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By Carl Davidson

focus on [Success]

Six steps to make
your sales staff
successful



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Many dealers today have a tough time adding sales staff and making them successful. They tell me “you just can’t find good sales staff anymore.” My experience with the clients I assist in recruiting great sales staff has been that we can find good recruits but they seem to lose their way once they are trained and the owner or manager cuts them loose to make it on their own. This article discusses a few steps I believe you need to take to increase your odds of success with new sales staff.

Focus on Demos

In the beginning of their career with you, focus sales staff on doing demonstrations every day. Don’t worry so much about sales because sales will happen if they do enough demonstrations.

Oddly enough, many owners never check their team’s demonstration to see how good (or bad) it is. After training, I suggest that you have your new recruits do a demo for you so you can see what your customer will see. If it isn’t good enough, keep training. You are not going to have success if you send your new recruit out with a bad demonstration to face rejection and failure.

Another way to increase success is to tell your recruits from the first day you meet them that they will be expected to do five “practice demos” after training but before they officially start on your customers.

Practice demos are demos they do to their friends or relatives. My experience has shown me that if they sell to one of their practice customers, they will be great salespeople. If they complete their practice demos and paperwork, but sell nothing, they will be average. If they cannot or will not do the practice demos in a day or two, they will not make it and you might as well terminate. I usually end the training on Friday and expect them to do all five demos over the weekend.

Minimum Maintenance

To succeed, you have to accept that salespeople are high-maintenance employees. I recommend that you do not hire sales staff unless you have 30 minutes each day to spend going over how many demos they did, how they are prospecting, hours they worked and closing results. Without this coaching, discipline and support,

they will fail. Some begin successful but fail later.

Training to Avoid (For Now)

Sales are made by emotional decisions. Your initial training should wow the salesperson on how great conditioned water feels and how great reverse osmosis water tastes. If they cannot wait to get equipment for their home and family, your training was a success. If they don’t beg for equipment, it was not.

I suggest you avoid technical training for new sales staff. Once they learn how valves work and the shape of resin, they cannot wait to tell the customer. They tend to do boring technical presentations with low closing rates. Technical training is a necessity, but make sure they can sell first.

Turning Failure into Success

Many owners and managers do not understand that if a salesperson you hired fails, most of it is your fault. There are only two things that your recruit needs to succeed and you can help with both.

If your recruit cannot close a deal, you need to go out and close one for them. This may take up an evening but it will turn failure into success, earn money for the salesperson and the company and will let them see how to do it in real life rather than in a classroom. If you do not have the skills to take a salesperson out and close a demo for them, you will not succeed with recruits.

It will take you three days to learn a demo. Learning to demo is critical to having a good sales team, even if you continue to sell yourself without using it. Their ability to close rests on you. Once you show them a couple of times, you will know what they need to do differently and if they will be able to adapt for success.

The same principle holds for prospecting. After training, you need to spend a day or evening prospecting with the recruit until they get two or three appointments. Once they have seen how to do it in real life, they can go out and repeat the steps every day and make themselves, and you, a good living. If you cannot generate appointments at will, you need to work at it until you can.

How Long Does it Take to Succeed?

If you give your staff this kind of support, they will be successful within 14 days of being hired. If you do three days of classroom training and then spend a week showing them how to generate appointments and then closing with them, you will have sales within 14 days.

Keeping a salesperson on for weeks or months hoping they will get better is a dream that will not come to pass. If your car won’t start, coming out every day to try and start it doesn’t change the result. The same is true with sales recruits. The first 14 days are critical. It doesn’t get better after that.

Ethics in Hiring

I want to end this article with a comment on the ethics of hiring. I suggest you only hire recruits with good jobs. If they have been unemployed for a long period, how good can they be at prospecting, presenting and closing? If you hire someone with a good job, you owe it to them to make them successful. They have taken a chance with you and put their trust in you. They have mortgages to pay and self esteem. If you hire them, their success is in your hands.

The good news is that you have the power to make any recruit with a good attitude, and who will follow your instructions, successful. It will take time and effort on your part but it is worth it. An average salesperson should sell three systems per week. Even if they sell two per week, that is 100 systems per year. To get an asset that makes that kind of money requires time and effort for as long as the asset is with you. There are few people out there who can do it without your support. If they could, they would be competitors and not employees. Give your recruits the hands-on support they need to succeed. The results will pay dividends for years to come. *wqp*