

Is Your Sales Team's Lack of Belief Leaving Money on the Table?



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Have you ever started your day by overhearing a frontline sales representative say, “I can’t sell today, customers are cheap.” Have you been privy to these enlightening statements, “I can’t sell on nights” or “I can’t sell on days!” Has the keen insight of, “I knew they would not buy...” made you want to go into the tarot card business? Have you ever calculated the financial impact of what would happen to your revenues if your sales and management team, spent 50% of the time they complain why “it” can not be done and channeled it toward their actual sales or presentation. Your results would be astounding! The obstacle in the way of your results is not an issue of market share, location, or fleet but an obstacle of **belief**.

Defining your frontline and management team’s belief at times can be difficult to do, however measuring belief falls in the areas of belief in product, price and sales program. Does your team believe that their product is the best a customer can receive? Do they feel good about the price you command for their product? Would

they pay the same price as the consumer? Do they view sales as some thing you can provide for their customer vs. something you do to the customer? Are they proud to be called sales representatives? Do they treat all their customers the same way regardless of how they may look?

Building your team’s belief in its product and service can not be accomplished over night, it can not be won by changing their incentive plan, and it won’t be dispelled by disciplinary actions! It takes a systemized approach that will involve every member of your management team. Your ability to have your team believing in its opportunities can mean the difference between a profitable operation vs. an unprofitable operation, a great environment vs. a mediocre environment, or even a great customer experience vs. a poor customer experience. The following Phases of Belief Development will drastically improve your sales culture.

Phase #1: Check Your Belief

Believing in your team’s ability to achieve higher levels of performance has to start from within. Conducting a

“belief gut check” should be completed before going into battle against your team’s negative perception. **Ask yourself the following:**

- “If I were a consumer, would I pay the rate/fee my team is trying to command?”
- “When my team comes to me with a statement of disbelief / negative perception of “why it can not be done”, do I agree with them?”
- Is there anything in my environment that fuels disbelief or negativity?

If you lack belief – find someone who has it, or find some one who recently achieved the desired results you want. This person can be your direct report, an outside training and development firm or a peer of yours from a different region. Your ability to describe the positive side of a perception will take persistence, knowledge, patience, and belief. If you can safely say that you have all of those characteristics you are ready for your team.

BREAKING NEW LEVELS

Roger Bannister, an English track star, shocked the world by running a sub 4 minute mile in 1954. Prior to this great accomplishment, athletes, physicians, coaches, and the media deemed the sub 4 minute mile an impossible feat. On May 6th, 1954 Bannister, battling 15 mile per hour cross winds, shocked the world and posted a 3:59.4 mile. An Australian runner, named John Lany, allowed the record stand for only for 47 days. During a race in Finland, Lany ran a 3:57.6 mile. Within three years of the initial Bannister “threshold buster” 16 runners broke the four minute mark.

MORAL OF THE STORY

#1 Half the battle of reaching a goal or breaking a new level of performance is simply in the act of believing that there is a new level of performance to be reached.

#2 No matter how high the performance you may have set, it will always become someone else’s target.

Phase #2: Check Your Team’s Belief

Now that you have established your personal “belief base of operations” it is time to gauge your team’s belief. Checking belief in your operation has to start with – your management team and your frontline team.

Ask the following questions of your management team:

- “What is the highest level of individual performance we have witnessed?”

If your manager knows the answer quickly it shows his or her ability to analyze performance.

- “What level of performance do you think our top performer can achieve?”

If your manager states a level of performance that is above the previous high mark it is fine. However, the difference between a manager who believes in his or her statement and one who is telling you what you want to hear comes from follow up statements of “How” it can be accomplished. The manager who can stress presentation style elements or dialogue techniques has the sales knowledge to help you.

- “What are the biggest belief challenges your team presents to you and do you agree with them?”

A manager who details a long list of negative perceptions without a positive rebuttal may indicate that he or she may not have the positive attitude to overcome the team’s disbelief. If this is the case, assign the manager a new location, new shift, or a different team.

Ask the following questions of your sales teams:

- “What was your highest level of performance?”

If your team can quickly tell you the specific month and results your management team deserves credit for consistently communicating results. If they struggle to tell you how they performed, this indicates that results are inconsistently communicated.

- “Where do you feel your results can grow to?”

The frontline team members who automatically revert to excuses rather than hard numbers clearly need to focus on belief.

- “Briefly, please tell me what are the biggest challenges to hitting a new level of performance?”

This question will solicit the most candid response. In many circumstances sales representatives will be “generous” with feedback. Using the words – brief & please – will allow you to positively cut off the venting session.

- “What motivates you the most – recognition, money, or accountability?”

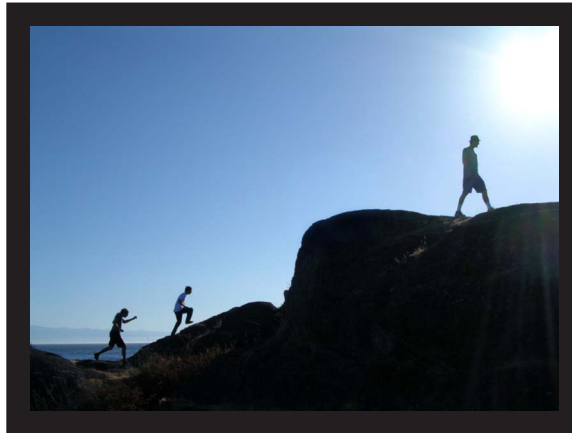
All though this may not be an indicator of where their belief is it, this knowledge will be important in the future.

The information you take from the discussions will be key to your next phases of changing your team’s belief. If you are flooded with many statements of disbelief or excuses do not be worried, but most important – do not take it personally or “buy into” them. Take time to reflect on the feedback. View the information from the perspective of a senior team member, a new manager, new sales representative, and most important from your perspective. The time and efforts here will be critical in the next phases of building your team’s belief.

Phase Three: Re-Train and “Sell Your View”

The third phase of this process involves implementing a formal sales and service training

program. Within the training it will allow for you to “sell your view” and stress sales opportunities.



PLAY IT SAFE vs. PUT ME IN

Ted Williams, the Hall of Fame left fielder of the Boston Red Sox, was the last Major League Baseball player to hit .400 throughout the course of an entire season. On the final day of the 1941 season he had the opportunity to sit out a double header and ride his .3996 batting average into the record books. Completely understanding the risk of going to the plate he threw caution to the wind and suited up. After an amazing 6 for 8 performance on that final day his average for the season ended at .406! Williams was the last player to break the .400 mark.

MORAL OF THE STORY

- #1 A true top performer will always take the risk of sacrificing their individual statistics for the betterment of the team.
- #2 A true professional goes to their locations every day expecting “Yes’s” instead of preparing for “No’s”.
- #3: “Cherry Picking” or customer profiling won’t help a team member’s sales results and definitely won’t win them any friends at their locations.

Training your team on a sales and service process will allow them to feel as if they have control over their presentation. Sales representatives without a formal process have a lower belief in their product/service, have higher turnover, and provide poorer service. Launching a new training program for your entire team communicates your support of improved results, allows for your management team to set higher expectations, and allows for your team to view the training as a fresh start.

Effective training programs have the following components:

- Defined sales and service process
- Highlight on Positive Attitude, Product Knowledge, and Presentation Style
- Discussion of belief in product, price, and sales program
- Description of successful dialogues - especially objection/rebuttal dialogues.

As this training process is introduced to your team use the time as an opportunity to “sell your views” on current environment of disbelief, your goals, and future expectations. Sharing a story of a sports

team, local business, or public company that impresses you with their performance will help set the tone. The

previous information you learned in the interactions with your staff will pay dividends here. (See Motivational Sports Stories.)

Phase Four: Look For Presentation and Sales Environment Changes

A measure of the effectiveness of your recent training should be seen within days of the sessions. It is in this critical time that your team members should be trying their new techniques.

It is in this time that your involvement on the frontline is key. There will be a direct correlation between initial acceptance of this change and the level of your support. It is absolutely critical that you and your management team acknowledge team members using the new process instead of the end result of their sales transaction. Simply put it is OK if they get many “No’s” in the beginning as long as they are using the process. Consistent coaching to the new process and techniques will help the sales environment progress quickly. Effective coaching sessions have the following elements:

- **The use of positive reinforcement**
- **Coach to specific behaviors instead of talking in generalities** ie, “I liked how you up sold that customer” vs. “That last presentation was a success because you communicated the features and benefits of the Cadillac – by using the new dialogues. Great job!”
- **Focus on the cause and effect of their new presentation** ie, “You asked for the booking by initiating. What happened? You secured the booking! Which dialogue did you use?”

Looking for change and thanking your team for their efforts will fuel this process. In most cases your most senior team member will come to you and voice their concerns. If they are supportive, thank them and stress the importance of their application of a new process because of their influential role on the team. If they are not supportive, thank them for their efforts, encourage them to stick with it – remind them that they have been in for many years and this is day 3, stress the importance of their role as an ambassador to change, and call to their sense of duty to remain positive. If the

disapproving senior team member is not on board and consistently hinders your efforts pursue the following avenues:

- Reposition to an administrative or operational role in the organization
- Give a 30 day notice of performance accountability
- Set the course of action for termination

This is the time of the change process that is extremely critical. It will also be the time where it is crystal clear which frontline team members and managers are on board with the new program.

SET AGGRESSIVE GOALS

Herb Brooks, the 1980 US Olympic men’s hockey coach, was considered a maverick for setting the expectation of a Gold Medal for a group of 18 to 21 year old amateurs. His audacious goal was reached with the crushing 4-3 victory over the Soviet Union in the semi-finals and an equally impressive come from behind victory against Sweden in the championship game.

MORAL OF THE STORY

- #1 As a leader don’t be afraid of setting “stretch goals” for your management or frontline team.
- #2 Your stretch goal should be set with a direct correlation to the amount of support you are planning on providing your team. Extra sales training, new fleet, and frontline incentives should bolster your belief in setting an aggressive goals.

Phase Five: Recognize Results By Stressing The - “I told you so!!!!!!”

This is the time of the process you can feel good about your involvement as an initiator to change or a conqueror of disbelief. Recognizing the results has to happen at a team level and an individual level.

Recognition at a team level will help you communicate that results did not come from just one person's acceptance of the new program. It will also let the group get a global perspective where your results are going. The following trends will help with this process:

- **60 to 90 days snap shot of results vs. the same time previous year.** The prior's year benchmark sets a blank canvas for performance. It will also communicate a return on investment of any training activities.

- **Four month trend of where your performance has grown to.** Always include the month of the new training or the month prior to demonstrate a cause and effect.

Recognition at an individual sales representative level will help your frontline team stay focused on their new process. At an individual level it is very easy to draw a correlation between the new process and his or her success. The following recognition pieces will help you praise an individual team member:

- **Nominate a "Change Ambassador":** This will provide recognition to a representative who quickly perfected the system.

- **Post Top to Bottom Individual Results:** Rank individuals in the categories of yield, conversion, or branch growth. Rankings will motivate the top performers through recognition and bottom performers by accountability.

- **Communicate increased incentive earnings compared to their previous year.**

- **Call upon your team's "motivational drivers".** This is where the previous discussions of, "Are you motivated by recognition, money, or accountability?" will come into play.

The financial results of this process should satisfy you immensely, the fact that if you execute – you can stress to your team that you knew they were always capable of these results. Stress the positive side of the, "I told you so!"

Phase Six: Set Higher Levels of Performance & Repeat the Process

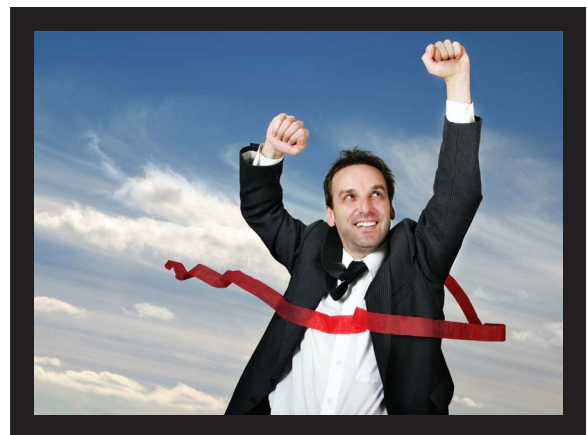
It is very easy for any team to hit a plateau and accept the success they achieved, without seeing new levels to break. It is here that your role as a leader will be absolutely critical.

Similar to your initial "belief gut" check now ask your self the following:

- "Are our results Good or are they Great?"
- "Do we have everyone on board with our new process to take it to a new level?"
- "What are our current "disbelievers" saying?"
- "What is the spread between my top and bottom performer?" "What has happened to that spread compared to when we started?"

If you feel that there is more room to grow - repeating this process is achievable. The key aspects will lie in setting a higher performance level for your team and providing them with advanced training.

Whether it is your vision, passion, or positive attitude that you want your team to replicate on a daily basis, success will come from your personal belief that the journey ahead to change your organization's perceptions is a battle worth fighting.



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