

4 Steps to Supercharged Sales Teams is a how-to book for successful sales management, showing how servant leaders across the nation have transformed sales teams from mediocre to exemplary. It's all about igniting the joy of selling.

4 Steps to Supercharged Sales Teams

By Max Cates

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**4 STEPS TO
SUPERCHARGED
SALES TEAMS**

**SALES MANAGEMENT
THE SERVANT LEADER WAY**

MAX CATES

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Introduction

Welcome to *4 Steps to Supercharged Sales Teams*, a revised and updated version of *Serve, Lead, Succeed!*

First, let me say thank you for your interest in Servant Leadership. It's an honor and privilege that you've taken time from your busy schedule to learn about this transformational way of leading salespeople. Irrespective of your background and skill set, I'm confident in saying the concepts you'll find in this book are life-changing, creating more productive sales management, helping you live with purpose, and also producing deeper and more meaningful relationships not only on the job, but with your spouse, family, friends...

This is a book about values, values that can be learned. It's not about strategy or tactics (even though you'll find ample examples of how to apply servant leader values to actual practice in everyday sales management). These values (such as emotional intelligence, empathy, listening, humility) I learned through 30 years of success followed by failure disguised as achievement, a chaotic cycle repeated over and over. I'm a recovered bad boss who had narcissistic tendencies. I was arrogant, thought I was the smartest person in the room, demanding, selfish, self-promoting, expecting others to be like me. I experienced one empty success after another. In fact, success frequently felt like failure. That's how I felt when I was reaching objectives, but finding no real joy in it, not in me or my people. It was just this draining process, followed by brief exhilaration, then just moving on to the next goal. Successful? Yes. Satisfied? No. Success was an unhealthy addiction, never enough awards to reach contentment. And, when you inevitably failed to reach objective? That was a soul crusher. Total devastation... Driven people can fall prey to Success Addiction. It's real. It's all-consuming. It's toxic. It was my cocaine until I kicked the habit.

Servant leadership was the cure. It provided perspective, purpose, sustained success, the satisfaction of helping others succeed and me succeeding with them in a partnership. It provided even greater career success, and it was achievement along with purpose. The beauty of this whole process is that it all can be learned and taught. We've been given a truly miraculous brain, a complex, ever-growing neuro system constantly evolving and regenerating. We can literally become what we want to become. We can vastly increase our skill set, our intelligence, our emotional aptitude through learning. It's called neuroplasticity. It's the engine for personal growth and improvement. If there is a single thread to this book, it's personal growth through learning better ways of leading your sales team.

Growth comes in many forms. Ironically, failure, not success, helped me recognize my gift of leading, coaching and teaching. You see, perhaps like you, I've had spectacular career success and catastrophic failures. I've known that white-hot elation of winning. And I've known failure that left me broken, wounded and self-doubting. It's through those defeats that I learned to become a real leader. So, here's my point: The best leaders and mentors can be the worst offenders, those people who once were driven by selfish ambition but learned the value of serving others over self. When I first started this servant leadership journey, I felt like an imposter. How could I teach these values when I had failed so miserably in the past? Who am I to teach these values when, at one time, my trademark was arrogance and selfishness? I soon realized that those dark seasons of my career qualified me extravagantly to tell the Servant Leader story. Where, at first, I was leading with an element of shame, I transformed those detriments of the past into strengths to lead because I knew the things that led to failure and could teach them by rote. I reframed the whole success/failure syndrome like this: I'm a leader, not in spite of my failure but because of my failures.

I'm anchored by Christian faith, and you'll see it emerge occasionally. But my orientation shouldn't matter to you as much as how the principles of servant leadership will work to bring a sense of significance, purpose and

accomplishment to your job as a sales manager. Once I discovered the power of servant leadership, everything changed. I looked forward to each day, helping others succeed, surpassing goals, enriching others' lives, facing plenty of challenges with composure and strength, going home every day with a sense of accomplishment rather than anxiety about tomorrow... It was truly transcendent, delivering me from a place of worry and anger to a space of achievement and peace, strength coming from peace, not anger, power coming from collaboration not selfishness. Paradoxically, the more peace I felt, the more competitive I became, imbued with a sense of relaxed intensity; and I could see it infuse my sales teams.

I've included success stories of servant leaders in sales throughout the nation, from small to large organizations. Some are natural-born servant leaders, others (like me) have learned servant leadership through trial and error. A common thread that runs through all these stories is how easy it is to be successful. It doesn't take a lot of reading or classroom time; all it takes is putting your salespeople Number One. Once you do that, everything becomes easier, your job as a leader and your team's success. Hundreds of other servant leaders have learned this simple lesson.

Having interviewed many outstanding sales leaders for this book, I always come away inspired and revitalized not only by their stellar results but by their character. Most are intense, competitive, disciplined and they have a big heart, sensitivity and empathy. They care for people. They nurture people. They find the best in people. They're not afraid to go against the grain or face criticism and ridicule for being different. But, being extremely gracious in victory, these leaders tell a story of strength under fire, despite being criticized for being too soft on their people, when in reality they were demonstrating tough love based on accountability. In the end, however, the results really tell the tale of success. As one said, "Servant leaders always crush it." I hope you'll find their stories as valuable and inspiring as I did. And I hope you're ready to crush it through servant leadership.

Step One: Principles, Practices of Servant Leadership

There's a quiet revolution occurring in sales management. It's called Servant Leadership. Servant leaders in sales across the nation are reporting impressive sales results. Even though they're now a small segment of sales managers, they are reshaping the sales management landscape. I've experienced it personally, and have interviewed Servant leaders in sales across the nation who have been spectacularly successful. What's their secret? And what exactly is a servant leader in sales? The short answer is they serve their sales team instead of their sales team serving them. They make their salespeople Number One. Servant leaders give their sales team training, coaching, encouragement, resources, support, expectations and accountability for results. Then they turn them loose to succeed; they empower them with the freedom to sell, which creates the joy of selling.

Servant leaders expect their people to succeed. And they inspect their daily progress with meaningful metrics.

Servant leadership might be one of the best-kept secrets in sales management. It's brought success to many companies ranging from Southwest Airlines to Starbucks, and has transformed sales management for a small cadre of super-successful sales managers. This book is intended to reach those sales managers who want to be better, who want to succeed year after year, who want to be a leader who leaves a legacy of character and high achievement.t... A leader who people remember.

Servant Leadership is not a management strategy or tactic. It's not one of those trendy buzzwords that's forgotten in five minutes. It goes back thousands of years and is the basis for sustained success from the very

beginnings of business and commerce. Instead of a strategy, it's more of a behavioral framework based on humility, empathy, selflessness and accountability. It's a framework that provides meaning and purpose to your sales strategy, tactics, policy and procedures. Servant Leadership creates salespeople who are competitive, self-confident, engaged, persistent, knowledgeable, prepared and filled with the joy of selling.

The Most Important 3 Words In Sales Management

Three simple words are key to successful Servant Leader sales management: **Help Others Succeed**. These simple words capture the spirit and intent of Servant Leadership. These words are the definition, the code of conduct, behavioral guide and effective practice of real leaders. Everything changes when you approach your sales team with this attitude: It makes you a better leader, and it invigorates your salespeople. Here's how the three words break down:

Help – Shift your emphasis from constantly pushing, driving, and directing your people to focus on helping them bring out their best, combining their inner power with your knowledge and experience. Change your mindset from being the boss to being the facilitator, to assist them, serve them.

Others – Get outside yourself, see others' needs, and use your strength to transform their weakness. Walk in their shoes and empower them by deferring your personal goals. Encourage them to see beyond their possibilities. Challenge them to see and realize their potential.

Succeed – Envision your team's success. Lead them aggressively with a relentless will to achieve their personal and team objectives. Teach them to prepare and compete with ferocity to achieve success.

Following are the main components, the core values, of supercharged sales management by helping others. Ask yourself these questions:

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1. **Empathy.** Can you put yourself in the shoes of your salespeople, understand their motivation, their fears, their weaknesses and strengths? Can you listen and ask questions instead of telling and selling?
2. **Humility.** Do you have the self-confidence to be humble? Can you admit mistakes, ask for help, hear and act on suggestions, give the credit to your sales team? Are you selfless, deferring your own initiatives to help your people reach their goals? Do you seek and value constructive criticism from your team?
3. **Courage.** Do you have the courage to step outside the box, be an outlier, take risks to win? Are you brave enough to adapt, adjust and make bold decisions? Do you believe in yourself? Really? Or do your doubts overtake you? Do you have the courage to doubt your doubts, and believe in your experience and instincts? Is fear of failure obscuring the joy of achievement?
4. **Self-Awareness.** Do you know yourself, your trigger points, your impulses? Are you committed to self-management before managing others? Do you have the self-control to be the calm one in the eye of the storm? Are you as good a leader as you think you are? Do your people see you as a real leader?
5. **Grace.** Are you able to provide undeserved favor to your sales team? This is the ultimate in sales management, being able to answer anger with patience, seeing failure as learning, giving second chances, encouraging others when no one encourages you, resurrecting those who are burned out, developing the slow learners and keeping an unshakeable belief in your people, even when they fall short.
6. **Integrity.** Do your words match your actions? Do your people see you as credible, believable and trustworthy?
7. **Competitiveness.** Are you driven by a desire to win, to achieve? Do you know how to compete with ferocity; to be the best you can be and help others become their best? To aggressively pursue the goal with relentless

willpower? Are you mentally tough enough to keep advancing to the goal even when the odds are against you?

8. **Accountability.** Do you have the strength to hold your people accountable for their performance? Can you hold yourself accountable to your salespeople? Can you insist on mutual accountability among your sales team, each being accountable to the other?

These Servant Leader values create high-performance teams and also promote productive relationships with customers. They are all teachable values. Instruct your salespeople to Help Others Succeed and be the example they follow.

As one servant leader said, "This ain't for sissies. Servant leadership takes a lot of mental toughness. It's tough love driven by self-discipline, based in love and kindness, and achieved through nurturing and growth."

This Is No Trendy Management Fad

Servant leadership. The term itself is contradictory. It's an oxymoron. It's counterintuitive and goes against the conventional wisdom of hard-charging, charismatic business leaders. On the surface it just doesn't make sense. How can a leader be a servant? And why would you want to be one? The answer is that dozens of small to multi-billion-dollar companies have found success in servant leadership.

The concept is best defined by Robert Greenleaf, former AT&T executive, who coined the term in 1970: "The servant leader shares power, puts the needs of others first, and helps people develop and perform as highly as possible." It's a form of "reverse delegation" with proven bottom-line results.

In addition, it's a form of tough love. A recent *Harvard Business Review* article stated, "Leaders are shepherds, goes the conventional thinking, protecting their flocks from harsh surroundings. Not so... Leaders who truly care for their followers expose them to the painful reality of their condition

and demand that they fashion a response. Instead of giving people false assurance that their best is good enough, leaders insist that people surpass themselves. And rather than smoothing over conflicts, leaders force disputes to the surface... But leaders who cultivate emotional fortitude soon learn what they can achieve when they maximize their followers' well-being instead of their comfort."

Even though servant leadership has been popularized in the last 50 years, the concept goes back hundreds of years. In the book, *Lead like Jesus*, Ken Blanchard states, "People follow a great leader because they respect them, not because they have power." Some of the earliest accounts of servant leadership come from the Bible. "Whoever wants to be great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." (Mark 10:42-45, NIV). Jesus was the epitome of servant leadership, exhibiting strength, boldness and effectiveness while being humble and caring. As the ultimate servant leader, Jesus performed one of the lowliest tasks of the day, washing the feet of his disciples: perhaps the most profound example of one who was strong enough to be humble, unshakably confident enough to serve others.

In 500 BC, Lao Tze said, "A leader is best when people barely know he exists, not so good when people obey and acclaim him, worst when they despise him. Fail to honor people; they fail to honor you. But of a good leader, who talks little, when his work is done, his aim fulfilled, they will all say, 'We did it ourselves.'"

If you look at an organization as an inverted pyramid, you see the role of the servant leader. Instead of the CEO at the top, he's at the bottom of the pyramid while the hourly workers are at the top and the managers in between work for their people.

Servant leaders are non-conformists. They are contrarians. They are paradigm shifters. They don't look at prevailing ways of sales leadership –

such as command-control, authoritarianism, and micromanagement – they have the vision to see new and revolutionary paths to success. They don't **conform** to traditional leadership norms. Rather they **transform** the sales process to succeeding by serving.

Servant leaders' maverick style is similar to successful airline pilots who have to make good decisions, even when unsure of the outcomes. In a white paper on aviation disasters, Christian Rebec said "intelligent disobedience" was the key to Captain Sully landing in the Hudson River, saving all aboard. He disobeyed the Control Tower, using his skill to make a first-of-its-kind landing that made aviation history. The three key elements of this remarkable feat were:

1. Be prepared for unexpected circumstances.
2. Know yourself, your limitations, your skill set.
3. Learn when to listen to the Control Tower, and when to have the courage to follow your instincts.

In the same way, the servant leader is prepared and ready for all eventualities, he or she assures that the sales team is well-trained and well-armed. Together the servant leader and their team create a common vision and objectives. Then, the servant leader turns them loose – with adequate monitoring of progress – to get the job done. Micro-managers not allowed.

The servant leader takes chances for his people. This is not for the weak at heart. There are times when the leader has to turn it over to subordinates and show confidence in their ability. Then, the leader has to fight relentlessly to help them get where they are going. Salespeople always notice their leader's efforts for them, and even if they don't show it, they will remember when you went to bat for them. The payoff is developing that ever-so-important element of trust.

Zig Ziglar, legendary speaker and author on sales effectiveness, captured the essence of servant leadership by saying, “You will get all you want in life if you help enough other people get what they want.”

You’re More a Medic Than a General

Watching a World War Two movie recently, it occurred to me that a servant leader is more like a medic than a general. The medic is in the middle of the battle, risking life and limb to offer help and expertise to the troops. Courageous and selfless, they symbolize the ultimate in sacrifice to keep the troops moving forward through healing while providing reassurance that there’s help waiting for the wounded. Generals are safely ensconced at headquarters, planning and directing troop movements from afar. In this scenario, medics, like servant leaders, are participative, whereas generals are more evaluative. They both have a strong sense of purpose, but the medic is covered with blood, sweat, and tears. That is immersive purpose, being a part of the battle, experiencing first-hand the chaos, danger, uncertainty, volatility, ambiguity.

Servant leaders, and many highly successful sales leaders, are not the generals who are removed from the battlefield, being served by a cadre of assistants; rather they are the ones who are getting in the trenches with their troops.

It’s A Matter Of Agency. You’re An Agent Of Change

Lately, I see the word “agency” being used more and more frequently in podcasts and blogs and articles. I didn’t think much about it until a spiritual advisor explained that servant leaders are agents. Agents of change, growth, vitality and joy. The dictionary defines an agent simply as “a person who acts on behalf of another person or group.” Change can come in the form of competitive threats, changes to the commission structure, changes in the product line, changes created when a new CEO comes on board, and even

changes in introducing servant leadership to your team. One huge certainty about any change is that there will be resistance to change. Here's how Pryanka Malik, in a Whatfix blog post, describes how to address change:

Key activities that a change agent performs include:

- Communicating how change is beneficial for both the organization and employees. (A manager resists and begrudges change, a leader embraces, encourages it.)
- Listening to the involved team members and employees to gain feedback and incorporate it in the implementation process. (A manager seeks compliance; a leader facilitates collaboration.)
- Understanding employees' reactions to change and reducing resistance to change. (A manager talks, a leader listens.)
- Actively engaging with employees by conducting change management exercises and change management training. (A manager focuses on skills; a leader fosters continuous learning.)
- Encouraging and supporting employees to become change champions and promote it. (Managers champion the status quo, leaders inspire growth through change.)
- Providing feedback on challenges facing the change management lead. (Managers see challenges as threats, leaders see challenges as opportunities.)

When you become an agent, you get outside your selfish needs and facilitate the progress of others by involving them in the process, working with their best interests in mind.

The opposite of agency in sales management is the "I'm your answer" sales manager, the one who says, "I have the answer, don't ask questions, just follow my directions." Chances are you know this person, the one who's insistent on their plan, their tactics and strategy. The one who frequently

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reminds you that they reached a few objectives and have you on the yellow brick road to success. The one ostensibly leading a cult of slavish obedience, except they have few, if any, followers. You've experienced it. And you probably know it never, never works.

A sense of agency shifts the sales manager's focus and enhances your value system:

1. It increases your humility. Seeing yourself as an agent frees you of a prideful, boasting, autocratic nature. It replaces judgment with openness, curiosity and inquisitiveness.
2. It helps you transcend selfish motives and goals through a sense of empathy, seeking to understand your salespeople's objectives, dreams, motivations and needs.
3. It creates an environment of encouragement: you encourage others, and that, in turn, encourages others to encourage others. Equally important, as a change agent, you learn to function without the need to be encouraged; that's because you'll find a consistent spirit of quiet trust with your team, and results that speak for themselves. How liberating to lead through participation rather than obedience!
4. It helps produce gratitude in seeing others grow and improve. The "Follow me" manager is gratified through reaching sales objectives. That's an empty and ephemeral pursuit. If you do happen to reach that objective, then what? It becomes a frenetic and unpredictable drive to seek another successful outcome that no one will remember. The agent is remembered by those who blossomed through this kind of servant leadership.
5. Finally, it generates grace, which is the gold standard for leaders. That is providing undeserved favor to others, answering anger with gentleness, rudeness with kindness, greediness with generosity, chaos with peace, and failure with forgiveness.

Here's another way to look at agency: It moves a sales team from dissonance to consonance to resonance.

1. Dissonance. Your sales team may be awash in back-biting, animosity, selfishness, secretiveness... Failing to consistently meet objectives, showing vestiges of low morale (low retention levels, absenteeism, high stress levels, etc.).
2. Consonance. The agent, through servant leadership, develops a sense of teamwork, mutual encouragement, partnership, a spirit of reconciliation, bringing together sales team members and management in a unified team with a shared purpose and spirit.
3. Resonance. The new value set becomes automatic, resonating day by day, continuously reminding your people of servant leader principles consciously and subconsciously. In other words, resonance becomes part of your sales team's collective conscience.

Following are a few additional tips for managing change productively and cohesively:

1. First, ask yourself this question: Am I afraid of change? Do I set the example of courage, selflessness and teamwork in facing change? I'll use a personal example that might resonate with you: At the height of my career, having worked my way up the corporate ladder to a place of power and status, I remember seeing an Anthony Robbins self-improvement video. I vividly remember thinking that he had good ideas, but I did not want to change. I had become successful doing things a certain way, and I didn't want to risk changing my ways and possibly becoming less successful. Big mistake! The result was that I stopped growing, became inflexible to change within myself and outside of myself. And even worse, I expected people on my team to be like me. My prevailing thought was, "If only they would do things my way, they would be great leaders, outstanding sales reps." A healthy reaction to change is to make sure you're willing to change to face the change, accept

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and respect others on your team for who they are, and bring them along to the place of who they need to be during this season of change.

2. Remember that one of the biggest fears of change is loss of control. Emphasize with your sales team that together, as a team, you can control how you implement the change. So, in effect, you are in control of the situation.

3. Emphasize the “Why” of change. Make sure you present the hopeful, productive “Why” that includes the vision of where this change will be taking the sales team. Part of this dialogue will be WIFM: what’s in it for me? Focus on how the individual sales reps will benefit from the change.

4. Encourage open discussion, dissent, debate, and feedback. However, at the end of the day, make it clear that you require alignment. We all need to be on the same page moving forward.

5. Follow up throughout the process to reinforce the progress and to get feedback from your team on how things are going. Remember that change management is a one-on-one process. Some reps will love and embrace change with enthusiasm. Some will grumble, some will be fearful. Be empathetic to each rep’s personality and attitude toward the change and help them work through it by following up with an understanding of them individually.

6. Be authentic. It’s ok to voice your concerns, maybe even your doubts, but do so in an optimistic, problem-solving way. For example, “I’m not sure how this new commission plan is going to work out, but I am confident that we, as a team, will make it work successfully.”

7. Create a culture of change. Seek change, don’t just react to it. Always emphasize that change transforms bad to good, and best to better. Be disruptors of the status quo, continually improving. Always looking for new and better ways to do things.

Servant Leadership Builds Bottom Line Results

Following are ways servant leaders are developing high-performing sales teams and building bottom-line results:

- 1. Improved retention rates** – Servant leadership improves rep retention, helping keep experienced salespeople on the payroll. According to a Baylor University study of 501 full-time salespeople, “Adopting an employee-oriented approach will improve turnover intention, a common problem in sales.” By placing salespeople’s needs as most important, “Leaders serve as role models to their employees and reap the benefit of improved employee attitude and job satisfaction. While it may on the surface appear counter intuitive to place employee needs as a top priority, even above company objectives, this study, as well as supporting research, demonstrates that servant leadership has myriad benefits to the organization and is an effective tool to retain employees.” Servant leaders, according to the study, enhance “person-organization fit,” helping align reps with company values, beliefs and goals by including them in decision-making and collaboratively shaping the company’s value structure. Essentially, servant leaders help sales reps feel that they truly fit the organization and belong there. In addition, servant leadership increases the level of “organizational commitment” the attachment and identification the rep feels for the employer – this sense of employee dedication leads to “a deeper desire to stay with the organization.”
- 2. Increasing sales productivity** – One of the few studies of the impact of servant leadership on sales performance was conducted by William Auxier in 2011. Studying a cross-section of salespeople in the healthcare industry, Auxier found that top salespeople – those in the top 20% of those studied – were likely to be managed by servant leaders who exhibited these three characteristics:

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- Developing and empowering others – Focusing on training, supporting and nurturing salespeople to reach their full potential; and providing them with the freedom and authority to work independently and creatively without coercion or micromanagement.
- Authentic leadership – Projecting in an honest way a leader’s values, identity, emotions, motives and goals which develops trust in followers. To be consistent about what one thinks, what one says and what one does.
- Visionary leadership – Developing a clear vision that inspires, motivates and energizes followers with a sense of purpose. Southwest Airlines, one of the premier servant leader companies, has led the airline industry in profitability and productivity indices for many years. Herb Kelleher helped found the airline on the following premise: “Your employees come first. And if you treat your employees right, guess what? Your customers come back, and that makes your shareholders happy. Start with employees, and the rest follows from that.”

3. Improved Return on Investment. A study by authors James Sipe and Don Frick showed companies with servant leadership as a component of management strategy delivered a 17.5% return on stocks compared to 10.8% average return of the 500 largest publicly-held companies. A subsequent study showed companies with servant leadership as the **predominant** leadership strategy produced a 24.2% return. In addition, this and other studies have shown that servant leadership also improves relations with customers, ostensibly having the effect of improved sales and repeat sales. According to the researchers, “Essentially, employees learn to treat their customers by observing how their managers treat them.” This gives the servant leader a performance advantage that’s particularly important in sales where customer satisfaction is everything.

Another study sponsored by the University of Illinois at Chicago further supported the bottom-line benefits of servant leadership. A total of 961 employees from 71 Jason's Deli Restaurants were studied in 10 metropolitan areas. The restaurants led by servant leaders showed positive results:

- Six percent higher job performance.
- Eight percent higher customer service behaviors.
- Employees who were 50% less likely to leave the company.

The Law of Reciprocity is Key

The Law of Reciprocity, a basic sales practice, says people repay in kind what another person has provided. Just like we feel obligated to repay favors and gifts, subordinates are likely to reciprocate the kind of positive treatment received from a sales manager. The manager who respects salespeople will likely receive respect from them – likewise for the following important factors (the more leaders give, the more they receive):

- Responsiveness
- Encouragement
- Trust
- Honesty

It's just human nature to want to return the favor of being treated well. The key thing is that it starts with the servant leader as the giver, the one who gives respect, trust and kindness without expecting anything in return. In effect, reciprocity creates a powerful synergy that drives teamwork, enthusiasm, buy-in and commitment to company goals. However, this law is never a one-to-one ratio, so don't expect immediate and equal reciprocity from your people. When the payback comes, you'll probably see more of a two-to-one ratio: You give two times what you receive.

And don't forget the Law of Negative reciprocity: When you give negativity (such as anger, rudeness, selfishness, ridicule...) that's what you'll get in return.

The 7 Essential Practices of Servant Leaders in Sales

The core values of Servant Leadership – Empathy, Integrity, Humility, Courage, Grace, and Competitiveness – all of which can be learned, lead to everyday practices and behaviors that energize the sales team.

Consider yourself a professor of sales and a sales practitioner: profess the values that you want to see in your sales team, then practice them religiously. Here are the 10 key elements of servant leaders in sales. (Notice that teamwork and empowerment are also key essentials but are in separate chapters).

1. Selflessness.

Your sales reps are Number One, not you. Great leaders have the confidence to forgo personal goals, putting the needs of the sales team ahead of their own needs. Working as partners in success. This means the sales manager understands what the sales team needs to be successful and meets those needs selflessly. As the old saying goes, "If you're too great to do small things, you're too small to do great things." The servant leader strives to be humble, allowing the sales team to take the spotlight for success while giving the team credit for accomplishments.

One word is the litmus test for great leaders: **Sacrifice**. It's easy to hand out awards, gift certificates and promotions. But are you willing to sacrifice your time, your energy, even take career risks and fall on your sword for your people?

In *Primary Greatness*, Stephen R. Covey said, "As we treat one another with more love, kindness, courtesy, humility, patience and forgiveness, we encourage the same in return. For example, a vice president once traveled

on assignment to Egypt with the president of their organization. After a particularly weary and dusty day together, he awakened the next morning to find the president quietly shining his shoes, a task the president had hoped to complete unseen. Such quiet service in the daily and ordinary things bonds souls and awakens reciprocity in relationships. Can you imagine that vice president refusing to do anything the president asked of him on that assignment? A successful manager is one who has loved, sacrificed, served, cared for, taught and ministered well to the needs of people."

Your salespeople are pretty good people readers. They know when you're driven by selfish goals. Their response will range from apathy to a subtle form of sales sabotage. They'll listen to your directives, smile, even nod agreeably, then turn around and do what they want to do. It's simply a form of negative reciprocity: your selfishness is returned in kind by your salespeople. The result is mediocre sales results, high turnover, a lack of teamwork and lots of dysfunction on the sales floor ranging from backstabbing to out-and-out hostility among your salespeople.

A recent article on LinkedIn by Eric Grundmeier, President of RS Analytics, states, "For the Navy SEALs, the stakes of leadership and teamwork are incredibly high, with missions that often involve complex challenges and significant risks. Within this context, the personal characteristics of each team member become critical to the success of the mission. Among these characteristics, **selflessness** stands out as a top attribute.

"The emphasis on selflessness among the Navy SEALs is driven by a clear understanding that mission success depends not on individual heroics but on seamless team performance. In this environment, the question "Are you about the team or about yourself?" becomes a pivotal litmus test for leadership and team compatibility. At the highest levels of leadership within such elite units, selflessness is not just preferred; it is a fundamental requirement. Leaders are expected to exemplify this trait, setting the tone

for their teams and ensuring that every action and decision supports the collective over the individual.

“This focus on selflessness and team over the individual is not just about operational effectiveness; it also fosters a deep sense of loyalty, trust, and mutual respect among team members. It creates an environment where each member feels valued and supported, driving motivation and commitment to the team and its objectives.”

2. Patience.

It's a rare virtue in sales; however, patience is the very foundation of coaching, rep development and sustained selling. Even though many of us in sales tend to be impatient, the good news is that patience is a learned virtue, it just takes time. The key is to find your way to patience whether it's deep breathing, self-talk, visualization techniques or other approaches. As long as you are thinking of ways to be more patient, you're 70% of the way there.

Yes, it's a given that patience is not a typical trait in sales. In some ways, impatience works for salespeople to keep them moving forcefully ahead by seeking quicker ways of doing things and leaping over obstacles with daring abandon. Top salespeople are time managers. They know that time is money, and wasted time is lost opportunities. Because of that, many salespeople are impatient, they're in a hurry even when they're not in a hurry. However, as a leader, impatience will quickly alienate you from your followers. It is a destructive habit that destroys relationships and productivity. It stresses you unnecessarily, raises your heart rate and blood pressure as well as sending stress hormones throughout your body.

Can you even imagine the reaction your people have to your impatience? In addition to feeling the debilitating effects of stress, your impatience impairs your people's effectiveness and distracts them from their priorities and goals. It makes you, the leader, appear arrogant, impulsive, insensitive and incapable of making good decisions. Impatience also hampers your career development, making you less promotable. Ironically,

impatience is usually counter-intuitive – that is, it is a wasted emotion usually created by situations in which we have no control.

For example, we get impatient in a traffic jam despite the fact that there isn't anything we can do about it. It always makes an unpleasant situation even worse. The same applies to dealing with people. Very rarely can we control people's attitudes and beliefs in the span of a few brief seconds. Learning patience takes some mental repositioning, especially if you're a former salesperson. Here are three tips for developing patience:

- Be aware when you are feeling impatient. You know the feeling: irritability, muscle tension, short breaths, elevated heart rate.
- Take a few deep breaths to relax before you say or do something impulsively.
- Analyze the situation: If John is not preparing for sales calls, is my impatience going to change him? No. What will change his behavior is patience, understanding of his problem and developing a game plan to address the deficiency.

It takes some work to address impatience, especially since many of us are Type A personalities. Luckily, there are hundreds of online articles and tutorials on the subject that can help develop a kinder, gentler and smarter approach to challenging situations.

Patience goes hand in hand with "**Deferred gratification**" which is the ability to resist the temptation of an immediate reward – to wait for a later, more substantial reward. This means taking time to develop reps rather than firing them prematurely. In sales, it means not allowing "quick sales" but rather taking time to make a larger sale later. The added benefit of it is that it also builds credibility and strong connections with customers.

The signature study of delayed gratification, published in 1972, is called the Stanford Marshmallow Test. A researcher tested a group of children,

bringing each one individually into a room and sitting them at a table with a marshmallow on it. The child was told that the researcher was leaving the room and offered a deal: If the child did not eat the marshmallow while the researcher was away, then he or she would receive two marshmallows. It was a simple choice between instant gratification or delayed gratification that paid a bigger reward. The fascinating part of the research was a follow-up study years later which showed the “high delay” children to have substantially higher SAT scores, higher college graduation rates and subsequently higher incomes as adults. The “low delay” children were less likely to graduate from college, had higher incarceration rates as well as higher levels of drug and alcohol abuse.

As with most elements of EQ, deferred gratification can be learned. Author and creator of Launch Your Life Academy, Brendan Baker suggests these five steps for strengthening your sense of delayed gratification:

“Know your values. When you know what is important to you, you are able to make choices that lead you to happiness and success.

“Know what you want to achieve. Ensure you have clearly defined goals. What is it that you want to achieve exactly? Having a clear understanding of what you want to achieve longer-term can help you make a choice in delaying gratification to help you reach your ultimate goal.

“Create a plan. When you understand your values and know what you want to achieve, creating a plan to help you get there can remind you of the choices you need to make along the way and reinforce the process of delaying gratification.

“Prioritize. Being able to prioritize what is important to you and what you want to achieve helps you make the choice to delay gratification.

“Reward yourself. Delaying gratification can be hard work. Depending on what you want to achieve, it may take weeks, months, years, and sometimes even decades. Breaking down your goals and rewarding yourself along the

way can remind yourself that delaying gratification is leading you to where you want to go.”

In summary, the people we trust the most are those who are the calm ones in the eye of the storm. The ones who stay cool, collected, and decisive. The ones with the strength to forego the quick fix and focus on the long-term benefit. The ones strong enough to show patience and understanding.

3. Accountability. You're the boss. Oh, and you're the servant too.

Are you self-assured enough to be as accountable to your people as they are to you? Do you give them the opportunity to assess your strengths and weaknesses and let you know if you're meeting their needs?

Here's one way to look at the servant leadership issue: Do you treat your subordinates with the same respect and courtesy as your boss? Realistically, few of us do. But think about it. Your sales force is going to have more impact on your career than your boss. Your salespeople, not your boss, produce sales that get you promoted. Your boss may steer your career path, but your subordinates provide the horsepower to drive the process. If your people aren't receiving your best attention (patience, courtesy, respect...) you're probably not receiving their best. Seek to know what it's like to be on the other side of your leadership. The key word is **seek**; don't just imagine what it's like. Chances are we all think it must be wonderful to be under our leadership. Not so. Seek your people's input on what you're doing right and wrong. Give them appraisal forms to seek their assessments of your leadership.

Three-way accountability

We all know the importance of accountability in sales: clearly identified goals and expectations that are accurately measured and acknowledged. Accountability creates “no excuse” selling and moves reps toward owning their jobs and aligning with company initiatives.

The question is who is accountable to whom?

4 Steps to Supercharged Sales Teams

A high-performing sales culture goes beyond rep-to-manager accountability and embraces three-way accountability. Just like the traditional process of managers holding sales reps accountable for results, three-way accountability means the manager is accountable to the sales team, and reps are accountable to each other.

These three types of accountability will shift your sales team into overdrive:

Upward accountability. This is the traditional process of sales reps being accountable to their sales manager. Don't overcomplicate it. Just sit down with your reps, one-on-one, and instead of telling them, ask them what they should be accountable for. Remember, accountability is ownership. The sales rep has to own their job like a business owner. That requires a mutual understanding and agreement between manager and subordinate of goals, objectives, duties and all phases of the job.

Each sales rep will have a different skill set, meaning they will have different accountabilities. Discuss, reach agreement and then list their accountabilities. Make it clear and measurable. It's that simple. Now you have the element of buy-in because they helped design the process. And you have the basis for no-excuse selling and for job ownership.

For example, the sales rep would list his or her accountabilities this way.

As a salesperson, I am accountable for:

1. Meeting deadlines.
2. Reaching objectives.
3. Honesty and integrity.
4. Respecting and supporting my teammates as well as sharing information with them.

5. Providing input in decision-making, concerning plans, policies and procedures.
6. Effective pipeline maintenance.
7. Accuracy in paperwork and administrative functions.

Reverse Accountability.

As mentioned earlier, this means the sales manager is accountable to the sales team. A sales team won't be accountable to a sales leader who takes credit for success and blames the sales team for failure. As a leader, the sales manager takes responsibility, does not blame, admits mistakes, defends the team, celebrates their success, and leads by example.

The sales manager's list would look like this:

As a leader, I am accountable for:

1. Providing training and resources.
2. Removing roadblocks to ensure sales effectiveness.
3. Standing up for the sales force.
4. Being honest and transparent.
5. Showing respect. Every subordinate deserves respect and will not be criticized unfairly, ignored or embarrassed.
6. Being responsive. Questions, requests, and paperwork will be responded to in a timely fashion.
7. Seeking the sales team's input on operations, procedures and policies.
8. Establishing and sharing Best Practices that make us all better.
9. Conducting a periodic evaluation from the sales team on my performance.

Lateral or Rep-to-Rep Accountability.

Reps in a high-performance sales culture are accountable to each other (a particularly powerful kind of accountability). It's the nucleus of military success, and it can take your sales team to new heights. Requiring time and patience to develop, it starts with the sales manager encouraging teamwork, for example, to solve problems, develop procedures, and create training plans. The idea being to learn to work together, accept differing opinions, establish trust with each other, and share openly their secrets to success and reasons for failures. In the developing stages, the sales manager should develop ground rules for working together which creates mutual respect, compromise, collaboration, toleration and selflessness.

You see lateral accountability in sports teams where the players are practicing together, playing together, encouraging each other, and holding each other accountable to perform at their best. In military teams, "battle buddies" have each other's back. They hold each other responsible to be at their highest level of preparedness because their lives depend on each other.

Lateral accountability is at the core of sales teamwork. For example, you have a rep who's missing objectives. In a servant-led culture, this is not an individual failure. It's a team failure. The response should be a team response: "How can we help?" Everyone on the sales team is involved, not just the manager and rep.

Here's how a Lateral Accountability list might look.

As a sales rep, I am accountable to my peers to help each other succeed by:

1. Sharing best practices, competitive intelligence, sales tips and techniques.
2. Encouraging each other in difficult times and celebrating each other's success.

3. Offering and accepting advice openly (teaching and learning from each other).
4. Working together to identify and solve problems in sales procedures, reports, product applications and all phases of our daily job.
5. Embracing the highest level of integrity among sales team members.
6. Holding each other accountable for goals, ground rules and team principles.

Sales reps take responsibility for their commitments to the team. In this regard, they accept the spirit and intent of team initiatives as well as taking on team duties conscientiously. When taking on a team assignment, you can depend on them to do their best and to be answerable to their teammates for its completion.

In summary, it's imperative that the sales team and the sales manager are held accountable for results. The manager sets high standards and holds sales reps accountable for achieving them. This is simply "no excuse" selling. Not blaming the economy, the product line or the competition, but taking responsibility for one's sales performance. At the same time, the sales manager accepts accountability for sales team results and feels a strong sense of accountability to the sales team.

4. Encouragement, positive reinforcement. You may be their only cheerleader

We all know sales is a minefield of rejection and discouragement. Hours of disappointment, punctuated by minutes of joy. Those seasons of discouragement are the place where sales managers should thrive and strive to be the sales rep's cheerleader, encourager and confidant. In addition to the sales manager being an encourager, the servant leader will build a climate of positivity where sales reps support each other and celebrate each other's successes. They build others up rather than tear them down. They

know each other well enough to provide encouragement when it's needed. In essence, they are kind, patient and empathetic in the process of supporting each other.

The goal of positive reinforcement is to increase the frequency of desired sales behaviors (customer alignment, strong closing, thorough preparation, overcoming objections, etc.). The opposite is negative reinforcement such as reduced commissions, undesirable account assignments, demotion, suspension or dismissal. All reinforcements are based on the desire to avoid pain and the desire to gain pleasure. Negative reinforcement decreases the frequency of negative behavior and positive reinforcement should increase the incidence of positive behavior.

The power of positive reinforcement

Research indicates that positive reinforcement has more power to influence desired behavior than negative reinforcement. Part of the rationale for this is that if you are consistently seeking pleasure, you will naturally avoid the things that cause pain. It stands to reason that if you are rewarding desired behavior, you should see less undesirable behavior and, therefore, a decreased need for negative reinforcement.

The key is to make positive reinforcement **personal** while making negative reinforcement impersonal or **procedural**. Positive reinforcement should be administered personally by you every chance you get, as soon as you can. Doing so not only rewards salespeople's desired behavior, but builds rapport between you and your people. When negative reinforcement is required, make it an expected outcome of rules and procedures. For example, you should have a clearly defined set of consequences for failure to reach sales objectives. All reps should be aware of the consequences and, in effect, be in agreement with these conditions of employment. A sales rep who misses objective faces negative reinforcement as an outcome of the stated rules, not as a personal action of the manager. In effect, the impetus for positive reinforcement is a caring manager showing gratitude for a job

well done. The impetus for negative reinforcement should be a company enforcing its stated procedures.

Balance your level of encouragement

Sales managers have to reach a balance between over-rewarding and under-rewarding. If you make your reps work too hard for positive reinforcement, they'll probably be too exhausted to appreciate it. On the other hand, if your rewards are too frequent, they become expected and meaningless. Rather than looking for superlative performance to reward, you should be looking for examples of behavior you want to see repeated. If you have a rep who tends to under-prepare for sales presentations, look for instances where preparation was obvious and reward the behavior with the hope of it continuing.

Some of the personal actions of the manager to influence positive behavior should include:

- Complimenting your reps in front of the group: "I just saw Kristen make one of the best uses of sales visuals to a customer yesterday."
- Writing or emailing them congratulatory notes. Put them in their personnel files.
- Sending notes to spouses congratulating their spouse and thanking them for their support.
- Adhering "You're Awesome!" stickers to contracts and paperwork sent to your reps. Having these stickers forces you to remember and to use positive reinforcement.
- Developing a Sales Hall of Fame to acknowledge your superstars. Post it, complete with photos, in a prominent position at the office as well as online through a website, LinkedIn, Facebook and other social media.

Encourage team and individual success

Reward team success in addition to personal recognition. Congratulate the team for small accomplishments like working together to develop a new and improved sales contract. Develop team objectives, and team projects (such as the sales team working together to create a training session) then celebrate the results with team awards, pizza parties and other recognition for the team working together.

Use your sales reps' individual accomplishments to create role-modeling, such as, "I remember two months ago when Jerry took some big account losses and everything looked pretty bleak. But he kept on with optimism, made some new sales to make up for the losses and he made objective." These anecdotes also become stories which are passed along and become part of the legend and lore of your organization.

Catch people doing the right thing and talk about it. Look for something good and build on it. Take, for example, a poor sales performer who has a laid-back, yet engaging approach to people. Focus on his way with people and how he develops customer alignment. Instead of excoriating his lack of results, reinforce his strength and build on it by showing him techniques to ask for the sale in a way that matches his personality.

You might be their only encouragement today

Don't underestimate your importance as sales manager for inspiring your people. Remember that a positive comment from you may be the only encouragement a rep gets all day.

Even a thirty-second phone call to commend a rep for a sale can be a big motivator. (In fact, even if you don't have specific praise, just taking the time to talk and listen is positive in its own right.)

As mentioned earlier, provide positive reinforcement immediately following the act. The shorter the time gap between action and reward, the higher the impact it has.

Award your people's success with framed certificates, trophies, and medallions, and call special meetings or award ceremonies to distribute them accompanied by your congratulations. Do it in front of as many people as possible. And do it as fast as possible. Many, perhaps most salespeople, love to be the center of attention. Formal or informal ceremonies where your people can stand in the limelight are their fifteen minutes of fame. Watch carefully how many of those certificates or trophies are placed on open display in your salespeople's cubicles or on their desks. They need those constant reminders of success, especially during tough times.

Reward success with money or gift cards. Things that have monetary value. These rewards are above and beyond your commission plan. They can be instrumental in helping you reach targeted, short-term goals. Inasmuch as some sales reps are primarily moved by recognition and a sense of accomplishment, all your people are moved by monetary rewards – especially when provided in front of an audience of their peers.

Make sure, when administering monetary rewards, that your people know exactly what they are being rewarded for. Make it simple and easily understood by your reps.

5. Rep Development. Fire or Fire Up?

A sales rep is missing objectives, not performing at their best. There are times when you have to cut them loose, when all options have been exhausted; but first make sure you've done everything possible to develop them. It's so easy to just to get rid of him or her and move on to the next one. So tempting, but so disastrous. First of all the costs of re-hiring are astronomical and disruptive to your sales team's flow. Second, you're simply getting another unknown with their own fallacies and weaknesses. Focus on retention. That's where the power is.

Look at the word "supervision." Break it down: Super Vision. Great leaders can **see** and **believe**. They see the best in their people. They see their strengths, their virtues, their idiosyncrasies and, of course, they see their

weaknesses. Equally important, they believe in what they can become, that they are wired miraculously to be better, to continuously improve. They believe that we were given the miracle of neuroplasticity, a brain that has virtually limitless capacity when it's stimulated, nurtured and challenged.

That's where the servant leader comes in: to immerse the sales team in a safe place, to be their safety net, their cheerleader, their support system, to provide unconditional belief in them, and to challenge them to be the best they can be. The result is true transformation, changing people who felt fear, inadequacy, anxiety and timidity into conquerors who are courageous, bold, self-confident. The inept become competent, the best get better. It's the leader's job to love them for who they are and respect them for who they're becoming. Provide an incubator for growth, not a furnace of rejection.

1. Honor their individual gifts and talents.
2. Respect their foibles and weaknesses.
3. Expect them to grow and improve.

Here's another way to look at it: Sales can be a highly toxic environment filled with caustic customers and narcissistic peers. The servant leader helps their team resist toxicity by filling them with purpose, encouragement, self-confidence, optimism, and emotional intelligence. When you're filled to overflowing with positivity there's no room for negative toxins to invade.

The Leader develops and empowers, as opposed to the manager who trains and delegates

The servant leader develops his or her salespeople through training, coaching and encouragement. The leader makes sure to know reps' abilities, strengths and weaknesses, and custom-tailors development plans to each salesperson. Notice that training is part of the development process; however, rep development is so much greater than just training alone. It means the sales leader has to be involved with one-on-one development with each rep. The leader focuses on development and then empowers (sets

free) the rep to pursue success. The manager, as opposed to a real leader, simply trains the rep and then delegates duties to the salesperson.

The prevailing thought is not to weed out the weak but to develop them to be successful. You want your salespeople growing, changing and improving – improving continuously. This ensures that they are locked, loaded and prepared to sell successfully. Sales management’s primary job is really pretty simple. It’s not reaching sales goals. And it’s not improving sales productivity, nor increasing company profitability. It is sales rep development, pure and simple. Everything else – goal attainment, sales productivity and profitability – follows reps who are well-prepared. Doing so requires the sales manager to embrace the complexities of human behavior from the rep’s viewpoint and the customer’s. There are simply no shortcuts. There’s no app for that. But we keep looking, and oftentimes we keep getting further and further away from our salespeople and from our customers.

The last resort, when firing up doesn’t work

Sometimes a rep just isn’t right for the job. After your exhaustive efforts just aren’t working, it’s time to let them go. Don’t feel guilty about it. It’s your job as a servant leader to help them grow by finding the right job or profession. It’s not only in your best interest, but also you owe it to the organization. Equally important, you owe it to the person. Just as you, the sales leader, are accountable for your performance, your people are accountable for theirs.

In general, there are two reasons that reps don’t perform:

1. Non-performance. They don’t have the skill set, and can’t seem to learn it. This means they’re not suited for this kind of sales job or not meant to be in the sales profession and need to find another line of work. Maybe they’d be better at selling a different type of product line. Maybe they’re more proficient at customer service than sales, maybe better at data entry, or accounting. Guide them. Help them realize their true skill set and how to go forward.

2. Non-compliance. They don't have the right attitudinal set. They don't or won't follow simple procedures and policies, or they're a toxic influence on others. This is a tough one to deal with. Take non-compliance with company guidelines for example. The three steps are that the rep recognizes the misstep, takes accountability for it and changes their behavior. In other words, it's not enough to acknowledge the error, they have to comply and not keep repeating their behavior.

No one grows by being allowed to perform poorly. You, as a leader, cannot enable their inadequacies. It sounds harsh, but the leader sometimes has to be the catalyst for personal growth by helping a non-performing rep bottom out. It's in this bottoming out process that people become strong, that they learn their strengths and weaknesses. Your job is to let them go with love, grace and respect. Help them find a more suitable job or profession.

6. Continuous learning. Three ways servant leaders boost team's sales IQ

Continuous learning leads to continuous sales improvement. It's all about your people becoming the best sales reps they can be: the weak getting stronger, the best getting better. Continuous learning starts at the top, with you, the sales manager. You have to be the example of learning, seeking training and sharing information on the latest in sales and sales management, then encouraging your people to do the same to aggressively grow their skill set. Here are three ways to keep your sales team educated and motivated:

Self-directed Learning, the customized way

Self-directed learning differs from the traditional approaches to training because it requires you to assume complete responsibility for your own behavior change. The stimulus for learning must come from within you. You must develop your own learning program to expose yourself to new

information and to change your behavior appropriately. This process means you, as the leader, have to be a continuous student, always learning how to be a better sales leader. And it means you must make sure your reps are continuously learning.

The sales manager's job is to encourage reps to individually seek training to address their particular needs and interests. You can facilitate self-directed learning in many ways, a few of them are:

- Provide each salesperson with a training budget for podcasts, books, seminars, DVDs, etc.
- Establish a library of sales education resources including newsletters, magazines, books, etc.
- Keep your sales team updated on online and in-person sales training programs.
- During sales meetings, ask sales reps to give a review of training or resources they've used.

Self-directed learning allows your reps to personalize and customize their training, to grow, change and surpass their best. As one of my clients said to me, "If you always do what you always did, you'll always get what you always got."

Traditional training, don't get hijacked by technology

For the sake of discussion, let's break training into three categories: classroom training, online training and personalized coaching/teaching.

Traditional sales training includes everything from pipeline management to sales techniques – all aimed at the group level, your sales team. It's so easy to turn it over to self-paced online training but resist that temptation. Online training is a valuable alternative, but studies are showing the most valuable training is in-person training, for example, from an effective sales trainer. Salespeople have better retention in live training, and they are able to interact with the trainer, ask questions and make comments. Even more

effective training is when your reps design and perform the training. The best way to learn is to teach. Many salespeople have special techniques and product applications that would be valuable to the sales team. Get them to do a session on their specialty. Not only would it be good training, it's a great self-esteem builder for the sales rep doing the training.

Also, don't forget training in the "soft skills." Teaching Emotional Intelligence (EQ) may be even more important than sales techniques. Recent management studies have shown that EQ is even more important than IQ in management success. Concentrate your training on things like empathy, listening skills, conflict resolution, developing win-win scenarios and deferred gratification.

Developing Your EQ and Teaching it

Many of us in sales constantly battle self-defeating behavior such as lack of impulse control and self-absorption. That goes with the territory when your livelihood is based primarily on your singular efforts to persuade people to buy. It's you against the vagaries of market conditions, resistant customers and demanding bosses. In fact, it's a miracle if you don't develop some narcissistic tendencies that will work against you in sales management. You may never erase counterproductive behavioral traits but you can ameliorate them by developing your EQ (Emotional Intelligence).

Indulge your complexities

We've all been trained on personality "types" and how to reach them: Type A and Type B; introverts, extroverts and ambiverts; drivers, analyticals...The list goes on and on. Let's pause for a moment of honesty. As a manager, have you ever really figured out your people using one of these typologies? If so, congratulations, but the chances are really pretty slim. After all, we are not psychologists, and the human psyche is extremely complex. I have never met anyone who fits neatly into a category.

The human psyche is amazingly complex, defying simplistic definitions. The way we think and act is dependent on thousands of variables ranging from age to genetics to experience to circumstance. For example, Psychologist Howard Gardner developed the “Theory of Multiple Intelligences” which categorizes eight types of intelligence:

- Linguistic Intelligence (word smart)
- Logical-Mathematical Intelligence (number/reasoning smart)
- Spatial Intelligence (picture smart)
- Bodily-Kinesthetic Intelligence (body smart)
- Musical Intelligence (music smart)
- Interpersonal Intelligence (people smart)
- Intrapersonal Intelligence (self-smart)
- Naturalist intelligence (nature smart)

We may have one or more of the types of intelligence in varying degrees, all of us being a complex mix of intelligence. Furthermore, there are hundreds of other factors influencing our behavior and thinking such as the brain’s processing speed, our recall, our ability to think metaphorically and recognize patterns in our environment.

The bottom line in this discussion of brain and behavioral theory is this: Indulge your complexities, and others’ as well. Don’t settle for a simplistic definition of personality “types.” Remember this: much of it is **situational**. You may have been an introvert two hours ago when you were alone, energized by solitude, preparing for a meeting but an hour later you became an extrovert when the meeting starts and you’re energized by others. You may be highly conscientious about arriving at that meeting on time and prepared. But when you get home, you throw your clothes on the bed, leaving your closet an absolute mess. You can be a perfectionist some of the time but not all the time. No one is a certain way all the time. Sometimes we’re quiet, sometimes loud...We all have this huge spectrum of paradoxes ranging from motivated to bored, impulsive to controlled, angry to peaceful.

It all depends on the situation. Accepting and managing these paradoxes is our challenge.

Some of us compartmentalize. For example, we may be highly competitive in sports but not at all competitive in personal relationships. We might not be detail-oriented at all, except when you're examining debits and credits in your bank account. Or we might compartmentalize our emotions, suppressing anger or fear as we engage in an all-consuming task.

Many times, it's unjust and dangerous to use these types or labels in trying to understand human behavior. I've seen managers limit their people's career potential with a description like: "He's a Type B, too introverted to be promoted to a sales manager." The truth is that some of the best sales leaders and salespeople have introverted tendencies. These labels are also self-limiting. That is, we may allow ourselves to fit the label we've been given. For example, if you've been labeled an introvert, it's possible that you start seeing your limits rather than your potential; you start believing you're not promotable. It becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy.

In other words, don't waste your time trying to analyze your people's psychology. Rather just ask the right questions. For example, ask what motivates your people. Ask about their goals, aspirations, and dreams. Ask what their strengths and weaknesses are. A few well-asked questions will save you a lot of time and confusion in understanding your sales team. Inquisitiveness and curiosity are the keys to understanding people, not labeling and judgment.

Traditional Training: Coaching by asking the right questions

Involve the rep in the moment. For example, if you've just rode along with a rep on an appointment, open up the conversation with, "How do you think it went?" Have them self-analyze their performance. This allows them to self-teach without being lectured by you. When it's time to offer your observations, limit your comments to a few specific things you noticed. Don't overwhelm the rep with your vast knowledge. A few concise remarks are

easy to remember and have more impact than a number of detailed points. When it comes to teaching moments, less is more. And self-teaching has more impact than lecturing.

Timing is everything. If you accompanied a sales rep on an appointment that resulted in losing the account, this is not the time to teach. The rep will probably be in no mood to listen, but they may be tomorrow. Likewise, if they just made a big sale and want to celebrate, don't take the wind out of their sails with a teaching moment.

The key to teaching moments is not how much you know, but how ready the rep is to be taught.

And, when it comes to teaching, remember the classroom is the **least** effective place to teach salespeople. Of course, a classroom setting is necessary because it's economical and delivers a lot of information to a lot of people. The problem is this: The things that make successful salespeople are the things that make them poor classroom students. Most top salespeople are not the studious type. They are adventurous, street smart, task oriented, a little impatient and have an obsessive sense of urgency. Sitting in a training class – when there are sales to be made and deals to get signed – can be a torturous ordeal for an enterprising rep. And no matter how good the trainer or how eager the salesperson is to learn, the average salesperson is likely to be occasionally or frequently distracted by the reveries of ongoing deals or upcoming appointments. That's not to say to avoid classroom training. It's just a reminder that the best learning comes one-on-one at the right time from the right person (a sales manager/coach or a sales peer).

Lateral learning, learning from each other

There's a kind of training/teaching that goes far beyond traditional training concepts. Lateral learning, or learning from each other is led by the sales manager who seeks to create an environment in which ideas, opinions, sales techniques and market intelligence are shared openly and received

willingly among sales team members. In this environment, learning becomes an everyday, every-hour process involving sales reps, managers, clerical people and everyone with a stake in sales.

This learning process has two vital parts:

1. First, your reps should feel comfortable, even compelled, to instruct and educate others. You have to make this happen since it is not a normal course of action for salespeople. Not only do they need encouragement to share, they need instruction on how to share. They have to be careful to avoid the appearance of self-righteousness (“My way is the best way.”); condescension (“Here’s how you might be as good as me.”); or just being too pushy (“You’ve got to try this, I guarantee you’ll like it.”). The best approaches come from statements like: “Have you thought about an approach like this?” or “Here’s an approach that I found useful.”

2. Second, help your reps be receptive. It’s easy to feel a little defensive when someone offers help or suggestions. Let your reps know this is an expected part of learning: Providing information and receiving it in a gracious way. It’s a two-way process. And it helps everyone improve.

You’ll have to reinforce this process through observation and follow-up. Make it an integral part of your sales culture in writing and everyday experience. Include it in personnel assessments. Set an example yourself by willingly being taught by your reps. In fact, challenge them to teach you, to share their street smarts with you, and let them know you appreciate it when it happens.

Mentoring, another way we learn from each other

Sales reps mentoring other reps make a sales manager’s job much easier and more productive. It’s an effective way to teach best practices, sales skills, leadership skills, procedures and practices. Equally important, it’s a way to create a winning attitude on your sales team. Attitude development: Look at mentoring as a way to develop enthusiasm, resilience, self-discipline,

cooperation, and persistence. Psychologists have a term for it: "Emotional Contagion." We are easily influenced by both positive and negative emotions from others. Emotions can change behavior. As a sales manager, look at attitude as something infectious that can produce productive selling behavior. Look at mentoring as a way of teaching successful attitudes.

Here are steps for setting up a mentor program including attitudes as well as the traditional components of traditional mentorship:

Selection of participants

Mentor Selection. With the goal of learning hard skills (techniques, procedures, etc.) as well as attitudes, include top sellers, average producers, and perhaps even those below-average but never-give-up reps. The key thing is to avoid "toxic" reps as mentors – those reps, even if high-performing, who are self-absorbed, defiant, sarcastic. Be sure to include those with leadership aspirations, considering that teaching others is an effective way of learning. Also, remember you don't have to be a top performer, some of the best mentors are the ones who can teach what not to do.

Mentee Selection. Obviously, new reps are the first choice to be mentees. But also consider poor performers, even average reps, burned-out reps, and any sales rep – even a top performer – with a bad attitude. Consider the military approach of "battle buddies." Pair up reps who may not seem to need help, but could always benefit from someone to brainstorm and confide in and commiserate with.

Purpose of the mentor program

1. Develop hard skills: sales techniques, procedures, best practices.
2. Improve soft skills. Create winning attitudes, enthusiasm, self-discipline, persistence, empathy, humility, patience.

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3. Learn to be better salespeople and sales leaders by teaching. Don't forget, it's also an esteem-building process for the mentor to be able to share his or her wealth of experience and knowledge.
4. Provide a "safe place" for reps to discuss one-on-one the challenges and problems with another professional who may provide a different perspective than the sales manager.
5. Improve Onboarding for new reps to have an alternate resource of knowledge, support and encouragement in addition to the sales manager, someone to lean on and learn from.
6. Rekindle the joy of selling in experienced reps who may have "plateaued" or have some measure of burnout by giving them the opportunity to mentor others. It's a way to reach non-performing reps as well as helping make the best reps better.

Mentoring Guidelines

Keep it simple. One hour per week, occasional feedback sessions with the sales manager. Allow flexibility to change mentors when it's not working. Provide a discussion starter sheet with such topics as: "What are your greatest strengths, weaknesses and challenges?"; "What are your career goals, short term and long term?"; "What can you share about your personal life, family, leisure time activities?" "Tell me about your emotional strengths: resilience, persistence, empathy."

Key points of Mentoring

- Mentor programs can be shaped to fit the team's needs, and can even match veteran reps with other veterans who have different but complimentary skills. Mentoring is a perfect fit for servant leadership as it captures the essence of teamwork and helping each other succeed, no matter what level of expertise and experience the salespeople might have.

- Encouragement is vital to the process and equally important is challenging the mentee to grow, perform at their best, to step out of their comfort zone.
- Empathy is another key factor. The mentor has to understand and feel the mentee's position, the challenges, problems, and pressures. The mentor has to avoid the approach of "Just do it the way I do it." It's vital that the mentor allow for the individual skills and attitudes of the mentee, and not try to shape the mentee into the mentor's likeness.
- Humility. Both the mentor and mentee have to be humble, to give and receive constructive criticism, and welcome suggestions and tips for doing things a better way.
- Get rep involvement in developing the program. Get their ideas, suggestions and feedback.
- Before you start the program. Go one step further and let them design the program. The more involvement your salespeople have in the process, the more buy-in you'll get from them.
- Provide recognition for mentors: Acknowledge their efforts and their success stories in sales meetings, provide gift certificates for outstanding individual performance, make it a part of promotion decisions, make mentoring a part of job appraisals, or have a Mentor of the Year Award.

Postscript on Continuous Learning. Are you really using your brain?

You could say that our brains want us to learn: to be better sales managers; to be better salespeople. The brain is wired to accommodate self-improvement and adaptive behavior. With the advent of MRI and other advanced research technology, researchers have found a fascinating function of the brain: That our thoughts can change the structure and function of the brain. The phenomenon is called neuroplasticity. According to Alvaro

Fernandez, co-author of *The SharpBrains Guide to Brain Fitness*, neuroplasticity is “the brain’s lifelong capacity to change and rewire itself in response to the stimulation of learning and experience. This includes both the lifelong ability to create new neurons – neurogenesis – and to create new connections between neurons – synaptogenesis. A consequence of the brain’s plasticity is that the brain may change with every experience, thought and emotion, from which it follows that you yourself have the potential power to change your brain with everything that you think, do and feel. So, brain fitness and optimization are about much more than crossword puzzles and blueberries; they are about cultivating a new mindset and mastering a new toolkit that allows us to appreciate and take full advantage of our brain’s incredible properties.”

Unlike scientific thought of just a few decades ago, the brain is not fixed and unchanging. It is amazingly flexible and can be shaped by positive thinking. We are capable of becoming our ideal selves. We can reinvent ourselves, adapt to change and bounce back from failure. Using the brain’s powerful potential, managers can become stronger leaders by building skills and habits ranging from impulse control to mental toughness. It takes specific techniques such as visualization and positive self-talk, but more important is the awareness of our brain’s powerful potential.

Neuroplasticity is like having four-wheel drive. The simple fact that you know you have it gives you confidence. When you know how to activate and use it, a four-wheel drive will take you places where others can’t go. As Buddha once said, “We are what we think. All that we are arises with our thoughts. With our thoughts, we make the world.”

7. Vision. Super-vision the servant leader way

The servant leader creates a vision, with the help of the sales team, providing a clear sense of purpose that motivates and energizes sales reps. This vision includes a lofty goal and a plan to achieve it. It’s vitally important

that the sales team feel a sense of participation, involvement in the process which creates buy-in.

Once you have a clear purpose that is personal and purposeful, a vision statement for your sales team comes naturally. Many vision statements share these qualities:

- 1. Concise** – Short and simple statements work best. A good vision statement needs to be edited and reduced to the minimum number of words to tell the story. In fact, many vision statements are no more than six words.
- 2. Bold** – It has to establish a picture of courageous action to achieve a memorable goal that is out of the ordinary. In this sense, it serves to inspire sales team members to move toward the goal and take action.
- 3. Specific** – A good vision statement states who, what and why. It provides a sense of personal accountability and is crystal clear in its wording.
- 4. Worthwhile** – The vision has to convey importance. Is the end result worth the effort to get there? Is the purpose big enough to become passionate about? Does it have lasting significance?
- 5. Relevant** – It must relate to company, customer and social benefits. In other words, a sales team vision statement creates a win-win scenario for all involved – for employees, customers, stockholders, community members and all other stakeholders.
- 6. Optimistic** – Salespeople need to envision a future that gives them hope for something better. Many visions have been born out of difficult circumstances because someone had the courage to see a brighter day.
- 7. Disseminated** – A sales vision statement is broadcast within and outside the company, for everyone to see. Elon Musk is an expert at disseminating, for example, SpaceX's vision and goals through news media outlets. Similarly, the sales servant leader intentionally informs those inside and outside of the company of the sales group's vision. Not only does this help

energize employees to accomplish the vision, but it also lets others know that the sales team is forward-thinking and focused on public benefits.

Define the Why of your vision. Make it purposeful, not simply reaching a sales objective but something bigger such as improving the lives and businesses of your customers. The Why motivates and inspires. The How activates the vision, taking it to the tactical level of who, what, where and when. The How translates the dream into an action plan.

Following is an example that describes a sales team's vision: "We will become the number one sales team in the company by each sales representative meeting the unique needs of every customer, and making each customer's business better."

Set a JFK-moon-landing vision.

As soon as John F. Kennedy declared that we would put a man on the moon, everything happened to reach that objective. He enunciated the vision simply and inspirationally: "We choose to go to the moon. We choose to go to the moon in this decade and do the other things, not because they are easy but because they are hard, because that goal will serve to organize and measure the best of our energies and skills, because that challenge is one we are willing to accept, one we are unwilling to postpone, and one which we intend to win..." Create a vision with your team using their ideas and their words. Make it big. Following are a few ideas for ambitious visions:

- Achieving a "number one" ranking in your industry or among your company's sales offices.
- Capturing a market share such as 40% of total product sales in your territory.
- Attaining a prestigious award either within your corporation or in your industry.
- Reaching a sales milestone such as doubling last year's sales.

Make sure your vision is specific, measurable and has a time frame. Avoid nebulous visions such as “To increase customer loyalty and annual sales.” You can turn those words into a workable vision by adding a measurement metric such as, “To increase annual sales and repeat purchases by 50% next year.” If you do use sales metrics, make sure they are “Wow” numbers; that is, record-setting, milestone metrics that will be remembered in years to come.

Laying out a grand vision and a plan to get there creates a kind of magic. It’s a self-fulfilling prophecy. Say out loud you’re going to do something grand and watch things happen. Setting a realistic vision will energize and motivate your sales force, especially when they’re part of the goal-setting process. In fact, most salespeople expect high goals. Of course, salespeople are always careful to grumble about challenging goals but it’s amazing how frequently we all discover new things about our abilities when we’re challenged to go beyond the usual.

As a manager, be prepared for varied responses to ambitious visions. During the vision-setting process, invariably, there will be complainers, detractors and resisters who would rather coast than accelerate. No matter how irritating they may be, listen to them – you may uncover legitimate institutional or procedural obstacles that require changes to current practices. But most important is the fact that you are listening, you are a partner in setting and achieving the goal.

Next, carefully develop a game plan for how you and your team are going to rise to the challenge. A little empathy followed by a solid game plan will go a long way in reaching your vision.

Ultra-competitive Sales Management, Servant Leaders Are Fighters

As a sales manager, one of my most enlightening moments was when a friend told me to quit obsessing about meeting objectives. He said, "You

can't compete focused on the scoreboard. Focus on what makes you a great competitor: preparation and practice. If you master those things, the numbers will come automatically."

This is a lesson Servant Leaders in sales across the nation are using and teaching with extraordinary results. As the old saying goes, "It's not the will to succeed that's as important as the will to **prepare** to succeed." This takes competition to a new level. It means a shift of attention from merely winning to a focus on preparation that leads to the intrinsic joy of selling. Instead of paralysis by analysis, pressure to perform and a myopic focus on numbers, Servant Leaders are helping their sales reps become the best they can be. Successful results follow naturally. Perhaps the best college basketball coach of all time, UCLA's John Wooden, said, "If there's anything you can point out where I was a little different, it was the fact that I never mentioned winning." Wooden emphasized being better than yourself each day; you can't control outcomes but you can control your effort, your preparation.

Wooden's winning strategy is echoed by Bill Walsh who built a football dynasty coaching the San Francisco 49ers. He emphasized proficiency with mastering the fundamentals, not winning. In his book, "The Score Takes Care of Itself" Walsh says:

- "I had faith that the score would take care of itself."
- "I directed our focus less to the prize of victory than to the process of improving."
- "Winning would take care of itself, and when it didn't, I would seek ways to raise our Standard of Performance (by focusing on the basics that create peak performance)."
- "We are united and fight as one; we win or lose as one."
- "The **culture precedes results**. It doesn't get tacked on as an afterthought on your way to the victory stand. Champions behave

like champions before they're champions; they have a winning standard of performance before they are winners.”

- “By focusing strictly on my Standard of Performance, the 49ers were able to play the bigger games very well because it was basically business as usual—no “try harder” mentality was used.”
- “I accepted the fact that I couldn’t control that 20 percent of each game. However, the rest of it—80 percent—could be under my control with comprehensive planning and preparation (well before game day).”

Here's how it works in sales.

1. Prepare - There are two components of preparation: **Learning** and **Practice**.

As a leader, create a **learning** environment, not only through training but learning from each other formally and informally. Encourage your reps to share their secrets of success. Emphasize learning at sales meetings. Have your reps discuss successful strategies at sales meetings, round table discussions, etc. Put them in charge of training sessions. Teaching is a great learning experience. Make sure that you are the example for learning, be teachable, ask questions, learn from your reps, go to training yourself. Expect and inspect preparation. Do spot checks on your reps' preparation before sales calls.

Practice develops muscle memory, allowing salespeople to efficiently coordinate their words, body language and use of sales aids. Take time for, and encourage, formal and informal role-playing sessions. Urge your reps to rehearse new things in sales calls. Provide a safety net for your reps to practice innovations even if they fail. Invite your reps to practice new sales pitches with you or in front of other peers. Help your reps get in the zone, a place where their muscle memory works automatically, effortlessly. A place where their presentation flows smoothly, where the right questions and the

correct answers occur without struggle. A place where the rep and customer are aligned and moving to the same goal of mutual winning.

Ask an Olympic athlete what their favorite part of their sport is. Is it the trophies, the notoriety, the status? Many, not all, will say it's practice – those times when they go to the track early in the morning, stopwatch in hand, and run, and see their daily improvement. That's exactly what puts them in "The Zone", that place when you perform effortlessly on game day, running with relaxed intensity. The sales process is similar. Practice develops muscle memory which ignites the joy of selling.

2. Beat your personal best, and beat them at their best. Encourage continuous self-improvement. Help your sales reps understand their strengths and weaknesses, and how they can get better (even the best can get better!). Create constructive team competition, in which your salespeople help each other become their best. As Coach Wooden said, "Never try to be better than someone else. Learn from others, and be the best **you** can be." Sure, your reps will compete openly and ferociously with each other for sales awards; however, there's no glory in beating a weak opponent. Compare yourself first to yourself – are you becoming your best? Forget the scoreboard, it's a performance measure, not a goal. The real goal is optimal personal performance.

Replace the pressure to perform with the confidence your reps get from being prepared. That's what makes them competitive. If they win, celebrate. If they lose, celebrate – they just learned some new lessons (and losing is a much better teacher than winning). Help them fully engage their passion for selling and compete with tenacity. Remember, the best way to score is to take your eye off the scoreboard and focus on performance.

Competing through the joy of selling

As a sales leader, you have a stable of thoroughbreds. Don't leave them locked in the stable. Prepare them to run free and powerful. Your people love to sell. Your job is to ignite that excitement to sell with the discipline

and competitive spirit needed to succeed. In sports jargon, you're their coach to help them perform in "The Zone." It's described by the American Psychological Association as "Optimal Arousal: the range of physiological arousal within which an individual can perform at the peak of physical, mental and skillful ability."

Here's how not to do it, and how to sabotage your rep's performance.

Before an important customer presentation, the sales boss comes to the rep and says, "This is D-day! We're only \$5,000 behind objective, and just have a week to make it. Remember the six-step sales process. And don't mess it up. Come back with the big sale." On the surface it sounds like simple, encouraging words. However, subconsciously you're creating a distraction, a counter-productive pressure on the rep. Here are the "Don'ts" exemplified by this example:

1. Don't exaggerate the importance of one sale, putting inordinate pressure on the rep. In reality, there will be other opportunities, everything is not riding on one rep, or one sale.
2. Don't focus on external circumstances such as objectives, money, or bonuses. Externals distract the rep from focusing on performance.
3. Don't concentrate on sales techniques; that's another distractor that takes the rep out of "The Zone" of intuitive performance.
4. Don't create a fear of failure by emphasizing what's at stake. This creates "what if" thinking; what if I fail, what if I don't perform? It shifts the paradigm from visualizing success to fearing failure.
5. Don't create unrealistic expectations, expecting that one rep is going to save the year. That's toxic pressure that will derail the best rep.
6. Don't create a sense of perfectionism, or "all or nothing" thinking. Emphasizing the "big sale" leaves no room for imperfection. We all know there's no such thing as a flawless sales presentation every time your reps perform. Sometimes we're overtaken by things we can't control.

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7. Don't push the rep. That's likely to result in the rep pushing the customer instead of pulling the customer to the sale.
8. Don't let the rep think that failure of a goal equates to failure as a person. Failure, many times, is situational and temporary. It's a learning process that's a natural outcome of striving for success.
9. Don't allow "first or nothing" thinking -- that all the training and preparation is pointless if they can't be Number One. The key thing to emphasize is to be the best you can be. Some days you're first, some days you're last. Use the bad days as a springboard, a bounce-back to achievement.

On the other hand, here are the things that will enhance the rep's performance, the "Do's":

1. Help your rep relax. Create a sense of relaxed intensity. In professional football games, just before a kicker lines up to make a game-winning field goal, you'll see the coach talking to him on the sidelines. Surprisingly, you may see them smiling. What's the coach saying? Not much, probably joking around, anything to take the pressure off, certainly not saying things like, "You've gotta make this, the season depends on it."
2. Encourage your salespeople to stay in the moment, fully engaged with the customer, forgetting things like objectives, management expectations, sales bonuses and other external factors. Help them give 100% of their focus on performing, not on sales techniques. Customer presentations are not the time to be thinking about the six-step process but rather to be reading the customer, asking good questions, and aligning with customer needs.

3. Facilitate visualizing success rather than fearing failure. Psychologists call it “guided imagery” where the rep sees the presentation unfold with successful outcomes.
4. Don’t over-emphasize your role in your rep’s performance. Your role is this: To insist on good preparation and practice. Then let the rep get in the intuitive flow of success. On presentation day, all the preparation should have been done. It’s really too late now for coaching. Actually, you shouldn’t have much to say, and don’t force a conversation unless the rep needs you to help. Stay relaxed and confident.
5. Encourage a sense of “free play” with your reps. Many professional athletes came from a background that had little adult coaching and supervision, but lots of “free play” where they just played their sport joyfully in the neighborhood and learned skills by experimenting in no-pressure, uncoached situations. Let your reps experiment with new techniques, approaches to customers and product applications. Let them play their game with joy and creativity.
6. Urge your salespeople to identify negative thoughts they may have before presentations such as “I’m going to fail,” or “I’m not good enough.” Then they should learn to challenge those thoughts by asking themselves “Is this thought realistic?” or “What evidence do I have for this thought?”

Here's a prayer that captures the winning spirit of Coach Wooden and successful Servant Leaders:

The Competitor's Prayer

Our heavenly Father, thank you for the gifts you've given me:

For the discipline to have prepared for this moment

For strength, endurance, skill, willpower, resilience, and persistence.

Help me bring these gifts full force into this event

To push through pain and fatigue further than I ever thought possible

So opponents will see your glory and power working through me

So I can bring everything I have, all my energy and strength to this moment

Win, lose, or draw, your light will shine today

Bringing humility when I win, grace when I stumble

All the time delighting in the struggle, exulting in the fight.

Servant Leaders Create Flow

As mentioned earlier, we all have peak performance moments known in athletic circles as playing “in the zone.” These are times when a person performs at their best in an effortless, relaxed manner. Athletes do it as well as salespeople, performing artists, attorneys, doctors and other professionals. These moments of brilliance may seem spontaneous and unplanned; however, there is nothing accidental about them. In fact, you may have spent weeks, months, or even years preparing for these moments.

These peak performances are called “Flow,” a term used by Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, author of *Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience*. The components of Flow match closely with TQM principles utilized by servant leaders who facilitate high-performing sales teams. The nine main components of Flow include:

1. Challenge-skills balance. This is a state where you feel confident that you are well-prepared for the challenge that you are facing. Servant leaders prepare their people through training, coaching, positive self-talk as well as technical and sales support. In addition to developing a sense of self-sufficient expertise, servant leaders let their people know that help is available from the sidelines if needed.

2. Action-awareness merging. In this state, salespeople are completely immersed in the transaction. A person is truly absorbed in things they enjoy and for which they have prepared. Servant leaders create a sense that this is “show time” or “game time.” It’s the moment that you have worked toward, so enjoy it and give it everything you have. When action and awareness become one, the action component becomes automatic. The actions of the salesperson’s presentation are effortless and natural. He or she, for example, intuitively overcomes objections and uses the correct visuals without even thinking about it.

3. Clear goals. Salespeople who have clear goals and objectives know what is expected of them. A servant leader helps establish concrete, achievable objectives so reps know exactly what is required in each customer presentation. In addition, the rep goes in fully aware that he or she is accountable for the results.

4. Unambiguous feedback. A continuous stream of feedback in the form of coaching, performance measurements, and team dialogue helps the rep refine efforts to meet objectives. The servant leader creates atmosphere where daily (even hourly) feedback is presented through updated sales metrics as well as ride-alongs from the sales manager. Some even arrange

rep ride-alongs with other sales reps to provide another source of feedback and encouragement. The servant leader also encourages constructive feedback from peers, one salesperson to another.

5. Concentration. This is hyper-focused concentration on what you're doing. Servant leaders enable this by minimizing distractions such as excessive paperwork, unnecessary rules/procedures, job threats and any factors that shift the rep's focus away from selling. For example, you do not want a rep getting in the middle of a good presentation and start thinking such things as "Did I forget step three of the five-step process?" or "If I don't get a cross-sale today, my boss is going to kill me." It's similar to a basketball player saying to himself, "If I miss this shot, the coach is going to bench me." The result of these distractions is a type of performance anxiety that leads to failure.

6. Sense of control. This occurs when a salesperson realizes that, for example, they **own** this sales presentation. At this moment, only they can influence the outcome of the sale. The servant leader creates a sense of self-sufficiency and independent decision-making by reps, giving them a sense of control.

7. Loss of self-consciousness. Losing this sense of self occurs when salespeople are self-confident, so self-assured that they're not second-guessing themselves or overthinking what they're doing. Their focus is on the presentation and the customer, not on themselves. The servant leader facilitates this process by building reps' self-confidence through training, role-playing, feedback and encouraging positive self-talk.

8. Transformation of time. When you're in "the zone" you lose track of time because of your total focus on the issue at hand. An hour may seem like 10 minutes when the sales dialogue is flowing. (Hopefully, the customer feels the same way but the rep has to be sure during this moment that they don't overstay their welcome.)

9. Autotelic experience. This element of Flow means that you are internally driven to succeed even without external rewards. You're doing something because you love to do it. Servant leaders encourage this process by providing an amiable work environment, free of threat and intimidation, in which reps can ply their chosen trade. In this sense, the servant leader becomes a cheerleader, generating enthusiasm and promoting a love for selling. Of course, it helps to hire people in the first place who love to sell.

Experiencing Flow doesn't require all nine processes to occur at the same time. Also, not everyone experiences Flow. In fact, Csikszentmihalyi says a study showed that 12% of respondents never experienced it, while 63% said "often" or "sometimes" with the remaining 25% saying "rarely." Nonetheless, servant leadership practices have a natural tendency to automatically create an environment promoting Flow in the sales force.

Servant Leaders Celebrate Failure! Success By Failing Forward

Think about it, as a sales manager where does your greatest strengths come from? Chances are, from failures, not successes. Winning feels good, and we want to do it again, but losing teaches us lifetime lessons that increase our chance of sustained success. Perhaps we should celebrate failure. Whaaat? Yes, don't take it so seriously. Laugh at failure with your people. Set the example. Don't hesitate to say, "Man, I really messed that up. But I'll do better next time." Remember, that "no-sale" just got you one step closer to the sale.

Part of your job as a sales manager is to know the science of failure and teach it to your people. Develop a constructive failure mindset; that failure makes us stronger, more astute, skillful and productive. Constructive failure means teaching, coaching, encouraging and reassuring the sales rep through the failure. The opposite is destructive failure – where the sales leader allows failure to weaken the salesperson, to create self-doubt and anxiety.

Destructive failure has two forms: First, it can be an active, aggressive reaction from the sales leader – punishing the rep for failure to make objective. Second, it can be a passive, evaluative reaction to failure that lets the rep sink or swim without making it a teachable moment.

Here are ways to make constructive failure work for you:

1. The fear of failure can be our greatest enemy. I've known many salespeople who hate to lose more than loving to win. The problem with that thinking is that when you're trying not to lose, you see the obstacles rather than the goal. You try too hard instead of letting your natural talents flow. Take it from world-class athletes and sports psychologists: practice, rehearse, prepare. Then, relax in the moment and let your preparation work. Get in the zone where the right words and thoughts come effortlessly. Let a sense of relaxed intensity replace the trying-too-hard syndrome which is fueled by fear of failure. Nurture, cultivate and develop **fearless** salespeople; those are your best sellers.
2. Provide a safety net for your sales team. Encourage them to get out of their comfort zone – that's where we grow. Make sure you or your people never rub it in but rub it out, and provide reassurance and encouragement when someone stumbles. Help them fail forward, learn from mistakes, use failure to progress, not regress.
3. Write a success script rather than a failure monologue. "Explanatory style," originally named by psychologist Martin Seligman, is how we explain why events happen. He conducted a groundbreaking study of insurance salespeople and found that top sellers were those with an optimistic style; they were likely to explain a no-sale, for example, in terms of external factors rather than taking a more internally focused explanation such as "I failed" as pessimists might do. The optimist might explain a failure to sell with such reasons as "The timing was wrong for the customer." or "Our pricing was not competitive." In other words, optimists are more focused on reasons that can be controlled in the next sales call, as opposed to accepting a failure

mentality. Pessimists are inclined to equate setbacks with their personal inadequacy. Optimists see failure as temporary, for example telling themselves that they didn't prepare well enough for the sales call, whereas the pessimist might say, "I'll never succeed at this." and "Nothing works out for me." In effect, failure is an event, not an identity. It's a scene, not the story.

Seligman identifies three elements of pessimism: Personal, Permanent, Pervasive.

- **Personal.** Pessimists blame themselves, saying, "It's my fault." They internalize failure rather than looking at it as circumstantial. They see failure as a character flaw rather than a set of circumstances such as the economy or timing or competition. Optimists are more likely to say, "It was just a bad day." Rather than say, "I'm just not good enough."
 - **Permanent.** Pessimists assume that if things go bad, they'll always go bad while optimists know that there will inevitably be good times and bad times, that failure is temporary, and that success is just around the corner. Surprisingly optimists are more realistic in their assessment of the world than pessimists.
 - **Pervasive.** Pessimists think that if they fail at something, all is lost; and if they succeed their whole life will be good. Optimists tend to compartmentalize, to see, for example, if they got a promotion their work life would be improved but that may or may not affect their whole life – they see things affecting them in specific ways rather than pervasive ways.
4. **Expect** the possibility of failure, it's inevitable. **Respect** it, don't fear it, embrace it. **Inspect** it, analyze what went wrong, learn from it.

There is no progress without discomfort; no pain, no gain. Expose your reps to the possibility of failure through stretch objectives and high

4 Steps to Supercharged Sales Teams

expectations. If they achieve your elevated goals, great! They've just become stronger, better, more confident. Maybe you just forced some of your best reps to get better. If they fail, help them learn to rebound by catching them in a safety net of forgiveness, nurturing, honesty and accountability. In other words, the attitude is, "You failed. It's no big deal. We all fail. Let's figure out why and turn that failure into success."

A good analogy is a weightlifter who lifts to the point of failure. That's the point where they make progress. In fact, some will ask a training partner to, "Help me fail." It's only by giving it all you have, through maximal exertion that the weightlifter makes progress. Also, remember, progress is incremental – step by step, a little more weight at a time. Some call it Exposure Therapy. For example, to overcome a fear of flying, a person first goes to the airport, then to the ticket counter, then to the walkway to the plane, then step by step to sitting in the plane. Like the weightlifter, they both are being exposed to the possibility of failure, of fear. With this in mind, the sales manager presents, for example, stretch goals to help each rep reach optimal performance through gradual, maximal exertion, then helping the rep grow through coaching.

Teach your sales team that it will be difficult. The path to success comes one agonizing step at a time, one success followed by failure, then another failure. Teach them to do it the hard way, to prepare, to practice, to expect hardship, to laugh in the face of adversity. Take it from basketball great, Michael Jordan: "I've missed more than 9000 shots in my career. I've lost almost 300 games. 26 times, I've been trusted to take the game-winning shot and missed. I've failed over and over and over again in my life. And that is why I succeed."

As a leader, encourage your people to take the shot. If they miss then recognize it, learn from it, fail fast, forget it and move to the next shot undeterred by the past.

You, the sales manager, have to be a catalyst of hardship. You have to insist on good preparation before each call. You have to require your team to be fully trained. You have to demand that they be the best they can be. You have to set difficult goals and expectations. Don't make it easy. Doing the hard things makes the harder things easier, and prepares them to do even harder things. That's what you call continuous improvement, sustained success. Equally important, you're their safe harbor, their safety net. You're the one who's with them in the middle of the fight, the one they can count on to support and encourage.

Success will come slow, steady, subtly sometimes suddenly. Most of the time success happens so slowly that you don't have that moment of epiphany that instant celebration. For example, you're trying to get your sales team to work together. You teach teamwork, you set the example, and you show them the value of working together. Little by little you see brief moments of them collaborating on the sales floor. You hear a buzz on the sales floor but you're too busy to recognize it. Then one day, you slow down and recognize it, seeing something that's been going on for days but you didn't take the time to see it. Six, seven reps are working with each other. Helping, cooperating... The buzz is their enthusiasm, their voices coalescing in teamwork. Sometimes it comes so slowly, almost imperceptibly until it finally dawns. The same for reaching objectives. It's December, you're five percent off the goal. Little by little, small sale by small sale you reach the goal, not one big sale, little by little.

Learning the science of failure will create resilient salespeople who bounce back quickly from defeat, who have the ability to comeback no matter what the odds are against them. What enables resilience is that their sales manager sees failure as a way to inspire rather than a way to punish. That results in sales reps who are refreshed rather than defeated, energized rather than beaten down. Failing forward creates persistence, never giving up, staying hopeful, and being able to envision success rather than fear failure.

Servant Leaders Know Success Is The Will To Prepare To Win

It's not the will to succeed that creates top salespeople. It's the will to **prepare** to succeed. I've known highly competitive salespeople who love to succeed but they fail because they don't have the discipline to prepare, they don't study, they don't practice or rehearse. They show up super-confident, competitive, with years of experience then fail when the going gets tough. Many times, they resort to what made them successful in the past, doubling down on charisma and dogged insistence rather than innovative problem-solving to meet customer needs.

Here are a few thoughts for sales managers on developing the mental toughness for sales teams to **prepare** to succeed:

1. Create a culture of continuous learning. It includes traditional sales training but goes beyond to learning from each other, sharing knowledge at sales meetings, and helping each other develop new skill sets. It all starts at the top with you, the sales manager. You are the role model for learning and sharing.
2. A learning culture is the basis for continuous improvement. Even the best can get better. The best is not good enough. If you surpass the objective, add another 10% next year. Keep moving forward with stretch objectives. That's what **prepares** your people with an aggressive mindset to become the best they can be.
3. Don't just suggest your people prepare. **Insist** on good preparation. You know the drill: know your customer, their needs, personality, and goals; know your product line, product applications, and discounts; practice, rehearse, role play for effective presentations.

Do prep checks. Your attention to preparation sets the tone for your team. Send a strong message that no one goes out without being prepared. Zero tolerance for half-baked sales pitches.

Servant Leaders Strive For Limitless Selling

The human brain is capable of amazing feats, far surpassing anything that could be accomplished by the world's most advanced supercomputer. Even more astounding, it's regenerating itself every second of every day, and it's building new neural connections as you read this. You have at your disposal, a personal supercomputer capable of miracles. Here are a few amazing brain facts:

- The brain has about 100 billion neurons, and created between 750 and 1,500 new neurons daily, each neuron delivering 1,000 nerve impulses per second.
- Using your brain actually creates physical changes in its circuitry: London cab drivers have a significantly larger Hippocampus (the brain's memory center) because of the mental workout of navigating London's 25,000 streets.
- Paradoxically, relying on GPS for navigation shrinks the neural connections, known as synaptic pruning.
- IQ had been thought to be constant and unchanging but studies have shown it's possible to increase IQ by as much as 30 points with proper care and feeding of the brain.
- Contrary to popular thought, we're not born with a good memory but develop our memory by using it throughout our lives.
- The human brain is vastly superior to any supercomputer in storage capacity and processing speed.

You have the ability for unlimited growth at your disposal. The key is to use this powerful processor to reach your goals and dreams. The sales leader's job is to recognize the brain's potential and help salespeople use this abundant processing power to achieve career goals and life dreams. The sales leader pushes people to be all they can be, to find and activate untapped potential, not some potential but all the potential in them. The sales leader makes salespeople reach, be more than they thought they could be.

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Here are specific ways the sales manager can help activate the brain's potential for their salespeople:

1. Present challenging, record-breaking goals. No one gets better from being asked to be mediocre. Your salespeople only get better being faced with challenging goals that are difficult to achieve – that's what activates their brain power.
2. Help reps believe in themselves, that they are capable of achieving extraordinary goals. The world thought it was impossible to run the mile faster than four minutes until Roger Bannister actually did it.
3. Assist reps in identifying not just short-term objectives but life dreams (such as being president of the company or making \$200,000 per year.)
4. Develop, in concert with the rep, a workable plan to accomplish the goals. Provide technical support, encouragement, tracking and training to turn the thought into an aspiration into a reality.
5. Keep them on solid footing, aware that there's a price to pay for achievement. It takes long hours, hard work, self-discipline and learning new work habits.
6. Encourage reps to problem solve on their own, without your help. Force them to create new neural pathways of learning that provides improved skill sets.
7. Emphasize a learning environment and continuous improvement. That means effective training, always progressing forward, with the attitude that even the best can get better. Remember, the brain has unlimited ability to learn and expand, your part is to encourage your people to reach, strive, and push their limits – that's what activates the brain.

As basketball, all-time great, Michael Jordan said, "Limits, like fear, are just an illusion."

Turn “Know your limits” attitudes to “Know No Limits” selling. Obviously, extreme goal setting is not for everyone, some simply won’t want to work that hard, but the active participants can make it worthwhile for themselves and you, the sales manager.

The C words of servant leadership

Richard Swartz, psychologist, has identified critical leadership themes or characteristics that start with the letter "C". These "C words" highlight important aspects or values in leadership, business, and personal development. Below are some commonly discussed "C words" and their relevance:

1. Communication

Effective communication is the cornerstone of any successful relationship, whether in business or personal life. It involves not just speaking clearly but also listening actively and ensuring that the message is understood as intended. Good communication helps in building trust, resolving conflicts, and fostering a collaborative environment.

2. Commitment

Commitment refers to a dedication to a cause, project, or relationship. It is the willingness to stick with something despite challenges and setbacks. In a leadership context, commitment inspires confidence and loyalty among team members, as they see their leader's dedication to the mission and values of the organization.

3. Collaboration

Collaboration is about working together towards a common goal. It involves leveraging the strengths and perspectives of different individuals to achieve better results than could be accomplished individually. Effective

collaboration fosters innovation, improves problem-solving, and enhances productivity.

4. Creativity

Creativity is the ability to think outside the box and come up with innovative solutions to problems. It is essential in today's rapidly changing world, where adaptability and the capacity to generate new ideas can set apart successful organizations and leaders.

5. Critical Thinking

Critical thinking involves analyzing information objectively and making reasoned judgments. It is crucial for effective decision-making and problem-solving, enabling leaders to evaluate situations, anticipate consequences, and make informed choices.

6. Courage

Courage is the ability to face fears, challenges, and uncertainties with confidence. It is essential for taking risks, standing up for one's beliefs, and making difficult decisions. Courageous leaders inspire others to step out of their comfort zones and embrace change.

7. Consistency

Consistency involves maintaining a steady and reliable approach over time. It is important for building trust and credibility, as people know what to expect and can rely on consistent behavior and standards.

8. Compassion

Compassion is the ability to empathize with others and show genuine concern for their well-being. Compassionate leaders build strong relationships and foster a supportive and inclusive environment, where people feel valued and respected.

9. Competence

Competence refers to having the necessary skills, knowledge, and abilities to perform effectively. Competent leaders gain respect and trust by demonstrating their expertise and capability to handle responsibilities.

10. Confidence

Confidence is the belief in one's abilities and decisions. Confident leaders inspire trust and motivate their teams, as their self-assurance reassures others and encourages them to follow their lead.

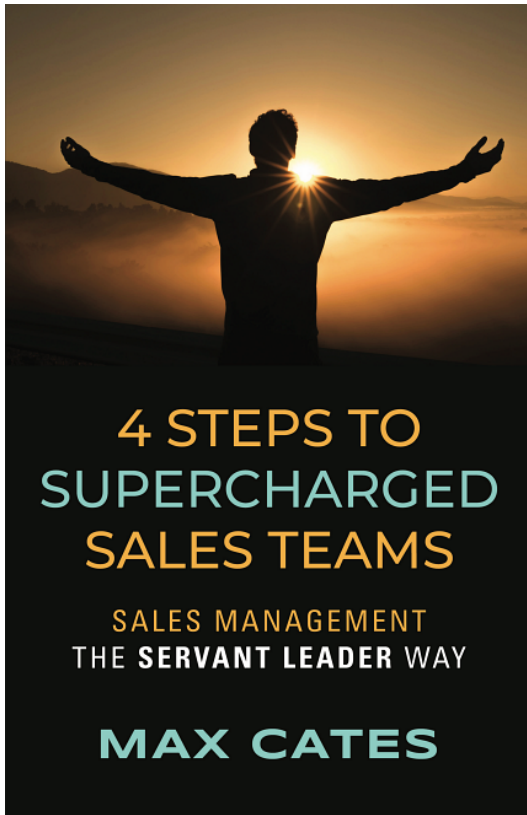
The Man in the Arena

The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena. Whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood.

A man who knows the great enthusiasms and great devotions. Who spends himself in a worthwhile cause.

Who, in the end, knows the triumphs of high achievement. And, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who know neither victory nor defeat.

- Theodore Roosevelt



4 Steps to Supercharged Sales Teams is a how-to book for successful sales management, showing how servant leaders across the nation have transformed sales teams from mediocre to exemplary. It's all about igniting the joy of selling.

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By Max Cates

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