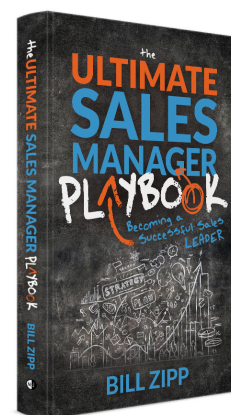


The Ultimate Sales Manager Playbook

Becoming a Successful Sales Leader

by **Bill Zipp**



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THE SUMMARY IN BRIEF

If you're responsible for the direct management of salespeople in your company, your ability to do well is the difference between the success and failure of those salespeople, and ultimately, the company.

From motivation—connecting with your salespeople in a way that lights a fire in their souls—to mobilization, you can coach your salespeople to execute at the highest levels of excellence. Bill Zipp, author of *The Ultimate Sales Manager Playbook*, doesn't bring snake oil or useless fluff. He shares information forged in the fires of decades of sales leadership.

As a salesperson, all you had to think about was your own number, something you could control. Successful sales leadership rejects sales management by force and leads from the inside out. It lights a spark in a salesperson's soul, fans the flame of that fire, and watches it burn. Sales leadership from the inside out follows three essentials, each flowing from one to the other—motivating people to unleash their passion, mobilizing their efforts through coaching, and multiplying their success through careful hiring.

IN THIS SUMMARY, YOU WILL LEARN:

- Why motivating sellers from the inside out brings success.
- Culture creation must be a priority to grow an effective team.
- Process goals and performance goals are not the same.
- Coaching sellers is more effective than cheerleading.

Introduction

Motivate your sellers by connecting deeply as a sales leader with the salespeople who work for you, so they trust you completely and let you unleash the power of their unique passion. You've heard the expression, "start with why." However, Zipp contends you can't start with why; you must start with who.

Motivation

You can't motivate someone who doesn't trust you. So, we begin with trust. And that means we begin with you. A you, that is, who is worthy of your salespeople's trust. How do you become that kind of leader? Three things are crucial: character, competence, and chemistry—the Trust Triad.

Character is the starting point for successful sales leadership. Remove the foundation from under a house, and the building collapses. Remove the engine from a car, and it cannot be driven down the road. Remove oxygen from the air, and people stop breathing. Pick your metaphor, and you'll be spot on about character. Remove it from leadership, and all is lost.

Competence has to do with your professional responsibilities and how fully you execute them.

If you're choosing a doctor to perform open-heart surgery, you want someone who won't advise a drastic procedure like this unless it is absolutely necessary and won't add expensive extras to pad profit. But you also want a doctor who won't accidentally nick an artery and leave you dying on the operating table. In other words, you want a surgeon you can trust, both in their personal character and their professional competence. People want both in their leaders as well.

Finally, chemistry is the ability of a leader to connect with people and spark a meaningful relationship. A warm smile, a firm handshake, eye contact, and a genuine compliment combine to forge a powerful chemical compound: humanity.

Passion

There's nothing more painful than meaningless work. When asked to push a big rock up a tall mountain day after day, people stop caring and simply give up. This is no more true than in the world of sales. Daily call sessions, outbound email, repeated rejection, and the constant pressure to sell, sell, sell become old quickly, if there's no meaning at the top of that mountain, no reason for pushing a big rock up there.

Most people choose sales as a career for four distinct reasons: fortune, fame, freedom, and family. Know what drives the passion of your sellers. Here's the bottom line: the how of sales is hard. The daily grind of prospecting, presentations, proposals, and rejections can deplete even the most dedicated rep. So, the how of sales needs a why, a very personal why that lights a fire within the soul of the people who sell for you.

Praise

Sales is like riding a bicycle ... uphill ... with the wind in your face ... all day, every day. It's hard work. Positive praise is like having a sales leader riding beside you and cheering you on. It's what gives you the inspiration to get up the hill and win the race.

A sales leader should act more like a coach than a cop. A good coach looks for what is going well and then affirms the heck out of it. In doing so, they get more of the good they want.

Don't just say, "Great job," but say, "Great job getting an appointment with that prospect. He's been impossible to nail down, and you did it. Terrific work!" Don't just say, "Thank you," but say, "Thank you for being willing to jump in and help with implementation on the new account. I know that was above and beyond the call of duty, but it saved the day for us." Don't just say, "Congratulations," but say, "Congratulations on making club for the third year in a row. Few salespeople have that kind of consistency and tenacity. I'm proud to have you on my team." The second part of each of the statements above requires more time and attention, but the return you'll get from each is more than worth it. Much more!

Culture

You may have the best product at the best price. You may have the most brilliant sales strategy being executed by the most talented sales staff. You may have the latest cutting-edge technology and the slickest social media presence, but if your culture is broken, all of that stuff—every bit of it—is dead on arrival.

Culture is the combination of beliefs and behaviors any group of people embraces, from businesses to churches, families to nations. It's the way these people think and the way they act in these groups consistently over time. Culture drives the way we work as a team, the way we treat our customers, the way we pursue our goals, and the way we respond to adversity.

Mobilization

The best way to mobilize your salespeople is through coaching them in the specific skills they need to execute the steps in your sales process at the highest levels of excellence. This goes beyond reaching quotas.

Goals

Here is where most sales leaders get goals all wrong. They beat the drum of quota over and over again. They put that number on three-by-five cards, or their digital equivalent, and post it everywhere. Then they wonder why people don't hit it. That would be like me preparing for the half marathon by repeating aloud, "2:15 ... 2:15 ... 2:15."

However, all performance goals need process goals, so they become reality. That means, like a running coach might prepare a runner to run a half-marathon in 2:15, sitting down with each of your reps, understanding their sales development history, creating a weekly sales workout plan, checking in on that plan every Monday morning, and adjusting it accordingly. This, and only this, is how sales goals work—including the why and the how.

Coaching

While not easy, coaching salespeople has a simple two-part process to it (not an intricate ten-step model). These two parts are best captured in the sport of whitewater rafting. First, read the river. Pay close attention to the flow of your reps' development, for, like a river, it bends and twists and turns all over the place. Then adjust, adapting to these bends and twists and turns with the most effective coaching response. This is what it means to coach and coach well: read and respond, read and respond, read and respond.

Situational sales leaders first assess the sales development of a rep before one word leaves their mouths, their responses being determined by the read of the river. Having assessed development, Situational Sales Coaching then selects the response that best matches the needs at hand. When this process is repeated over and over again, reps grow and sales soar because managers are providing the coaching the reps need when they need it.

One-on-Ones

Reading and responding in your coaching come together in one powerful practice: conducting regular one-on-ones with your salespeople. Regular one-on-one meetings between a sales representative and their sales manager should focus on one thing and one thing only: goals. This meeting is not

a time for deal reviews, which are best done with the entire team so everyone can learn from the review, pipeline management, forecasting, or strategic account development—all best done with the entire team as well (or the occasional one-off). Neither is this a time for corrective action. When corrective action needs to take place, as it sometimes does, it should be done outside of the regular one-on-one, so a sales rep knows what to expect whenever they meet with you. No surprises! Check on progress. Talk about plans. Connect personally. Consider any problems.

This should be a conversation in which the seller does at least seventy percent of the talking. Keep a weekly cadence and maintain consistent follow-through. Doing so will yield the rich reward of above goal performance year after year and team members who'll be completely loyal to your leadership.

Team Meetings

Meetings, meetings, meetings, meetings. You're probably sick of sitting in meetings. I'm sure your salespeople are as well. Some estimates put sales meeting attendance as high as forty hours every month. That's an entire workweek spent in meetings every thirty days. The answer to this dilemma is not fewer meetings, but better meetings (okay, maybe a few less meetings) and shorter meetings. Meetings that deliver value every time. Meetings that help your salespeople make more money.

Multiplication

Multiplication is essential. Duplicate success in others by hiring and promoting the very best salespeople and sales managers while keeping them from derailing in their roles.

Hiring

Most candidates for an open sales position, being salespeople, present well in an interview. Any interview. Because that's what salespeople do. Give them a stage, and they're ready to perform. Make sure the interview reveals what you're after in a candidate.

Zipp recounts a science activity on a beach as his metaphor for hiring. The students poured a bucket of dirt from the beachfront campground through a series of screen grates, analyzing the results. The screens on the grates became smaller and smaller until only the finest sand could sift through. Then they studied the contents of each grate to determine the geological developments that brought these contents to the shore. This is exactly how to hire the very

best salespeople for your firm, screening and screening, narrowing the grid of each screen in each step until all but the finest is left. Your first set of screens is the resume, the Career History Form®, and The Phone Screen Interview. Then you conduct a Chronological Interview, Round Robin Interviews, Reference Interviews, and request the completion of a project, a real-world field-work assignment.

Promoting

Birds fly. Fish swim. Rabbits run. It's not just what they do; it's what they love. Ask a bird to swim, a fish to run, and a rabbit to fly, and, well, you've got a problem. The key to multiplying sales success year after year is first, hiring well and promoting wisely. Don't just look at your best salesperson and assume he or she will be a great sales leader. Allow time for self-evaluation on the part of the candidate. A promotion from individual sales contributor to sales manager is not always the right move. It works for some, and it's a total disaster for others. Make sure this position is a good fit for you or the person you're considering for management—what you love, what you loathe, and what's your lifestyle—before moving forward.

Derailing

It is impossible to predict all that can happen in a sales leader's life. Everything is going along fine until some problem occurs. An unexpected turnover, the loss of a major client, or missed quota for the quarter. You name it, and the pressure starts to build. Like a plunger forcing water through the pipes of your life, something blows and there's a mess everywhere. These meltdowns are entirely preventable. How? By making sure the joints, the most vulnerable areas of leadership, are strong and secure. In other words,

you can hire and promote the right people, placing them in the perfect role. But those same people, including you, can blow out of that role—making a big fat mess for everyone to clean up.

Conclusion

Here's the ultimate bottom line: Successful sales leadership flows from the springs of successful self-leadership. Your outer world needs your inner world to be healthy and strong. Refusing to be driven by the urgency of manic mornings, the myth of multitasking, and working on the weekend is not just a nice suggestion for having a happier life. It's much, much more than that. It's critical instruction for a long, rich, and rewarding leadership career, untouched by the derailment that so many of your peers will experience. Follow this path without fail. Your future self, and those who love you, will thank you for doing so. And that's the point, isn't it?



Bill Zipp helps busy CEOs, heads of sales, and frontline managers become better leaders, grow their people, and hit their number. He has over 20 years of experience with high-growth companies and agile startups, as well as established businesses stuck on a sales plateau. He's worked with hundreds of sales leaders around the world, from ADP to Avalara, Businessolver to SAP Concur. Many of these companies experienced dramatic revenue growth while working with him, some doubling and tripling annual sales. Eventually he became President and General Manager of the station group, and together, his team achieved repeated annual growth in the face of intense competition due to industry deregulation.

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