

How to Get the Most from Your Coaching

By Jeanne Buchanan



Salespeople usually respond most intensely to satisfying others' expectations—those of their sales leader, their customer, their company—as well as the goals for themselves. Sales leaders can help keep them do this by coaching them, giving them advice and resources when they are required, and recognizing their achievements along the way.

My colleague, Peggy Besand, recently addressed the importance of coaching, the role of the sales coach, and some coaching best practices in her Critical Pathways article, *How to Give the Most in Your Coaching*. This prompted me to ask, “What best practices would help ‘coach-ees’ get the most from their coaching?”

Just like coaching in professional sports, it takes two people actively engaged in the act of sales coaching for it to have an impact. Peggy eloquently described how the successful sales coach effectively engages—they tailor it to the individual, help each salesperson gain their bearings, recognize achievements along the way, among others. But what is the role of the person receiving the coaching? What can they do to make sure that a coaching session is productive for them? These 10 coaching habits for the receiving team will help.*

1. **Keep your coaching session appointments and be on time.** Make your coaching session a priority—do not cancel or reschedule. Come with an open mind and an eagerness to receive input.
2. **Be prepared—bring an agenda.** Get what you want out of each session; don't wait for your coach to initiate. Bring a list of questions, a concern, an opportunity, or a problem and seek the advice you need. Asking for help is an indicator of desire to succeed.
3. **Use your coach as a resource.** Your coach likely has traveled many sales miles, and coached others who are facing similar challenges. Your coach has been trained to initiate conversations, share ideas, make requests, clarify your thinking, and support your decisions. Coaches don't always have the answers, but they will help you discover them for yourself.
4. **Relentlessly get your needs met.** You have needs which, when not met, keep you from expressing your values, reaching your goals, and living your vision. Don't expect your coach to know your priorities—communicate your goals and ask your coach to help you discover what's critical to get what you need.



5. **Inspire your coach.** A coach needs to be inspired by you, your actions, and what is happening in your life. Always fully communicate your feelings. Sincerity is paramount, and a Thank You is very powerful reinforcement.
6. **Get yourself heard.** Being fully listened to is an integral part of coaching. The more you are heard, the more you can accomplish. Make sure your coach is hearing what you are saying, even if you can't articulate it fully. Great coaches hear what is not said as well as what is.
7. **Clearly define expectations.** Be absolutely clear about what is expected of you. The advantage of clarity and the support of discipline will help you execute your responsibilities well.
8. **Be realistic.** Sometimes you may find yourself promising yourself and your coach too much. Avoid committing to a pipedream, but don't sell yourself short either. Be realistic in setting clear, stretch, and extraordinary goals for yourself and for your customers.
9. **Ask for help.** It is important to let your coach know when you need help. This is far better than charging ahead without asking for support when it is warranted. No surprises!
10. **Commit to best next actions.** Focus on real-world insights, not just the numbers on sales reports. Identify specific areas for change and agree how you will modify your behavior, both on specific opportunities and in managing your territory.

For many salespeople, coaching sessions are often the first opportunity in their career for them to analyze their sales situation, performance, expectations, professional and personal goals. Actively engaging in these sessions will help you focus on creating opportunities to deliver extraordinary results to your company, as well as deliver on your personal and professional aspirations.

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