



*Portfolio Management for Sales Leaders*



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# Leadership Development

Successful sales leaders use their heart as well as their head to leverage the unique qualities that each member of the sales team brings to the job.

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**ABOUT CPS.** Critical Path Strategies helps clients improve the effectiveness of their sales organization. Our portfolio of services addresses the strategic, organizational, and relationship issues that impact selling performance. Our powerful processes enable clients to transform their sales culture, enhance their competitive position, and accomplish strategic business initiatives. Our clients—emerging companies and members of the Fortune 500 alike—typically measure 100 to 500 times their CPS investment in revenue growth.



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*Think Strategically, Act Tactically*  
*A disciplined combination of strategies and tactics is essential.*

by Art Wilson, author of *Building a Successful Selling Organization* and founder of Critical Path Strategies



*It's a new game for the promoted sales leader and the tactics and strategies for a winning hand are different.*

*Whether interacting downstream with customers or upstream within their sales organization, sales professionals face a common challenge: "What have you done for me lately?" The sales leader resides between these two demanding short-term constituencies who are focused on achieving monthly, quarterly, and annual sales goals, pushing projects through the pipeline, and meeting the customer's immediate needs.*

Reacting to those immediate pressures, successful sellers over time develop their own techniques, methods, and rhythms. They find what works for them. As they move up the corporate ladder, they bring their habits with them. As they change from one employer to another, they continue to rely on their proven techniques, adapting them to each new set of short-term demands. A new job means new paperwork, new metrics, new products; it seldom causes a change in the salesperson's behavior or habits.

The Peter Principle lurks for the promoted sales leader. Responsibilities expand, challenges accumulate, subordinate issues multiply. At some point the old, reliable, personally developed techniques no longer work—sometimes because the successful sales leader has become a second-, third-, or fourth-level manager who now lacks the bandwidth to personally impact every transaction. At other times, the tools used in past selling and assignments are not applicable for higher-level management or more complex leadership roles like a global account executive. And—as one moves further into the leadership ranks—the unique former sales star quickly finds it impossible to depend on or influence a mixed bag of equally unique sales professionals. It's a new game and the tactics and strategy for a winning hand are different.

Successful sales team management requires discipline and combines three elements: pressing for short-term results; planning for long-term extraordinary results; and institutionalizing successful behaviors through coaching, processes, and rhythm.



Disciplined sales leaders permit each team member to apply their own personal sales techniques, but within a framework that is effective. They encourage individuality within the context of the sales organization. Wild ducks, flying in formation, are ok. Over the long term—yet while still driving for short-term accomplishments—they develop and infuse processes that are proven winners in their company’s specific sales environment. We have observed that this sales leadership discipline displays the eight following characteristics.

<b>1. Customer-Focused</b>	Leadership begins by defining outcomes that make the customer successful.
<b>2. Sales-Process-Based</b>	Leadership documents their sales process and coaches their teams to the process.
<b>3. Intentional</b>	Leadership defines and encourages the actions that must be initiated at the customer interface.
<b>4. Developmental</b>	Leadership helps team members build their selling relationship skills.
<b>5. Interventional</b>	Leadership listens and counsels at defined stages of the sales process.
<b>6. Accountability-Driven</b>	Leadership declares its expectations and inspects to determine compliance and results.
<b>7. Timeline-Driven</b>	Leadership establishes timelines in advance and monitors them frequently.
<b>8. Performance-Motivated</b>	Leadership links rewards to meeting and exceeding expectations and timelines.

In our research and consulting, we often find leadership discipline to be a core value for sales and customer-driven companies. The process is clearly part of the fabric of the organization. The discipline is predictable and methodically transferred across the company—top to bottom. New people joining the organization are rapidly assimilated. Rewards and recognition are designed to reinforce the eight behaviors as well as the right outcomes.

Leadership discipline is a long-term tool that prepares the sales team to answer the inevitable short-term question: “What have you done for me lately?”

## *Transforming the Sales Force with Leadership*

by Ken Evans



*This article highlights key points from an article written by Marvin Johnson, Alan J. Dubinsky, Francis Yammarino, and Lucette Comer. The article's premise is that in the specialized area of personal business-to-business selling, a combination of transactional and transformational leadership is required to help salespeople and teams achieve better results.*

*Many a sales leader has said that managing salespeople is sometimes like herding lizards with a stick. And it probably is true that salespeople do have different characteristics from other types of professionals within a company. What is it that makes many folks believe that sales professionals require special handling?*

- **They are isolated and independent.** They usually work alone or in small virtual teams. They do need feedback and attention and the sales manager is usually their first line of support. Most of them are salespeople because they like the freedom to "do their own thing."
- **They are in a glass cage.** Gaps between management's expectations and their performance are easily measurable and visible. Customers also have expectations and are quick to point out disappointments.
- **They are boundary spanners.** They are linked up with lots of people to get the job done. They negotiate between the customer and the business. Frequently lots of people are disappointed, including them. Customers are paying too much or not getting the service levels they expect. Business processes or practices are frequently violated.
- **They are stressed.** Pressure is everywhere all the time. Customers. Competitors. Management. The Bank. They take the heat when the company's products or services fall short.

The sales professional's job is sometimes exhilarating and sometimes depressing. As a result, managing them is often a challenge. Although the environment in which sales teams operates is not a placid one, the sales manager's job is to assemble a team of well-trained, highly motivated people who consistently make their numbers. With such a degree of day-to-day uncertainty, what does it really take? Managers of sales professionals must somehow find a balance between transactional and transformational leadership.

Transactional leadership is one with which we are all familiar. Management establishes an agreement with the salespeople, formally or informally, that reinforces a clear desired behavior: "If you accomplish X, you will get Y, and if you do not accomplish X there will be repercussions." The original Sloane article cites one sales manager who had a sign on his desk stating "**No Orders, No Money.**"

With transactional leadership, management by exception is the rule. Experienced sales managers and salespeople who are competent and hungry tend to gravitate toward transactional leadership. Both parties want executive management to set goals for them and deliver the rewards when achieved. They want to know the inspection process, and a suggested method for achieving the goals.



While many sales professionals are drawn to the “money for orders” approach, it doesn’t always work, especially for less experienced salespeople. Less seasoned workers can become quickly isolated and dejected and they “de-select themselves” from the job.

Transformational sales leadership offers another approach to managing salespeople that can provide good results. The transformational style centers on the salesperson’s personal and professional aspirations to create an environment that emotionally connects these desires with current actions and augments the transactional leadership style. What are the attributes of this style?

- **Charisma is one.** Transformation leaders attract and inspire their team with confidence, risk taking, and an assertive approach. They continuously encourage. They act out what they want to see. They empower the salespeople to do the right thing. They generate energy.
- **Intellectual stimulation is another ingredient.** Transformational leaders create in their people a readiness for change. They encourage new thinking, innovative approaches, and behaviors. They connect the company business strategy with the salesperson’s strategy.
- **“One on one” approach.** Selling and managing salespeople is all about people. Task management orientation will only move the needle so far. The successful sales leader does not treat them all the same. They all have different circumstances. Different levels of morale, strengths and weaknesses, training needs, territories, and results. They work on preventative measures, not just remediation.

The concepts in this Sloane article appealed to the Critical Path Strategies team for many reasons. Primarily, it is our experience that best practices selling organizations recognize and leverage the unique qualities that each sales team member brings to the job. When a company can take advantage of such diversity and implement collaborative processes that bring the right skills together, extraordinary team accomplishment is enabled. Similarly, just as salespeople are unique in their characteristics and in what they individually bring to a job, so are the managers that strive to guide and support the selling team. As a result, we believe that there is a great benefit in fostering a healthy mix of management styles to field a highly effective sales organization. Too often, we see selling organizations in which certain management traits are encouraged to the exclusion of other complementary styles. While management styles needs to be a reflection of the culture of a company, we believe that when a combined approach of transactional and transformational leadership are embedded in the management discipline of a company, greater success and accomplishment is possible.

## *Best Practices for Implementing a Sales Process*



*Most salespeople have attended sales training classes that recommend repeatable sales processes intended to optimize their efforts and, if implemented, improve their productivity. It has been our experience that salespeople appreciate, and will implement, processes that fit their needs and are easy to implement.*

**Fitting the Needs of Sales Professionals.** Top-performing salespeople frequently cannot describe, with clarity, what it is they do that drives their consistent success. Every complex sales situation is indeed unique and usually demands a high degree of flexibility and adaptability. In hindsight, after a successful sale, it is usually clear that a set of processes were put in place, sequenced, executed, and communicated. The *fit* came about as a result of the experience and personality of the salesperson adapting to the opportunity or prospect. The process, because it was logical and flexible, is imbedded into day-to-day actions and the salesperson feels comfortable and confident during all phases of the cycle.

Complex client organizations, often global, are increasingly served by sales teams which combine multiple levels of products and services, requiring multiple levels of sales expertise and, frequently, technical sales assistance.

Without a sales process that is adaptable in this team environment, crucial team members can feel distant and far less valuable in both the sales planning and execution steps. Process *fit* can be measured by viewing total team buy-in during team meetings and preparedness with planning tools and execution reporting. The results are more consistent terminology, efficient progress reporting, and faster team pace toward the sales goal. Putting a sales team together without an "agreed to" method for dealing with sizing the opportunity, analyzing the prospect decision process, and assigning ownership of sales tasks is clearly less effective. Sales teaming is optimized when all team members agree that the process and tactics are both natural and specific, yet are not so intrusive that the method calls for major personal style modification.

**Collaboration.** Successful sales teams value collaborative effort. Customer complexity and the dynamics of client organizations facing global marketplaces make it impossible for a "go it alone" strategy to work. Collaborative tools draw out and document the best thinking of the team. Every team member benefits from the knowledge shared and each person sees the value of shared strategy development.

**Making a Process Easy to Implement.** Assuring a new process is easy to implement is clearly the task of sales management. A best practice assures the sales teams like the methods and listen to experienced salespeople's suggestions about how best to implement. Salespeople always look for steps in the current process that can be eliminated, shortened, and consolidated. If salespeople see that time, their most precious re-



source, can be saved and/or condensed, they react by finding ways to implement versus fighting new methods. Examples of time saving include:

- Team sales strategy development meetings eliminating continuous update sessions
- Management review cycles that are no longer necessary
- Concise territory activity and forecasting processes taking half the time

As a result, salespeople can spend 30 to 40 percent more time with their clients and prospects versus internal communication functions. Because documentation is a natural output of the tools and is available in digital format, sales teams eliminate redundancy and clearly see that the total job of selling is easier and more efficient. With highly aligned sales strategies that truly meet the real needs of the client, salespeople can achieve 10 to 100 times the productivity with the same effort. Consistently, top sales performers state that *the task of selling to the customer is easier* than working through internal tasks, especially if they experience redundancy or inefficiency in current sales process steps. Sales management, at the same time, strives to have sales and support spend *high-value time* with clients, thereby unburdening the sales teams.

Here are three sales management practices CPS has observed for successful sales process implementation:

**Imbed Selected Tools into the Sales Process.** All sales organizations do sales reporting. By imbedding appropriate tools into the monthly report or strategy sessions, it is clear that there is management support and commitment for the process.

**Know the Terminology of the Process.** A key sales executive of a CPS client once came into a CPS strategy session unannounced. Without notes, he spoke specifically about the high value of the process in the terminology of the strategic tools his company was using. In just a few minutes, it was obvious that he and his company were committed and knowledgeable. Implementation was well on its way to becoming pervasive.

**Assign a Process Advocate.** Many of our clients have selected a highly valued sales professional to assist and assure that the process gets off to a fast start and keeps momentum until it is part of the culture. While not necessarily a full-time position, assigning a person who commands respect from the sales organization is a very effective management action. Often, we observe the selected individual is promoted to higher levels within sales organizations because they become leaders and coaches across the organization. It is clearly beneficial in building their skills and experience for increased responsibility.

## *Portfolio Management for Sales Leaders*



Your sales team works with a variety of customers and handles a number of sales opportunities at any one time. Each one is at a different stage in your sales process with its own character and value. You ask your teams to strategically manage their customers and opportunities in a way that optimizes their competitive position, achieves their desired productivity, and maximizes their return on investment (ROI). Are you equally strategic in managing your sales teams?

Critical Path Strategies' **Portfolio Management for Sales Leaders** workshop generates fresh thinking about how to manage your sales teams so that they generate the maximum ROI for your company using key account strategies and must-win opportunity pursuits. Just as you seek to balance your financial portfolio in terms of real estate, stocks, and bonds, this workshop helps you balance your go-to-market portfolio in terms of your **solutions, customers, competition, and sales/technical/executive teams**. This holistic approach ensures that your teams are aligned with your stakeholders' most important business drivers, crystallizes their progressive sales strategies, and optimizes their true value.

You will learn how to:

- Identify your stakeholders and what they expect of you and your teams
- Align solution and customer segment views of your portfolio plan
- Focus your team on opportunity-focused interactions with the customer at each stage of your sales process
- Identify development actions for each segment of individual contributors on your team
- Plan for appropriate levels of reward and recognition
- Better coach team members on differentiating your solution and aligning customer business drivers with your company's value
- Best manage relationships across customer and internal teams

Your participation in the workshop will yield the following benefits:

- A real-world plan for significantly impacting the ROI from your sales teams' collective portfolio
- More effective use of time focused on coachable, high-value opportunities
- Development plans for yourself, your sales teams, and individual team members
- A strategic plan for your collective sales portfolio that is balanced and aligned to your market and customers

Your ability to examine your portfolio with an holistic lens and within the context you need to make decisions gives you a competitive advantage. The flexibility to proactively manage your portfolio ensures that you will make the best use of resources, at the right times, for the right purposes to realize that advantage.