

# Dual Roles

## Which type of sales leader are you, a deal manager or a sales manager?

It's no secret that sales leaders wear multiple hats. In fact, a sales leader can be everything from coach to motivator to sales expert, and many more. There is not one specific thing sales managers do; rather, they perform a complex, interwoven group of tasks all related to delivering results. In this article, we focus on two common types of sales leaders: the deal manager and the sales manager.

### THE DEAL MANAGER

Usually, this type of sales leader proved to be a great salesperson, and because of this was promoted to manager. He or she is an excellent closer, loves to discuss the hot deals, is very good at strategizing a customer situation and, if the numbers come up a little short for the quarter, month, or year, will do what it takes to hit the targets.

### THE SALES MANAGER

In most cases, this sales leader concentrates on developing the skills and abilities of the team, realizing that this will allow the team's leader to be successful, as well. The sales manager believes that the sales manager's job is, not to create sales, but to create salespeople.

If we look at a couple of critical sales-management tactics from both perspectives, we see the strength or frailty in each one. Of course, the best of both worlds would be a sales manager who can also be a deal manager when the need arises.

### PIPELINE COACHING

As a deal manager, I am really interested in two things: the deals that are closest to closing and the big deals. I love to engage in conversations about them, what is happening in the sales process, explore what else we can do, and how I can help.

As a sales manager, I want to know the overall health of your pipeline. If it is healthy, you will have enough customer situations and deal volume to sustain

you for the next quarter and beyond. Then my task is to help with deal management. If your pipeline is not healthy (about 75 percent of all sales pipelines), then we need to talk about the steps you are taking to grow your pipeline. This coaching will help you long term.

### THE CAUTION

You can see the pitfall of deal management in pipeline coaching: deal

managers will do everything to help their salespeople close what is in their sights, and they might miss the big picture, which is that their salespeople do not have enough deals in the pipeline for the future.

### REVENUE GOALS

The sales organization must deliver on revenue commitments to the company. As a deal manager, if my annual target is \$10 million, you can bet that I will help close everything needed and deliver my number. As a sales manager, I will pay attention to my revenue number and participation rate – the percent of my team that is at or above plan. I know that if I help 60 percent of my

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people to make their plans, not only will I make my plan, I will most likely over-achieve. I also know that if 60 percent of my people make plan, they will stay, and my job next year will get easier.

### THE CAUTION

Deal managers might ride the high performers to help crest over the goal, and in this action, they and their salespeople suffer from burnout. This can lead to the first quarter hangover, when they experience really low sales while they try to recover.

Participation rate is a metric that is often not formally measured in sales organizations. Sales leaders are measured by hitting their revenue number,

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### deal manager or sales manager quiz

**What is my participation rate (% of my reps at or above plan)?**

- a) Less than 25%
- b) 25% to 60%
- c) Above 60%

**How frequently do I discuss overall pipeline health (ability to hit the quarter and the year)?**

- a) At annual planning
- b) Quarterly
- c) Monthly

**Poor sales performance is**

- a) Tolerated
- b) Managed
- c) Up or out

**Pipeline coaching is about**

- a) This month
- b) This quarter
- c) This year

**My sales team would call me**

- a) "The Closer"
- b) Sales coach
- c) Sales leader

Score one point for each "a," three points for each "b," and five points for each "c." A score below 12 points might indicate that you need to spend more time developing salespeople and less time developing sales.

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so it is in their best interest to keep every person on their team. Even a poor performer who is at 40 percent of his or her quota is making a contribution to the sales leader's numbers. If he or she is cut from the team, the team's left with an open territory and some lost sales.

If sales leaders are measured by revenue and participation rate, low performers need to be helped up or out. Sales leaders will also make the deci-

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sion as to what to do with these low performers sooner; the sooner the decision is made, the sooner the participation rate can be improved.

One way to look at participation rate is to think of the bell curve. Sales teams typically have a few stars, lots of middle performers, and a few who are not currently successful – the bell curve of performance. Participation rate causes sales leaders to shift the curve up, get more people into the performance category (curve shifts to the right), and make quicker decisions on poor performers (remove the tail from the curve).

### FINAL THOUGHTS

Deal managers are busiest at the end of the month, helping to close deals. Sales managers are busiest at the beginning of the month, helping salespeople set plans in place so there is no rush to close at the end of the month. Deal management is a subset of sales management – absolutely necessary but not sufficient. Great salespeople absolutely will be great deal managers. But before promoting a deal manager to sales management, the question to ask is, will the deal manager make a great sales manager?

– KEVIN HIGGINS

*Kevin Higgins is the president of Fusion Learning Inc., recognized by Selling Power as one of the top 10 sales training companies in North America. For more information, visit [www.fusionlearninginc.com](http://www.fusionlearninginc.com).*

### hiring

## Assess Your Hires

Assess Systems ([assess-systems.com](http://assess-systems.com)) saves organizations time and money with job-specific, research-validated assessments that result in rapid, clear hiring recommendations for all levels of sales positions. It helps you design a multicomponent selection process, including **prescreening, realistic job previews, testing, interviewing**, and more. It then provides state-of-the-art technology to make the entire process seamless and easy to use. Assess's Web-based tools help to ensure that you hire the best salespeople quickly and efficiently, whether hiring sales managers, executives, or consultative salespeople.

## Finely Honed Instrumentation

Caliper ([calipercorp.com](http://calipercorp.com)) has advised more than 25,000 companies over the last four decades in hiring, employee development, team building, and organizational development. It has assessed the potential of more than 3 million employees and applicants for sales and other positions. Caliper begins with objective and accurate assessment instruments, which **measure potential, personality characteristics, individual motivations, likely behaviors**, and job-related progress. Its consultants then guide clients in selecting the best candidates to ensure high sales performance.

## Statistically Valid

For more than 30 years and after more than 1 million tests, the Craft Personality Questionnaire (CPQ) has helped sales managers make better hiring decisions. Validated, proven, and trustworthy, CPQ is neither offensive to candidates nor discriminatory against any demographic. CPQ provides a **statistically significant correlation to sales performance**, and its predictive power strengthens over time. CPQ predicts success in prospecting for new business and the sales competencies that lead to shorter learning curves and higher retention. Visit [craftsystems.com](http://craftsystems.com) for more information.

## Level the Field

PI Worldwide ([piworldwide.com](http://piworldwide.com)) offers a host of tools and services for selecting and developing sales talent, especially for customer-focused consultative sales. Its Worldwide Selling Skills Assessment Tool (SSAT) **quantifies the sales skills of your current sales force with objective data** on 25 aspects of consultative selling. SSAT information gives sales executives the tools necessary to evaluate sales skills on three levels: individual, team, and companywide. PI provides sales training along with a behavioral assessment tool to ensure long-term, sustainable sales excellence.

## Test It Yourself

Salestestonline.com is an online test that, unlike some experienced interviewers who may be fooled into making costly hiring mistakes, can **cut through an applicant's facade to uncover the real person**. The test reduces hiring errors by arming you with an objective, accurate, and detailed sales-personality test report. For candidates, Salestestonline.com is easy and convenient, and testing is self-managed, automated, and instant. You simply provide applicants with your password and direct them to the online test site.

## Automation to the Rescue

Treeline ([treeline-inc.com](http://treeline-inc.com)) focuses solely on sales recruitment. Its new tool, DADO, is an automated search technology that **streamlines the entire recruiting process**, allowing Treeline clients to bring great candidates on board much faster and with a clearer picture of the person being hired and how he or she fits into the organization. DADO provides hiring managers with critical information, such as a candidate's average sales cycle and quota, and an opportunity to watch a candidate's video and view professional recommendations online. – HENRY CANADAY