3 Secrets to Building a Winning Sales Culture

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Let's hire a hotshot, expert closer, and to make sure the rest of the company helps out, let's add "everyone sells" as a rallying cry to address our slumping sales.

I have heard that line from so many companies struggling to generate sales. In an average organization, sales rely on the capabilities of a few skilled individuals who are rewarded for creating as many transactions as possible. They do whatever it takes to close the deal and create temporary results — temporary because they must be consistently recreated for a business to survive.

On the other hand, everyone else attempts to rise to the vague "everyone sells" call-to-action, despite being plagued by the question, "What does that mean exactly?" If sales becomes absolutely results-driven without consulting anyone else, the company will become less productive and effective.

According to a seven-year study by GiANT Worldwide, the average team functions at just 58 percent of its potential because it is not intentionally capturing the genius of eeach person. Instead, it relies on the drive of just one or two "leaders." Imagine what that means for your business. How many more clients could you serve, and what would revenue and sales look like, if you harnessed more of the team's capacity?

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So how do you build a winning sales culture?

Secret 1: Never hire a rockstar salesperson if you want your company to grow

Instead, build a balanced team, because *who* is on a team matters less than *how* the team members interact, structure their work and view their contributions. According to *5 Voices* authors Jeremie Kubicek and Steve Cockram, a winning culture includes five specific type of contributors that complement each other's weaknesses and are essential to business growth: the Pioneer, Connector, Guardian, Creative and Nurturer.

The Pioneer is usually the person in charge. In this case, the rockstar salesperson is vital because they are results-focused and strategic in thinking. Unfortunately, once they have an idea they want to execute, they rarely ask for input or opinion. Often, they dismiss others they believe are not competent or as experienced as they are. This behavior can be a major contributor to the low functioning of a team. The alternative is to create an intentionally dynamic team

A Connector is the evangelist of ideas and an expert at finding resources. They always seem to know a person who knows a person who can help. They love to share what is happening and inspire others to engage by just talking about an idea. As people pleasers, they have difficulty challenging ideas and will just go along, but often tell people different stories to get agreement. When those people compare notes, they think they were being lied to when the Connector feels they were telling each the same thing.

The Guardian is the process-and-systems guru and key to scaling any operation. They hate to waste resources and are

risk averse. A focus on the here and now means they ask the tough questions about how you are going to move from where you are to where you want to be. “We’ll figure it out as we go” is not an option. These folks often clash with the go-getters on a team because it feels like an anchor holding everyone back.

The Creative is an idea scout. When they hear something, they immediately start analyzing all the routes to goal-achievement, including a detailed risk assessment about what is the smartest way to get there. They tend to be perfectionists and may push to avoid as many stumbling blocks as possible in a strategy or plan.

Finally, there is the Nurturer. This is someone who knows the pulse of an organization and is a natural team player. They will always put people first and are great representatives of the how your customers will respond to a product or service and how the company will respond to a change. They will always ask, “Does this feel right? Is it the right thing to do by the customer and the company?” But because they do not like conflict, they will hold on to their ideas unless they feel absolutely safe.

Secret 2: Be intentional with company culture from the start

Much like business processes, company culture is inherently dynamic. It is the result of a constant interaction of elements and practices that grow and change with the company. These can be either accidental or intentional.

An accidental culture will organically form based on the mood and behaviors of the individuals in it. This is usually how toxic environments form, as the norms of acceptable behavior are defined by the few who are in charge.

On the other hand, an intentional culture is one that

deliberately monitors team performance to establish practices and behavioral norms to make everyone feel safe when sharing ideas. It focuses on communicating vision and direction. It makes certain that everyone is aligned so that they know exactly how they contribute to the company's success. It's an "everyone is in sales" culture

Secret 3: Align everyone around the customer experience

The key to the "everyone is in sales" rallying cry is an effective and impactful process designed to reflect the experience you want your clients to have. This starts with creating a map of the customer journey that identifies every opportunity for a service breakdown. Involve all staff who are involved in a process at these critical interaction points. Be sure to collect data about the process to keep the conversations objective and avoid the blame game.

Once you have identified the breakdowns, convert those to breakthroughs, and redesign internal processes to support the customer journey to be what you want every client to have. Involve every process stakeholder in the design process to build support for the ideas, and increase adoption through a heightened sense of accountability for the sales process. Through engagement of the team, the sales process becomes core to everyone's job and not left to the person in the field making the deals.

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Historically, impressions of a winning sales culture have been predicated on the false beliefs that: 1. Because a rockstar salesperson can temporarily save a company, we should just hire more of them; 2. Focusing on culture won't provide a measurable ROI; and 3. Culture is something to worry about

after we resolve our revenue issue.

To change your business reality, do an honest assessment of the team tendencies and determine which of the contributing voices mentioned above is missing. Hire to fill that gap so that you have an inclusive, balanced culture. Set rules of engagement that show that it is OK to be wrong or fail because you support each other. Focus on intentional communication; not a need-to-know basis exclusion, but transparency in message and content. Finally, make sure everyone knows how they contribute to the customer’s experience.

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