

Re-energising Sales and Relationships

“The time has come to review the mentality of selling to reflect dramatic changes in the market place. Mature customers are increasingly skilled in the art of buying and the more agile amongst them are seeking to by-pass the traditional selling process to gain competitor advantage. There is a mis-match between how sales people have been trained to sell and how customers want to buy – with the traditional sales process serving only to slow things down, or cause the loss of the sale to the other guy.

Sales Managers must focus themselves and their people on re-energising relationships and on re-thinking how they do business.”

Wayne Phillips, Defence Industry Solutions Lead, Microsoft Corporation

The Power of Relationships

Let's be clear: buyers want to do business with people who are able to truly connect with them and who understand their problems. They need relationships that add value. Whether your sales team are engaged in selling products and services or in selling solutions, part of their success is undoubtedly in the quality of their relationships – on the one hand, relationships between the sales team and the buyer and on the other, relationships between the Sales Manager and the individuals in their sales force – where the most important roles a Sales Manager can undertake are those of **Coach, Mentor** and **Trainer**.

Start with the Sales Talent Pool – the ‘Journeyman’ and the ‘Eagles’.

The **Journeyman** make up around 80% of the talent pool and tune-in to the **science of selling**. They make presentations, make statements and believe that process is the key to success. They work their pipeline and as good sales citizens, are always able to handle a pipeline review. They can see where the blocks in the sales funnel are and can revert to the process to understand how (and when) they should respond – making them easy to manage, monitor and check up upon. They are stolid and reasonably predictable – if only all customers were the same!

The **Eagles** – make up the other 20% of the talent pool. They are practitioners of the **art** (some would say the **dark art**) of selling. They are intuitive, have meaningful conversations and, although they would often benefit from structure, instinctively kick against the restricting nature of having to use a sales process. They are ‘unconsciously competent’ and are not always able to dissect the nuances of why they have been successful (and, as their approach is situational, they realise that what they did may not be repeatable anyway). They are harder to micro-manage, may miss out some of the bases of the sales process and they make forecasting a nightmare – but the successful ones bring in more than their share of business!

Interestingly, when the Eagles soar and bring in the big deals, they are often promoted to Sales Manager and as a result, the business faces two massive challenges. Firstly, because a real top performer is removed from the frontline, the flow-through of sales takes a hit and secondly, the freshly promoted leader has to take on a new role – helping their reports to replicate the great things that they themselves achieved and champion a process which, in truth, they may have been successful in spite of!!

In a stretching market place and in order to hit their numbers, the Eagle Sales Manager may be tempted to go out and capture business themselves and although this may create a short term win, it will be at the expense of developing the breadth and depth of their team's skills and ability to address challenges in the future.

The smart response is for them to focus on **Coaching, Mentoring** and **Training** and on encouraging their people to move out of their comfort zone into an area of learning and understanding, more in tune with today's market.

These are all areas where **Step System** is ideally placed to add value to your business.



Re-energising Sales and Relationships

SYSTEMS FOR SUCCESS – HELPING INDIVIDUALS AND ORGANISATIONS ACHIEVE THEIR OWN DEFINITION OF SUCCESS

Imagine a Tennis Coach, who has performed at the highest level, winning tournaments and gaining great recognition for their flair, the power of their serve and volley game and their ability to win. Following the logical course of things, they

eventually leave the hurly burly of competition and become a Tennis Coach. At club level, they work with players who have found their own way of being successful and there would be little point in our Tennis Coach taking the 35 year old 5'4" ladies

tennis captain and trying to turn her into a serve and volley superstar. In other words, there is no point in the Coach trying to grow her into a version of himself. Instead, he needs to use his knowledge, skill and expertise to make her a better version of herself.....

The Step System Approach to Coaching to Peak Performance

Coaches encourage and, where appropriate, educate and equip people to build on their strengths, tackling areas for improvement or blockage and achieving on-going success. Coaching interventions are likely to be short and quickly followed up upon.

The Coach may be a line manager, or just as likely, a functional expert offering specific support.



Just as 'coaching you to be me' is pointless, so too is the unquestioning reliance on non-directive coaching taught by those Coaches, who have little or no real business experience and who are tempted to stick too rigidly to the mantra of non-directive coaching – always asking questions – never giving answers.

Journeymen and Eagles alike need direction (albeit with a subtly different flavouring from each other); they need help with strategy and tactics and, if they are human, would probably benefit from some focused encouragement too!

All good coaching is performer centric and the coaching approach must be adjusted to suit the requirements of each person being coached on any given day and focused to specific parts of their job. As a result, a truly effective Business Coach will need to draw on retrospective, forward looking and assertive coaching models, such as those provided by **Step System** – enabling them to coach their own team, across the wider business **and** if appropriate, even their customer base.

While the pendulum swing that has so favoured non-directive coaching has helped to suppress the expert, opinionated manager, Theory X Manager is a good thing – many people require something more from their business leaders. Perhaps this is where Mentoring and training have a part to play?

The Step System Approach to Mentoring to Peak Performance

The Mentor's role is an empowering one, aimed at providing practical and objective guidance concerning issues and blockages identified by the Mentee. As someone with knowledge and practical experience to draw upon, the Mentor is likely to be mentoring somebody with less experience in the area under discussion and not necessarily an immediate line report.

The origin of the term Mentor can be traced back to Homer's **The Odyssey**. Odysseus, leaving for war, chose Mentor to protect and advise his son, Telemachus – a clear 'red thread' to our more modern view of a Mentor as being 'experienced and trusted advisers', who have credibility and are willing to pass on their wisdom to another person.

Re-energising Sales and Relationships

A true Mentor is someone who can share their own experiences, provide insights and views and who can also take on the role of counsellor and critical friend – offering realism, support and encouragement. Often one step removed from the frontline, they give people an overview based on their experience of having ‘been there and done it’. They are committed to passing on knowledge that helps the person they are mentoring to take more control of their life and work, offering clarity that will enable the Mentee to work towards achieving their own goals. Mentoring can take place across **and** outside the business.

There is potential for there to be some overlap between Mentor and Coach. In general, coaching is likely to be more frequent, more immediate and with shorter time horizons and will probably be carried out by a line manager, who will focus on performance. Mentoring is in some ways more academic in approach, with longer time horizons and depends on conversation and strategic thinking, allowing for the injection of a ‘worldly wisdom’, from Mentor to protégée. The Mentor’s role may also be to point their Mentee to other resources – a Coach, a functional expert or a training intervention, for help.

The Step System Approach to Training to Peak Performance

Using competencies and training needs analysis will help to understand individuals’ training requirements. However, a good mentor may be able to anticipate and highlight them, while an effective coach will draw them out from their performer, through conversation.

Both of these methods are much more likely to get seasoned performers to buy-in to the need for training, than if it is simply offered ‘off the shelf’ by the HR or training department.

The skill of the Sales Manager is to understand the nuances of their particular market and the needs of their people. Through mentoring, they can provide a ‘heads up’ of potential challenges and areas of opportunity. As a Coach, the Sales Manager might get involved in more day-to-day tactical issues – how something might have been done differently, how to leverage a particular client or opportunity and all the while, will have half an eye to ensuring that their performers receive the most up-to-date and current training in the skills that they will require to be able to perform with confidence.

For these reasons, at **Step System**, we work with teams and individuals who understand the value of developing their mentoring and coaching skills, as well as helping them to access some of our traditional interventions. From foundation workshops – things like Presentation Skills and Time Management, through bid development, Advanced Presentation and large forum speaking, to Communicating, Influencing and Negotiation workshops, we provide solutions that are relevant to those organisations where people need to be able to respond to an increasingly demanding business environment.

At the same time, our Mentoring and Coaching programmes enable business leaders to have the sorts of conversations that will guarantee that everyone that they work with will think more widely and with greater flexibility than ever before. This means that the leaders will come to be seen as exactly that – leaders – who are a guiding light within the business and whose activity makes a tangible difference to the performance of individuals **and** to the bottom line.

STOP PRESS

Look out for the next Step System Hint & Tip – which will continue the theme of re-energising relationships and will focus on Principled Negotiations.

Previous Hints & Tips can be found on our website at www.stepsystem.co.uk or by contacting us direct.

Step System are expert in the fields of Personal, Team and Organisational Effectiveness.

With an international team of associates, generic and bespoke interventions, books, articles and on-line resources to draw upon, we can help **you** to achieve your own definition of success.

For further information, contact Mark Barnes at:

Step System International Limited / Gable End / Upper Brailles / Near Banbury / Oxon / OX15 5AX
Telephone: 0044 (0) 1608 685105 / Email: mark@stepsystem.co.uk