



# Sales Manager Capability Assessment & Development

## THE BUSINESS CHALLENGE

Whilst most sales organisations will have a sound range of sales and product training solutions for their sales professionals, relatively few have a formal set of training and development offerings for their sales managers that are designed to equip them with the skills, knowledge, habits and behaviours that are required to effectively lead and manage a high performing B2B sales team.

Our sales manager capability assessment has been developed to help B2B sales organisations achieve three things:

1. To develop a detailed competency profile for a high performing sales manager in their business that can be used to not only assess current capabilities and identify development needs, but also for the recruitment and selection of future sales managers
2. Conduct a thorough assessment of the training and development needs of their existing sales managers.
3. Develop a set of targeted sales manager development modules to address their prioritised development needs.

## THE APPROACH

The design and development of an integrated learning and development program for the sales management team involves a number of critical steps.

Firstly, you need to develop a detailed competency profile for the sales manager role within the organisation against which your current incumbent sales managers can be assessed. This will need to include descriptions of all the critical skills and knowledge required for the role. We find it useful to organise and define this sales manager competency profile around the following eight categories of competence:



Figure: The eight competency categories of a high performing sales manager

Within each of these eight competency categories, a number of critical capabilities, skills and knowledge will be identified, so that the completed competency framework could comprise 50-60 separate assessment factors.

### Before

- 16 Sales Managers with an average satisfaction rating of 3.2 / 5
- No formal sales manager development training
- 315 "Needs Development" ratings in the assessment

### After

- Three Sales Manager Development Modules prioritised, designed and delivered
- Sales Manager average satisfaction rating 4.1 / 5

### Impact

- 29% Increase in Sales Manager satisfaction
- 65% reduction in the number of "Needs Development" ratings after delivery of the first three training modules

In order to ensure confidence in the reliability and accuracy of the development needs identified the individual sales manager self-assessments are supported by two things. Firstly each sales manager's sales leader also completes an assessment of their current capabilities, skills and knowledge against the profile. Secondly a simple three point rating scale is used to highlight the individual's and management team's major development needs:

- Needs Development
- Meets Expectation
- Exceeds Expectation

The results of all completed assessments are consolidated and analysed to specifically identify three things:

1. A summary of the perceived development needs of each sales manager within the team relative to the agreed competency profile.
2. Identification of any team-wide development needs that can be addressed through standardised sales manager training.
3. Identification of individual specific development needs that are best addressed through peer or sales leader coaching.

### **TYPICAL FINDINGS**

In most of the sales teams that we have worked with, we find that 2-3 of the eight competency categories represent the greatest number of "Needs Development" ratings and so represents the greatest opportunity for improvement.

In one recent client, three of the eight competency categories represented two thirds of all the "Needs Development " ratings identified by the sales managers and so were prioritised. Targeted training material was developed to specifically address the skills and knowledge gaps highlighted by the team. The module outline for the Pipeline Management training is shown in the figure below.

**Sales Manager Development Program. Module 1:**  
Pipeline Management Learning Objectives

- What are the major challenges and traps in pipeline management?
- What does best practice pipeline management look like?
- The benefits of pipeline management to the sales manager
- How to ensure the sales pipeline has only quality content
- Best practice agenda for a one-on-one pipeline review
- Key questions and considerations for your one-on-one pipeline reviews
- Key metrics and indicators of pipeline performance
- Personal planning to take your pipeline management to the next level

Figure: The module outline and learning objectives for the Pipeline Management training module

### **THE BUSINESS IMPACT**

We worked with our client to help them developed and delivered one prioritised sales manager training module per quarter. At the end of 12 months, the sales managers completed the self assessment a second time and reported that 65% of their development concerns had been effectively addressed by the training that had been provided.

When their team members were surveyed to understand their level of satisfaction with the support and management that they were receiving, it indicated a 29% increase in the team's satisfaction with their sales manager.

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