
Improve Performance Of Your Outsourced Sales Force With Almost No Additional Investment



Owners, general managers and sales managers of manufacturing and service companies think differently than most people in their organization when it comes to supporting an outside sales force. This is true whether the company uses direct or outsourced salespeople.

There is a false perception among employees of many enterprises that salespeople somehow have it made. This is particularly true if the company employs very successful reps whose lifestyles reflect their success. Salespeople are often perceived as people who:

- Work outside the office with very little supervision.
- Get to drive nice automobiles and have lunches and dinners with customers.
- Make way too much money for the minimal contribution they make to the company's success.
- Have flexible and shorter working hours than the average employee.

These myths are even sometimes believed by the management of organizations that employ outsourced sales professionals when they see commission checks

going to agencies that are in excess of their own monthly salaries. The theory here is that the rep's income is identical to the amount of the commission check, even though it is quite easy to see that the cost of putting a B2B salesperson on the street today exceeds \$150,000 per year. This anti-salespeople/anti-rep culture operates as a deterrent to top-notch sales performance in companies who have it. It does so in very subtle ways:

- It defeats harmonious cooperation between the sales and operations people.
- It can undermine respect for the salespeople when this attitude is conveyed to customers who the home office folks come into contact with.
- In its worst manifestation, it can even torpedo new business as inside folks subconsciously (or consciously) delight in a failure of their sales counterparts.

If you have such a culture in your organization, how do you combat it?

- Require all home office staff to attend training sessions that build up the importance of the

sales reps and demonstrate how employee compensation is affected by additional sales volume (or the lack of it).

- Distribute copies of the MANA booklet, *Understanding The Outsourced Sales Professional*, to internal employees.
- Tie employee bonuses to top line increases rather than to operating income.
- Counsel with employees who have poor attitudes about sales personnel and, if necessary, terminate those who do not respond.

In today's global marketplace, it is much harder to sell something than it is to make it. All employees need to have this thought foremost in their minds, and they should be rewarded for activities and attitudes that build sales volume.

We would like to hear from you here at MANA if you've discovered any other techniques that are successful in dealing with a cultural bias against reps or direct salespeople please send an e-mail to: jmiller@MANAonline.org. □

