it won't flourish.

Top-down training is still the right strategy for management to communicate their sales initiatives and systems approach. All too often we "bypass" the mid levels of sales management and drill down to the reps. The typical report back: "Our reps aren't using the process." It's no wonder if management does not coach, follow-up and reinforce, especially each other, let alone getting it down to the salespeople. The only way to get sales management to coach, follow-up and reinforce is to train them to do it with each other. **Practice, skill and repetition provide knowledge, but training plus practice develops habits that lead to sustainability.** When coaching becomes part of your pre- and post-call debriefs, you know you're heading in the right direction for your sales culture to grow. When pre-call planning becomes a daily regimen, utilizing a selling process, you're well underway. But remember, you must do "check-ups" every 60-90 days to ensure all sales team members are on track.

The sales managers need the same coaching from their managers in order to keep it going. So often, this is where breakdowns occur and must be addressed. It's never too late to do a refresher and continue to practice the skills of coaching until they become habit. Salespeople have a tendency to "drift." That's why the quarterly "check-ups" are mandatory for sustainability.

Sales Coaches, if you had the opportunity to watch any of the March Madness over the weekend, you're witnessing the best of coaching to drive performance. It's all about directing, guiding and counseling! We should do the same with our sales teams.

Going back to my original story, meeting with the president...we got back together within a week and I presented my "Coaching for Life" outline. We modified it to fit his game plan, I coached him on coaching pre- and post-call debriefs with the reps. It's become a daily routine and the company continues to grow. So, Sales Leaders, if I've upset you or "ticked you off" and you still disagree, give me a call and let's talk it through. Better yet, let me send you our "Coaching for Life" outline to provide the structure you need to make your selling process sustainable.

Good Luck & Good Team \$elling!

Bob Butler, TSP
and the Butler Learning Systems T.E.A.M.
Together **Each **Achieves **More******

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