PXT Select
Special Edition

Building High-Performing
Sales Teams

for dummies®

A **Wiley** Brand

Embrace the critical
importance of sales

Hire salespeople
predisposed to success

Master the crucial art
of sales coaching

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PX T SELECT™

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William Hull
Crystal Thomas

About PXT Select

To perform their best, organizations need the right people in the right jobs. The traditional tools — résumés, education, training, and interviews — help organizations know a candidate's past and present performance, but they fall short in predicting for the future. Hire confidently with PXT Select assessment data for your organization's needs for today and tomorrow. At PXT Select, we help organizations worldwide create high-performing workforces through a scientifically validated understanding of their people. Our powerful hiring assessments help companies translate job requirements into measurable cognitive and behavioral traits to find the ideal candidates with the best fit for each role.

With more than 30 years of research-validated assessments, your organization will have the tools necessary to hire, select, and replicate top performers — taking the guesswork out of the selection process.

Are you ready to experience a more in-depth look of PXT Select? Get a demo today: www.pxtselect.com/Get-a-Demo.aspx.

Building High-Performing Sales Teams

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by William Hull and Crystal Thomas

for
dummies®
A Wiley Brand

Building High-Performing Sales Teams For Dummies®, PXT Select Special Edition

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Introduction

No activity directly impacts your company's success more than sales. Not marketing, not the efforts of your leadership team, not even the products or services you provide. Sure, all those things matter a lot, but without a sales team capable of converting prospects at an acceptable rate and keeping customers coming back, your business will struggle.

Often, your sales team handles a prospect's first interaction with your company. That experience, good or bad, will shape how that person perceives your business moving forward. Positive experiences keep prospects in the buying journey, making them more likely to become customers. Negative experiences push them away. The bottom line is that good salespeople help businesses thrive and bad ones make it very difficult to succeed — or they sink your business altogether.

Needless to say, your business needs a high-performance sales team, but that's not a simple thing to build or maintain. You need data-informed insights to know which candidates to hire and similar knowledge about the salespeople you already employ so you can coach them to excel.

About the Book

Building High-Performance Sales Teams For Dummies, PXT Select Special Edition, is your road map for building the kind of sales team your business needs to succeed. It dives into the two most critical elements for sales success: hiring the right people and coaching them well. The book builds upon insights we share in our last book, *Hiring Successfully For Dummies,* but focuses specifically on sales.

Our approach is straightforward. First, we show you how to fill sales roles with people predisposed to be successful in those roles, thereby avoiding sales hiring disasters. Next, we provide you with the tools you need to coach and develop your existing teams into sales superstars. The book is packed with research insights, as well as real-world examples of how other companies, just like yours, have achieved extraordinary sales success.

Foolish Assumptions

In writing this book, we made some assumptions about you, the reader:

» You may be a sales manager, trainer, coach, or consultant.

» You have responsibility for turbocharging sales performance.

» You want to arm yourself with data and new insights.

Icons Used in This Book

Check the margins of this book. See those icons? They're guideposts connecting you with important points:

You're in a hurry, but even as you speed-read, you won't want to miss the key points marked by the Remember icon.

You want advice? The Tip icon spotlights something that'll help you understand and master the art of job fit.

Lots can go wrong in the hiring process, and the Warning icon points to things you'll want to be aware of and avoid.

Where to Go from Here

Hungry for even more insights after finishing this book? Try these:

» **PXT Select:** A tool for helping you assess job roles and candidates, understand the data, prepare for effective interviews, and achieve job fit. Head to www.pxtselect.com to learn more.

» *Hiring Successfully For Dummies,* **PXT Select Special Edition:** Our e-book on how to make data-driven hiring decisions. Download it for free at www.pxtselect.com/hiring-successfully-for-dummies-pxt-select.aspx.

» **State of Hiring 2022:** The latest trends impacting hiring. Check it out at www.pxtselect.com/pxt-select-state-of-hiring-2022.aspx.

Chapter **1**

Avoiding Sales Hiring Disasters

Y ou no doubt already know that underperforming sales reps can make life very difficult and perhaps even sink your chances of a successful sales period or business altogether. You may have even opened this book because you're experiencing a sales problem firsthand right now. If so, you've come to the right place.

This chapter explains why high-performing salespeople are essential to the success of your business and outlines how destructive it can be to employ bad sales reps (or even just mediocre ones). It explains why you can't rely on instinct when selecting a sales rep — you need solid, insightful information about all candidates. And it outlines how you can avoid sales hiring disasters by applying something we call *job fit* to select people whose characteristics and tendencies make them predisposed to sales success.

Understanding Why Salespeople Are So Critical

It's hard to overstate how important salespeople are to the success of a business. After all, "nothing happens until someone sells something," according to a famous quote attributed to Henry Ford and repeated by many business gurus long since the Model T and the advent of the assembly line changed the world.

Of course, even though we all know that a whole lot of other things have to happen before something can be sold, there's no arguing with Ford's underlying point that companies need sales — and usually lots of them — to justify investments and to keep the lights on.

But aren't salespeople becoming irrelevant to the buying process these days? You may have heard that suggestion, based on the fact that buyers have access to more information about your firm and products than ever before. It's true that buyers nowadays often engage with sales only after conducting extensive research, but the fact is, business-to-business (B2B) firms are still seeking the help of expert problem-solvers to make purchasing decisions.

REMEMBER

A survey conducted by RAIN Group confirms this. It found that 71 percent of B2B buyers preferred to actively engage with sellers for new ideas about how to drive business results. And 62 percent said they seek the advice of sales reps to help problem-solve and fix what's broken. It makes sense when you really think about it. The likelihood is essentially zero that a business would commit tens or hundreds of thousands of dollars without ever consulting a live sales rep.

Salespeople create efficiency and add value at every stage of the buying journey. Even if you can fill your marketing funnel with plenty of leads, it's all for naught if you don't have capable salespeople converting those leads into appointments and product demos. So, unless you're selling products entirely online, salespeople still matter — and the data shows they matter a lot!

Tapping into the Competitive Advantage

Let's face it: Standing out isn't as easy as it once was. Today's world is hypercompetitive — as soon as your product hits the marketplace, the competition quickly begins to reverse-engineer your technology and release its own alternative that's similar, perhaps even better. Unless you're Apple or Microsoft, it's very difficult to stay ahead of the copycats and win with products that, at least on the surface, aren't that dissimilar.

That's another reason you need the competitive advantage of high-performing sales reps. No matter how sophisticated your messaging is, branding and marketing really can't adequately convey much useful information about customization and adaptation.

REMEMBER

Even if you're lucky enough to secure a sales conversation, you're still not likely to seal the deal without a demonstration of your firm's capabilities and how they can match the specific needs of the customer. The best sales reps are exponentially better at this than their underachieving peers. McKinsey & Company has studied this, and its research reveals that the top 30 percent of sales reps outperform the bottom 30 percent by a factor of four to one.

Recognizing the Cost of a Bad Sales Rep

If you've ever hired, onboarded, and trained a sales rep who didn't turn out to be a good fit, you probably know it can be a costly lesson learned. Just how disastrous can it be, in dollar terms? The actual cost can vary depending on the industry and type of sales role, but estimates place the average cost of a single bad sales rep between $381,000 and $1 million.

Now, you know the financial ins and outs of your organization better than anyone else, but we can tell you most companies can ill afford to make million-dollar mistakes. Blunders of that scale can sometimes place an entire organization at risk of failure. So, just as a high-performing salesperson can be one of your greatest assets, a bad sales rep can potentially be a catastrophic liability.

It's bad enough to stomach lost prospects and disenfranchised clients, but if you've ever had to manage a poor performer, you

know the costs extend well beyond that. Bad sales reps are a significant time suck on management, and they can emotionally tax the entire team. The more time you spend coaching and managing the performance of chronic underachievers, the less time you can spend on mentoring and other high-value activities involving the reps who can actually help move your business forward.

If a sales rep is truly bad, you have a costly but fairly straightforward path to termination or separation. Your options include probation, a performance improvement plan, or termination.

But what about reps who fly just under the radar? Mediocre sales reps may do just enough to get by, but their consistent underperformance makes life difficult for everyone else and is costly for the business. They can spend years falling a bit short of expectations and ultimately drag you down significantly.

WARNING

When this happens, the team's overall culture suffers, and if it persists, your top performers will soon start looking for work elsewhere. Why? Because high performers want to be part of an organization that is fully committed to winning, not on a team where they're constantly compensating for the mediocrity of others. Employee retention and relocation firm UrbanBound estimated that organizations spend $37 billion annually retaining unproductive employees.

You've no doubt heard of the 80/20 rule — that is, 20 percent of your salespeople bring in 80 percent of the revenue. Imagine what could happen for your business if you could improve this ratio by just 10 percent.

Optimizing sales productivity should be a major focus for every company. The effectiveness, responsiveness, and productivity of the sales team have a direct and significant impact on your revenue. Keep reading, because the rest of this book goes into more detail about how you can do just that.

Avoiding a Sales Hiring Disaster

If you've read this far, you get the point that having the right salespeople is mission-critical. The question is, how do you make that happen?

REMEMBER

The answer boils down to two important words: *job fit.* This concept is the key to selecting candidates whose individual traits and characteristics predispose them to success in a sales role. A job fit assessment can help you avoid sales hiring disasters and find sales reps who will be high performers.

Job fit is an enlightened approach to hiring that helps organizations compare each candidate's talents, abilities, and interests with specific job requirements to see how well they align. We discussed job fit at length in our last book, *Hiring Successfully For Dummies,* PXT Select Special Edition, so we won't go as deep into the details here. We'll cover the basics and explain how it's your ticket to reducing turnover and replicating top performers. If you want to know more about job fit, just download the free e-book at `www.pxtselect.com/hiring-successfully-for-dummies-pxt-select.aspx`.

Employing a job fit approach helps you place new hires in positions where they're likely to do well and perform at their full potential. The job fit approach looks at candidates' preferences and tendencies to determine

>> If they can do the job

>> How well they'll do the job

>> Whether they'll enjoy the job

These variables, taken together, reveal a whole lot about whether a person can be successful in a particular role.

REMEMBER

To say it another way, job fit helps to ensure that the job matches the candidate's abilities. It gauges whether the job will provide sufficient stimulation that connects with their interests. And it assesses whether the demands of the workplace are compatible with this particular candidate's personality.

If all these things aren't true, there's little hope that the person can experience sustained success. The likely result is voluntary or involuntary turnover.

Even the best-intentioned people can only fake it for so long. Many candidates apply for jobs at companies they admire, or they're chasing perks and favorable benefit packages. Perhaps they hope to develop skills they think will help them be more

successful down the road. Those are important considerations, of course, but if the work is unfulfilling or impossible, none of these things matter. Placing people in jobs where they aren't a good fit isn't good for the person — and it can be disastrous for the company.

WARNING

Research conducted by *Harvard Business Review* supports this conclusion; the study revealed that most organizational turnover is the direct result of hiring someone who is the wrong fit for the position. And, for sales organizations, rep turnover can have serious financial implications for a company. According to *Forbes*, an increase of only 5 percent in sales rep attrition will hike the total cost of sales between 4 percent and 6 percent.

Job fit makes a lot of sense, and fortunately, there's a straight-forward approach to making it happen. Chapter 2 goes into more detail about assessing job fit with the help of the PXT Select Sales Reports.

Chapter **2**
Predicting Sales Performance Using Data

What's the hiring manager's primary responsibility? Picking the best person for the job. If only it were as easy as that seven-word sentence sounds.

The problem is, many hiring managers don't have the data they need to do that successfully. The common approach involving résumés and interviews is tried but not always true. Gut instincts don't get the job done either. This chapter spells out the challenges of hiring salespeople, points out where better data would be incredibly helpful, and shows how it works to gather that data and put it to good use.

Seeing the Challenges in Hiring Salespeople

As a business leader, you know from experience that hiring bad or mediocre salespeople can be disastrous for your company. As a recent *Harvard Business Review* article notes, hiring and retaining sufficient sales talent is one of the most significant growth challenges that corporate leaders face today.

It's no secret, though, how difficult it can be to make good hiring decisions based solely on what you can see during the typical selection process. That's because people are very good at customizing their résumés and moderating their behaviors during interviews to present a more capable and potentially alternate version of themselves in order to land the job. Unfortunately, they inevitably revert to their natural selves once hired, and their true tendencies and preferences take over.

Does that mean hiring criteria such as résumé details, qualifications, and interviews are worthless? No, they're still key parts of the selection process, but you just need to acknowledge how ineffective they are in predicting future job performance. That realization, however, can lead to another problem: relying instead on gut-level decisions.

Those who go down that path are often totally unaware of their own susceptibility to biases. Overconfidence is one type of bias common among hiring managers — it's when hiring managers are so certain of the value of their own subjective judgments that they ignore the objective reality of whether their decisions tend to be accurate.

Of course, no one sets out to hire salespeople who aren't a good fit and later end up struggling, but it happens all too often if you rely largely on your gut when making hiring decisions. The good news is that it doesn't have to be that way. The better path is making data-backed decisions.

REMEMBER

The question is, how can you get truly objective data? What you really need is a tool that can help you understand the characteristics of successful sales performance and how particular candidates fit in. Finding that answer is a great way to improve the hiring and retention of sales talent.

Before we talk about solutions, though, let's dive a little deeper into the most common challenges related to hiring for sales performance:

» Inadequately defined performance requirements, which can lead to incorrect selection criteria

» Unclear job profiles, which can result in hiring "unfit" salespeople

>> Low-impact interview questions, which leave you with insufficient factual knowledge about the candidate

>> Reliance on "gut instinct," which can cloud good judgment

Did you know that most hiring decisions are made within the first four minutes of an interview? That fact alone is proof of how hiring managers can rely too much on their gut. Indeed, about two-thirds of the hiring managers surveyed by PXT Select said they more often rely on instinct than data when making a hiring decision. Instinct is a commonly used subjective data point that often proves to be problematic in the hiring and selection process.

Hiring managers are often unaware that these kinds of instinctive decisions may lead them to pick candidates who share their interests or backgrounds. Or maybe they inadvertently pick candidates based on what they unconsciously think a salesperson should look like. To learn more about how this kind of instinct and unconscious bias in the selection process can get in the way of effective decisions, download the free e-book version of *Hiring Successfully For Dummies* at www.pxtselect.com/hiring-successfully-for-dummies-pxt-select.aspx.

Beyond leaning on instinct, hiring managers often commonly assume that sales success in one role will guarantee equal or even greater success in the next. That's one of the problems with relying too much on what you learned about past successes and comparing it to a résumé or an interview.

⚠️ **WARNING**

High performance in a sales role varies from one sales culture to the next and can differ from one role to the next. Subtle and sometimes not-so-subtle nuances play a big role in performance results, both positive and negative. Those nuances can be tricky to spot and evaluate.

Here's how it can play out in practice. Take a look at Figure 2-1 and meet the fictional character Jamie, a new sales manager, who was hired in March, had a great résumé and an impressive background and interviewed well. Jamie was told the sales manager role requires a lot of collaboration with the team and accuracy in creating sales forecasts, because many overarching deliverables rely on that.

Jamie sure seemed to be highly qualified, and the hiring manager had a good feeling about them. But months have passed since Jamie was hired, and they just aren't delivering the numbers.
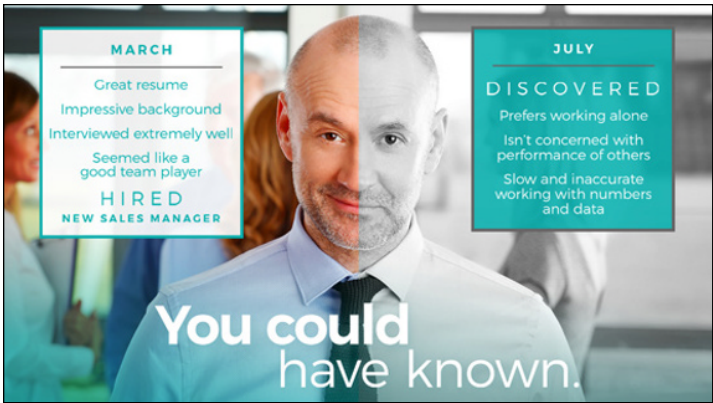
FIGURE 2-1: Meet the fictional new hire, Jamie.

Not only that, but the company has since discovered that Jamie prefers to work alone and isn't concerned with team performance, and they struggle to provide an accurate sales forecast. Jamie's approach worked quite well in their last job at their previous organization, but it's sure not working in the new role. Sound like a familiar scenario?

It's not that company leaders didn't know what they wanted when they hired Jamie. They took time to tease out important attributes they were desiring in their new sales manager. They wanted an individual who could manage people, collaborate, come up with accurate forecasts, and use data to drive sales growth.

REMEMBER

In short, they were on the right track. They just needed to take it a few steps further and really get to know the character traits and preferences of their candidates. When hiring for sales, hiring managers need a way to look beyond the surface and get some detailed and objective data about candidates.

Overcoming the Data Gap

A typical selection process starts with a résumé review and per-haps a phone screen, and then candidates are moved quickly to selection interviews. This is where sales leaders are flying blind, attempting to determine job fit without data.

When does gut-level instinct take over the decision-making process? Probably right about this point. Sales managers look back to what they know and begin making candidate fit decisions based largely on impressions. A key data gap needs to be filled, as Figure 2-2 shows.
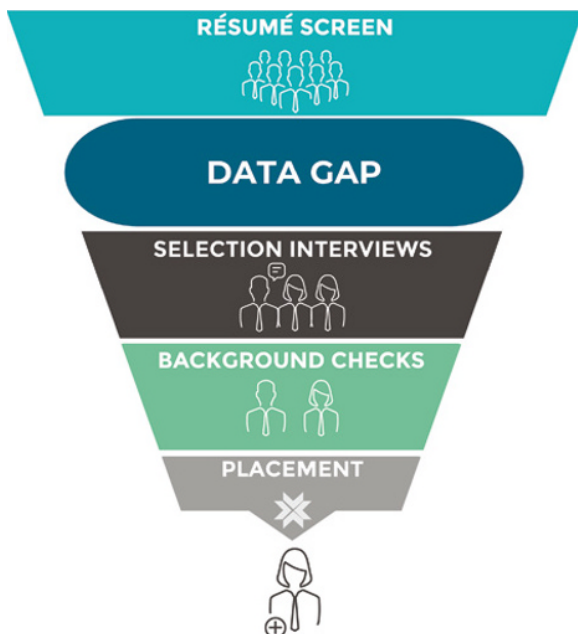
FIGURE 2-2: A big data gap in the hiring process.

What if you could add job fit data and compare the candidate to a predetermined *sales profile* (performance model)? That would be some great, actionable data that would close the data gap between the résumé and the interview. The data you get from evaluating and comparing against the sales profile can help predict future sales performance.

REMEMBER

The potency of this reporting will be determined by the caliber of performance data used to create the custom sales performance model. The use of a job fit assessment such as PXT Select can bridge the gap between the résumé and the interview, as shown in Figure 2-3.
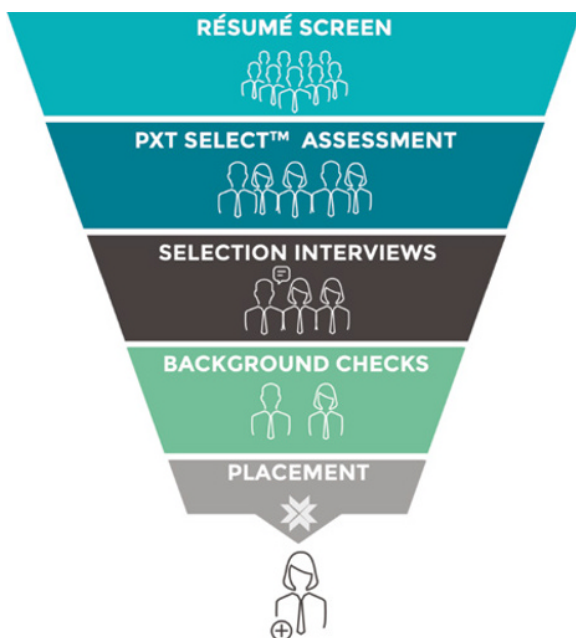
FIGURE 2-3: Bridging the data gap.

Now that we've determined where in the selection process the gap exists, and we've filled it with the PXT Select job fit assessment, let's go more in-depth about that sales profile.

One of the top challenges in hiring successful salespeople relates to unidentified metrics that impact sales results. The development of the sales profile is vital and is one of the challenges that will follow your hiring decision beyond the interview.

REMEMBER

Perhaps you're hiring for a job that has been around for a long time and has generated years of data and metrics already. Or maybe the job is newly created and you're just drafting the job description for the first time. In either situation, the right program can put you on a successful path of building your sales performance model. The PXT Select methodology is designed to meet all organizations wherever they are and propel them to a better understanding of their ideal candidate.

The use of a sales performance model helps you replicate high-performing sales results. The model development process takes into account assessment results from high performers as identified by the metrics you think matter.

This accomplishes two important things: You create a baseline of success for future hires, and you can also use that benchmark to identify gaps that are impacting your existing sales team.

TIP

Before you begin, take time to identify key performance indicators (KPIs). A logical starting point is to review KPIs you're already measuring that are tied to organizational objectives, because they can strengthen the potency of your sales performance model.

For a better understanding of how this works, let's check out a sample of a custom sales performance model (see Figure 2-4). This sales profile will help you gain insight into your candidates' thinking style, which is the top predictor of success on the job. It defines how a person processes information for problem-solving, communication, and learning skills.
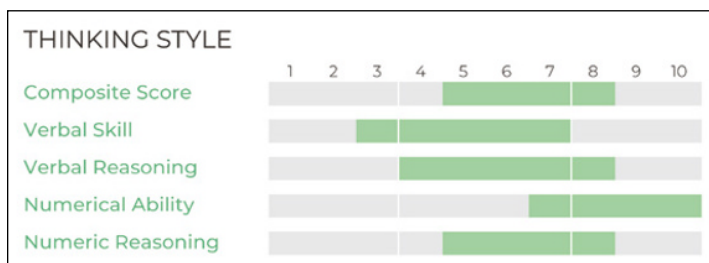
FIGURE 2-4: Assessing thinking style.

Meanwhile, an assessment of behavioral traits indicates a person's key tendencies, preferences, and job behaviors. These are the behaviors that sales manager will need to understand to drive sales results. Check Figure 2-5 to see what that looks like.

And the section on interests identifies the top three most important interests for your role, from the measured six that are available. This portion indicates a salesperson's motivation and potential satisfaction with various aspects of a position. See Figure 2-6 for an example.
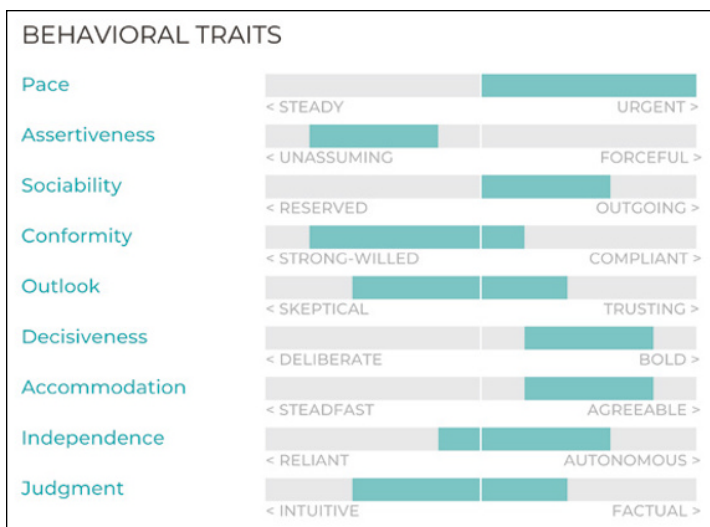
FIGURE 2-5: Checking the required behavioral traits.

TOP INTERESTS

| 1-ENTERPRISING | 2-PEOPLE SERVICE | 3-TECHNICAL |

FIGURE 2-6: Determining which interests fit a job role.

So, how do you introduce a sales profile and job fit data into your selection process? Read on for a suggested approach, knowing that you can adapt it in areas that create further efficiencies and impact for your team.

> **TIP** The key to adoption and impact is alignment. Take the time as a sales leader to connect with those who will be recruiting for you. The better they understand your goals and objectives, the more it will help them in the earlier phases of the selection process.

Phase 1: Aligning on strategy

This step helps support adoption and boost the positive, long-term impact. Here are the keys:

>> **Be on the same page.** You'll save a lot of time by establishing a recruitment strategy in collaboration with management, HR, and the sales department.

- >> **Identify must-have skills and qualifications.** Also work on the nice-to-have skills and the negotiables. Dust off and perfect those job descriptions before starting the recruitment process.

- >> **Determine how you'll measure success.** Create sales performance profiles based on metrics.

Phase 2: Aligning the data

This step helps mitigate unconscious bias and creates consistent practices. Here's how:

- >> **Assess all candidates.** Create consistent and fair hiring practices to increase results.

- >> **Apply ideal candidate ranges based on the sales profile.** Use assessments to obtain objective information regarding each candidate's personality traits and motivation.

- >> **Know the strength and challenge areas of focus in the interview.** Customized interview questions can help you maximize the interview process.

Phase 3: Aligning on expectations

This step helps hiring managers choose long–term fit. Here are the key points:

- >> **Know candidates at a deeper level.** Select candidates who best "fit" the job, based on the objective data. Don't be deceived by those who "sell themselves" in the interview process.

- >> **Be prepared to compromise.** Sadly, unicorns are hard to find. Identify and isolate important traits you're seeking in an employee, and get as close as you can, realizing that absolute perfection isn't realistic.

- >> **Create a plan to help coach and train new employees from the start to achieve sales success.**

REMEMBER

PXT Select tools provide you with the process, technology, and science you need to reliably know what differentiates performance in any sales role in your organization. After you've built a sales profile backed by data, share the profile and its value with

other stakeholders such as your sales enablement team and sales trainers. That way you can begin to use assessment data to understand performance gaps driven by behaviors or unrefined skills. It's a reliable approach for building a top-performing sales team.

Replicating High-Performing Sales Results

In an article published by *Forbes,* it's reported that high performers are 400 percent more productive than average performers. As the job's complexity increases, that productivity gap increases to 800 percent. Hiring a team that's exclusively high performers isn't really a reasonable proposition, though.

Plus, many sales managers don't have the luxury of hiring every person on the sales team anyway. Poor performance may already be a problem, and what happens if the poor performer happens to be tenured, carrying a level of institutional knowledge that would take years for a new hire to replicate? The best way to promote sales growth is by retaining talent and acting with precision in addressing performance gaps.

It's important to acknowledge from the outset that good performance rarely happens by accident. Many people find this hard to accept, and lots of leaders think they have little, if any, influence over employee behavior. The fact that you're reading this book indicates that you know better. You know that passivity is not the path to achieving great results.

TIP

To begin any evaluation aimed at replicating high results, you must begin with the correct baseline. Now's the time to create a sales profile if you haven't already. A successful sales profile will compare your existing salespeople to the ideal range for success in each trait or characteristic. This snapshot will quickly expose gaps, creating valuable reports that support the sales managers' coaching efforts.

Here's a real-life PXT Select client success story that shows the power of utilizing a sales profile: A manager in software sales was challenged with an underperforming sales rep, and it seemed like there was simply no long-term solution. The organization

was reviewing additional tools to support managers with performance problems and decided to test the PXT Select tools with this individual.

After leaders at this company reviewed assessment results and compared them to their newly created custom sales profile (performance model), they found a surprising gap in this salesperson's pace scale. See Figure 2-7 to see what that looked like — the salesperson's initials, NS, show up on the far left side of the scale, far from where the rep needed to be.

BEHAVIORAL TRAITS

Pace NS

< STEADY URGENT >
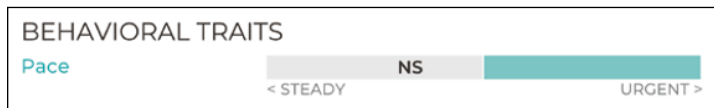
FIGURE 2-7: Solving a sales problem.

After reading through the PXT Select Sales: Coaching Report, the hiring manager implemented several tools to help bridge this gap. The manager quickly saw the sales rep's performance results start to climb. The company later reported that the salesperson was consistently performing above quota and finding new levels of success.

REMEMBER

This is an excellent example of how specific behaviors impact performance. And it also shows how assessments can be used not just to hire great new sales reps, but also to help existing sales reps increase productivity and drive results. Assessment results, along with the manager stepping into the role of coach, are the keys to finding a long-term solution.

Chapter **3**
Coaching for Sales Success

"'Coach' is one of the greatest titles that anybody can have." So said Phil Knight, the legendary cofounder and former CEO of Nike. You can imagine that when someone known for athletic shoes says something like that, he's talking about sports. But as you read in this chapter, you'll learn why coaching is just as critical for excellence in sales as it is in athletics.

This chapter introduces sales coaching as a tool for improving sales performance within your organization, explains why it matters so much, and explores how data fits into the picture. Read on for insights into launching a practical and effective sales coaching program at your organization.

Coaching on and off the Court

Coaches have a long history of helping players tap into their innate talents, maximize their abilities, and achieve their full potential. In pretty much all winning athletes' end-of-season or end-of-career speeches, you're likely to hear gratitude for the coaches who helped them become more successful than they might have

been on their own. We all know that achieving success at the highest level is rarely, if ever, a solo endeavor.

In his Hall of Fame acceptance speech, Michael Jordan thanked at least seven different coaches who played some role in helping him develop into arguably the greatest basketball player ever. It's interesting to note that Jordan's list included several coaches for whom he never played: "I have to say thank you very much for that motivation that I desperately needed."

His speech highlighted some important elements about coaching and why it can be so powerful. Coaching is tailored to fit the personal and professional development needs of the individual. But it also lifts the performance of others nearby.

REMEMBER

That's sports, of course, and everyone agrees that coaching matters a lot in athletics. Only recently has coaching gained momentum in business as a key sales enablement strategy. These days, according to ValueSelling Associates, 54 percent of high-performing companies use sales coaching more than they used to, and 60 percent have integrated coaching into their formal training programs.

Why are so many organizations jumping on the coaching bandwagon? Because high-quality sales coaching has been shown to improve sales performance by as much as 19 percent. In fact, even moderate improvements in coaching effectiveness can help move a team's performance from below average to above average, according to *Harvard Business Review.*

Data collected by the RAIN Group shows that sales coaching has a positive impact on average deal size, sales activity, and win rates. And with competition as hot as it is now, these kinds of outcomes are nothing to sneeze at. That's why sales leaders hoping to gain an advantage see coaching as an effective, practical, and necessary tool.

Any basketball coach would, of course, love to build a team where every player is of the caliber of Michael Jordan. And what sales manager wouldn't want a team of superstars, every one of them performing off the charts? That, of course, isn't the reality in most organizations.

Sales superstars or A players are game changers for a business. They're high performers who excel with little external motivation from management. Give them a sales quota, and they'll set

a personal goal well beyond that. They thrive on holding themselves to a higher standard of achievement.

REMEMBER

But there's a whole lot more demand for this type of talent than there is supply, which means the competition to land A players on the team is fierce and costly. It's normal to have a sales team with a wide range of talent, ability, and drive to get the job.

There's nothing wrong with a B player or C player. In fact, they make up the majority of most sales teams. They're not inherently bad employees — they can get the job done, in many cases on their own — but they may have a hard time achieving a high level of sustained success without good sales coaching.

Defining Sales Coaching

Before we get too far, now's a good time to align on what sales coaching is. It's important to note that it's not the same thing as a related, similar-sounding sales-enablement tool: sales training.

REMEMBER

Sales training aims to improve sales effectiveness, and it does so by equipping salespeople with a baseline of knowledge and giving them basic tools they need to start selling a product or service. *Sales coaching* is a personalized and targeted form of support that's helpful for sales reps long after sales training is over. Its goal is improving proficiency and boosting performance by focusing on correcting deficiencies in critical sales competencies.

To put it another way, sales training involves transferring knowledge from the coach to the trainee, while coaching is an individualized and participative process meant to reinforce behaviors that lead to success and end behaviors that hold salespeople back.

To take it back to the sports analogy, training offers the basics that every player needs. Coaching helps all players to individually focus on enhancing what they're doing right and stopping what they're doing wrong.

Across talent development in general, the use of coaching is on the rise. The 2020 ICF Global Coaching Study found that between 2015 and 2019, the number of coach practitioners increased by 33 percent to about 71,000. According to that study, the number of managers or leaders using coaching to improve their teams' performance grew by 46 percent over the same period.

Meanwhile, according to Salesforce Research, 81 percent of sales reps and 75 percent of sales leaders say they get valuable coaching from their manager. There's still room to improve, though, because only 26 percent said they have weekly coaching sessions with their manager.

Many different approaches are part of good sales coaching. It may involve role-playing to help boost the reps' sales skills and confidence, or perhaps follow-up conversations about how and why a particular sales call went awry. It can also include on-the-spot corrections when behaviors are particularly harmful.

TIP Coaching can be formal or informal, but either way it's more than just a casual conversation. Coaching feedback should have practical applications that help sales reps navigate current challenges. When done right, coaching reinforces training with real-time feedback, and the return on investment may start showing up right away.

Seeing Why Sales Coaching Benefits More than Sales

It should be clear by now that the impact of sales coaching can be substantial. The most obvious benefits, ones we've discussed up to this point, relate to sales metrics. Sales activity increases, win rates improve, and so do other sales key performance indicators (KPIs) that are leading indicators of better financial performance and good times ahead.

But there are more ways that sales coaching drives individual and organizational success. Read on for the impressive details.

Boosting talent acquisition and retention

Who hasn't been bogged down by the scarcity of qualified candidates to fill critical roles? Management consulting firm Korn Ferry has predicted that at the current pace, by 2030 there could be more than 85 million unfilled jobs, thanks to shortages of skilled workers.

Executives see this bleak situation coming. A PwC survey found executives alarmed that talent acquisition and retention challenges may pose serious risks to their business operations. As it happens,

coaching and other learning and development opportunities can be effective tools for helping companies combat talent shortfalls.

One reason is that coaching can facilitate career growth, and workers want that. In a 2022 Pew Research Center survey, 33 percent of workers who left their jobs the prior year blamed a lack of opportunities for career growth, and another 30 percent said poor career growth potential played at least a minor role in their decision to leave.

REMEMBER

Younger workers place a particularly high importance on personal and professional development opportunities — and they expect employers to have formal programs in place. A survey of nearly 23,000 Gen Z and Millennial workers found that learning and development trailed only work-life balance as a consideration for choosing a new job.

Improving employee engagement

Most successful organizations know that employee engagement is a key driver of performance. According to Gallup, businesses with engagement scores in the upper quartile perform significantly better than those in the lower quartile.

Digging a bit deeper, firms in the upper quartile had 18 percent higher sales productivity and 81 percent lower absenteeism. In situations where turnover is usually high, these organizations had 18 percent lower turnover. Where turnover is typically not as high, these organizations recorded turnover that was 43 percent lower.

These results really shouldn't be surprising, though. Most people recognize that engaged employees are more likely to be emotionally invested in the success of the business and feel like they have a stake in the organization's success.

Here's the thing, though: Generally speaking, employee engagement had been on the rise for more than a decade, but that good news has been fizzling out more recently. Between 2019 and 2022, the ratio of actively engaged to actively disengaged employees declined by more than 30 percent, according to Gallup

WARNING

That can mean big trouble for companies, because disengaged employees are less optimistic about the future, less productive in their jobs, and more likely to leave. And disengagement is particularly concerning in sales, which already has historically experienced high levels of voluntary turnover.

Data collected by the revenue intelligence firm Xactly has found that the problem is only getting worse. According to Xactly, sales organizations experienced a 58 percent increase in voluntary turnover rate in 2021 compared to the prior year.

But again, sales coaching can come to the rescue here. It has been found to be effective in helping to keep sales reps engaged and productive. It helps reps feel valued and that their voices are being heard, and those areas are a couple of the big drivers of engagement.

REMEMBER Coaching is participative. It allows sales reps to be part of the goal-setting process and empowers them to be involved in decisions affecting their development and success. That's a great way to get them more engaged.

Maximizing investment in sales training

The Association of Talent Development has estimated that organizations spend an average of $2,020 per person for sales training in the first year on the job. Every year after that, they spend between $1,000 and $1,499. That's a lot of money, and beyond that, sales training can take up a large chunk of rep time — on average, 10.2 training days for first-year salespeople, and roughly four days a year by the time reps hit their fifth anniversary.

WARNING So, is that time and money well spent, with a healthy return on investment? Not necessarily. Gartner research has found that business-to-business (B2B) sales reps forget 70 percent of what they learned at a training session just a week later, and a month later they've lost 87 percent of what they were taught. Learning losses this severe really aren't acceptable for organizations serious about operating at high levels.

TIP Sales coaching, though, works hand in hand with training, serving as a key learning reinforcement strategy. What's more, individualized coaching can reveal deficiencies that aren't covered in group or self-guided training environments. And it helps sales reps quickly act on what they learn, which is tremendous reinforcement.

You may be familiar with Learning Pyramid, which was introduced way back in the 1960s by the National Training Laboratory. It shows that learners retain only 5 percent of what they hear in

lectures and just 10 percent of what they read. But if they immediately practice what they learn, 75 percent of the information sticks with them.

More recent research from Frostburg State University found that coaching helps stimulate and encourage a growth mindset. And when employees embrace coaching feedback, they end up with better strategies, stronger action plans, and more successful solutions.

The bottom line: Coaching is essential if you want to make the most of your sales training investment.

Tapping into Sales Managers as Great Coaches

As a sales manager, you may or may not think of yourself as a coach — but that's exactly what your sales reps need you to be. A sales manager is better suited than anyone else to understand the day-to-day struggles of a sales team or rep. They've been there and done that.

REMEMBER

In most cases, sales managers got their leadership title because of their success as sales reps, so it makes sense that sales reps will look to their manager for guidance on how to be successful. In fact, when the Association of Talent Development asked sales reps about their preferred method of learning for its 2023 State of Sales Training report, the top answer was on-the-job coaching from the sales manager.

So, that's what employees want, but that's not the only good reason sales managers should embrace their role as a coach. As noted earlier, time spent with one's manager on personal and professional development is time well spent because it's vital to engagement. Managers are a key to engagement.

According to data from Gallup, managers can account for as much 70 percent of the variance in their team's engagement, which was more than any other factor. Another study published in 2018 in the *Journal of Personal Selling and Sales Management* found that sales coaching is more effective when conducted by a sales manager rather than a third party. That's because the manager

is more likely to have developed stronger relationships with the salesperson.

At the end of the day, it's the sales manager who's in the best position to understand the complex and diverse needs of sales-people. The sales manager is the ideal person to implement actions to help sales reps be successful.

KEY TO SUCCESSFUL SALES COACHING

What does it take to make sales coaching a success? Here are some pointers for coaches:

- Discover ways to build trusting and deeper relationships between the salesperson and the coach.

- Acknowledge both the salesperson's strengths and their weak-nesses, and hit the strengths first.

- Collaborate with the sales rep in setting achievable goals within a realistic timeframe.

- Link development actions to both professional (business) and personal development goals.

- Focus on one area of improvement at a time.

- Allow room for self-evaluation, and obtain sales rep feedback on the effectiveness of coaching sessions.

- Document progress with a formal coaching/development plan.

- Hold sales reps accountable for making progress toward their development goals.

- Give praise and acknowledge progress.

Chapter **4**
Sales Coaching Using PXT Select

It's time to make sales coaching happen, but as we suggest earlier in this book, you're not totally on your own. This chapter introduces you to an innovative tool for winning at the sales coaching game: the PXT Select Sales: Coaching Report.

Read on to learn how this tool helps you get to know the sales rep as a person, what's below the surface, and how individual characteristics are helping or slowing the cause. This chapter explores what's in the report and offers step-by-step advice for getting a sales coaching program up and running.

Getting to Know the Sales Rep

It doesn't matter whether you're coaching basketball players, opera singers, or sales reps. Your first order of business is to get to know the person you're coaching well enough to meet their specific, individual needs.

That's not necessarily easy. After all, humans are complicated creatures. All people have unique abilities and characteristics that

not only shape how they approach their work and how successful they are at it, but also how they respond to feedback. It would be an understatement to note that not everyone welcomes feedback from others. Truth is, the ones who need the most help are often the ones most likely to resist your input.

PXT Select has outlined the critical skills of high-performing salespeople, which we share and discuss more completely in Chapter 5. One of those eight keys to success is coachability. It just so happens that top-performing salespeople typically seek and welcome feedback, and they're always open to finding new ideas incorporating improved sales techniques that help them achieve more.

Mediocre salespeople tend to be just the opposite. They reject constructive criticism and prefer to stick with the same behaviors that have been limiting their success all along. It's something to consider when you're acting as a hiring manager, in fact. Determining how receptive to coaching a sales candidate is likely to be is incredibly helpful information when you're assessing that person's fit for a sales role.

So, why not simply avoid hiring sales reps who are prone to resist coaching? That's certainly how you'd proceed in a perfect world, but of course, we don't live in a perfect world. You've got lots of things to consider when making a hiring decision, and coachability is only one of them. Other critical job skills may take priority.

Beyond that, it's not like coachability is a binary thing, a yes-or-no characteristic. It would be a gross oversimplification to say that a person is either readily coachable or totally not coachable. It's more of a continuum, and whether an individual is ready to welcome feedback isn't just a factor of preferences and personality, but also life experiences.

Indeed, defensiveness is a normal human reaction to criticism, and it helps protect people from shame or hurt feelings. If someone's past experience with feedback has included embarrassment or harshly punitive action, they may be apprehensive about coaching. In these cases, it may take some time to build up enough trust to achieve productive coaching conversations.

It's also perfectly natural for a person to be skeptical of feedback, at least some of the time. You may be at least as concerned about someone who always accepts everything at face value. After

all, salespeople who are too trusting may fail to look at prospects with a critical eye and, as a result, waste lots of time chasing low-probability opportunities. So, some skepticism is healthy, even desirable.

In any case, you're not likely to be coaching only those you hired yourself. That means for some of the people you end up coaching, you've not yet had any chance to scrutinize how open to coaching they'll be.

REMEMBER

Your mission is the same, no matter what any of these details are. As a sales coach, your purpose is to help the rep deliver better results for the organization. Read on to learn more about a tool that'll help you fulfill that mission.

Introducing the PXT Select Sales: Coaching Report

The PXT Select Sales: Coaching Report uses assessment data to prepare sales coaches for conversations, informing them about how the sales rep is likely to approach different aspects of a specific sales job.

If you've made use of the PXT Select Sales: Comprehensive Selection Report, you know how it helps you get to know a candidate's preferences and tendencies, as you try to figure out who's the best fit for a specific sales position. The PXT Select Sales: Coaching Report also uses assessment data, this time to give the sales coach insight into how a person's abilities, motivations, and level of awareness impact their performance in the various aspects of a sales role.

TIP

The coaching report is designed to improve the quality of the coaching partnership by helping the coach understand what's important to the sales rep and what that their needs are. And it provides suggestions on how to approach a coaching session with that individual.

As we note earlier, receiving feedback can be tremendously uncomfortable for some people, even when it's offered with the best of intentions. Some reps will accept the critique as a positive, some may seem indifferent, and some may feel attacked

and become defensive. The coaching report helps to peel back the layers and see each individual on a deeper level. That boosts the quality of coaching and can really make a difference in the sales rep's development.

Exploring the PXT Select Sales: Coaching Report

Let's take a closer look at what's included in the Sales: Coaching Report to see how it can assist you in having powerful and impactful coaching conversations. Here are some of the key components.

Introduction

This section helps the coach understand what's in the report and what the assessment measures. This page is also where the coach can see if distortion was detected.

Distortion refers to the tendency that some assessment takers have to answer questions in a way that's socially desirable instead of answering candidly. It's definitely good to have that kind of caveat up front.

Assessment results summary

This is the place where, at a glance, the coach can see how the individual aligns with the Sales Performance Model. Each of the three sections of the assessment — thinking style, behavioral traits, and interests — includes a percent fit. There is also an overall fit percentage to help the coach see how the individual fits the model as a whole.

Narrative feedback

This section helps the coach see how an individual may approach the sales role. It includes useful insights and management tips on how to best work with the participant in a coaching setting. The report includes narrative feedback for each section of the report (thinking style, behavioral traits, and interests). The thinking style section of the report uses a composite score taken from the four thinking style scales (verbal skill, verbal reasoning, numerical ability, and numeric reasoning).

Want to see how this looks in practice? Let's check out a sample report for a fictional salesperson named Taylor Chase, comparing them against a sample sales position and showing how narrative feedback is displayed. Figure 4-1 shows one page from this report.

COACHING REPORT FOR TAYLOR CHASE

SOCIABILITY
Behavioral Traits

Sociability Desire for interaction with others

< RESERVED   OUTGOING >

TC

- Taylor does not fit the Performance Model for Sociability.
- They tend to be fairly introverted and may often keep to themselves.

What you need to know about Taylor:

- They may be somewhat uncomfortable as the center of attention.
- They may not always involve others in a discussion about how things should be done.
- Taylor tends to prefer working by themselves, at least some of the time.
- They may occasionally reach out to others for feedback.
- They can likely work well without relying on strong personal relationships.

Management tips:

- Ask them how they prefer to be approached when you need them (email, phone, one-on-one, etc.).
- Provide some opportunities for them to socialize with their colleagues, but also recognize that this may be somewhat draining for them.
- Recognize that they appreciate a level of privacy and may be slightly more comfortable working independently or in very small groups.

BOTTOM LINE:

Taylor is comfortable working alone, but willing to collaborate when necessary.

FIGURE 4-1: One section of the sample report for Taylor Chase.

As you can see in the example, each of the various report sections includes a graphic depiction of where the individual sits on specific thinking style or behavioral trait scales. In this case, it shows how Taylor charts on the Sociability trait — the initials TC
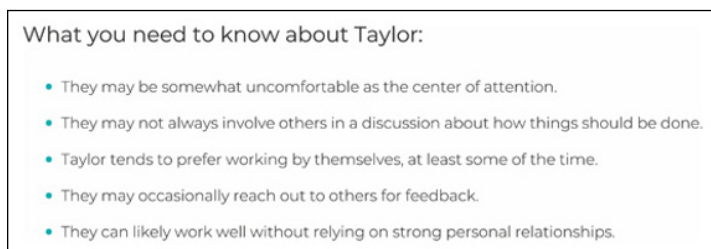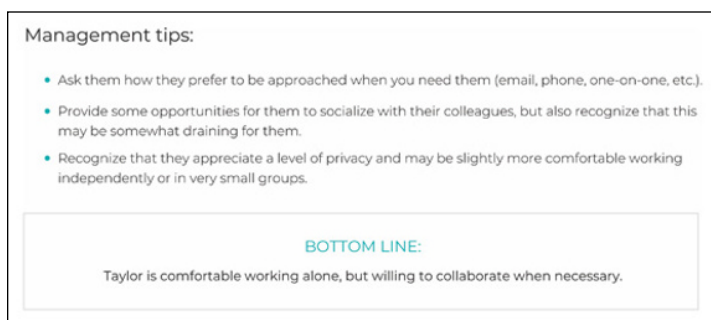
are plotted there on a line running from Reserved to Outgoing. There's also a summary of what's being measured and a discussion of the implications of that particular characteristic in relation to the job performance model.

Then comes the "What you need to know about . . ." section that provides the coach with additional insight into the participant's preferences and tendencies, along with how they may impact their performance relative to the job performance model. Figure 4-2 puts the spotlight on how this section looks for our fictional Taylor Chase.

What you need to know about Taylor:

- They may be somewhat uncomfortable as the center of attention.
- They may not always involve others in a discussion about how things should be done.
- Taylor tends to prefer working by themselves, at least some of the time.
- They may occasionally reach out to others for feedback.
- They can likely work well without relying on strong personal relationships.

FIGURE 4-2: The "What you need to know about . . ." section.

And then there's a section of management tips and bottom-line advice. These are insights about the person's results, helping the coach zero in on behaviors and ideas that may have the most impact on the sales rep's performance. Check out Figure 4-3 to see how this looks for Taylor.

Management tips:

- Ask them how they prefer to be approached when you need them (email, phone, one-on-one, etc.).
- Provide some opportunities for them to socialize with their colleagues, but also recognize that this may be somewhat draining for them.
- Recognize that they appreciate a level of privacy and may be slightly more comfortable working independently or in very small groups.

BOTTOM LINE:

Taylor is comfortable working alone, but willing to collaborate when necessary.

FIGURE 4-3: Some bottom-line advice.

Keep in mind that if your organization uses the Non-Cognitive version of PXT Select, the reports won't include the thinking style section, its scales, or the associated narrative feedback.

Getting Started with Sales Coaching

A few things should be clear by now:

» **Sales coaching is one of the best returns on investment an organization can make.** Coaching is, in fact, a no-cost, high-return initiative. It can improve financial performance for the organization, increase the commitment and engagement levels of your salesforce, and help you to acquire and retain top sales talent.

» **For sales management, coaching is one of the more critical responsibilities on your plate.** You may or may not see yourself as a coach, but that's exactly what your sales team needs you to be.

Coaching doesn't replace performance management, and you still need sales training, but coaching amplifies those initiatives and makes them more impactful. And who is in a better position than sales managers to address the unique needs of each individual on the team? Compared to any third party, sales managers are far more likely to have already established the necessary level of trust that fosters breakthrough conversations.

» **It's absolutely essential to have a powerful tool like the PXT Select Sales: Coaching Report to supercharge coaching conversations.** The Sales: Coaching Report gives you, the coach, the ability to see beneath the surface of an individual. It helps you zero in on that sales rep's personal characteristics that are most likely to result in improved performance. And one more plus: When you've got the PXT Select suite of reports, the Sales: Coaching Report is included at no additional cost.

So, now you're thinking, "What's next?" and "How do I get started?" Keep reading, because we're about to lay out, step-by-step, how you can implement a practical yet effective coaching program at your organization — starting today.

Step 1: Identifying a turnaround opportunity

Turnaround opportunities are places where performance doesn't match up with expectations, but where changing course could improve outcomes. To be clear, the turnaround opportunities aren't the disappointing sales results (or other key performance indicators, or KPIs) — those are the symptoms. The turnaround opportunities are related to the behaviors that have led to those poor results.

For example, say a sales rep is achieving 25 percent below the team's average. That's how you know there's a problem, but it doesn't tell you how to fix the problem.

Even if you investigate further and discover that the rep's call volume is significantly lower than their peers, you still haven't identified a turnaround opportunity. Yes, it totally makes sense to correlate low call volume with poor sales results in this scenario, but that doesn't give you any insight into what's keeping the rep from making as many calls as the other reps.

Getting to the root of the problem may take several coaching sessions and joint sales calls. It could be that the rep simply has poor time management skills, or it could be that the rep is struggling with the sales pitch or handling objections, which in turn is amping up the anxiety level and leading to fewer calls.

REMEMBER

Figuring that out is identifying the turnaround opportunity. Poor results have alerted you that there's a problem, and now you've discerned the turnaround opportunity, the behavior that can be adjusted to achieve a different, more desirable result.

Step 2: Setting goals

The next step is to be sure the coach and the individual sales rep are aligned regarding what they hope to accomplish together. The coaching initiative will be most successful when you work collaboratively on setting expectations.

TIP

When salespeople are actively involved in developing their goals, it helps them feel more empowered throughout the process and makes it easier for them to take ownership of the results, whether they turn out good or bad. The role of the coach is to serve as the guide for the process. The coach is there to ensure that the goals and objectives align with the organization's mission, to address

behaviors that are keeping the rep from being successful, and to consider areas of development that are important to the individual sales rep.

You may have heard of SMART goals, and this is a great place to apply that framework. SMART is short for Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound. Your goals need to be all of these things.

WARNING

It's worth emphasizing the *A* in SMART goals. Coaches should make sure that goals are achievable, not unrealistic. Of course, the world of sales is known for audacious or stretch goals, which isn't a bad thing at all. But in the context of coaching, expectations that have little chance of success can lead to further frustration and set up sales reps for failure.

That's not to say that coaching goals should be easy. Research consistently shows that people grow only when they get out of their comfort zones. The challenge for the coach is to help strike the right balance, getting reps comfortable with discomfort while not pushing them beyond the breaking point.

Step 3: Establishing a coaching cadence

It's a clear theme in this book that coaching is not a singular event but rather a process of continuous improvement. What the coaching cadence should be depends on the type of behavioral change you aim to bring about.

A good rule of thumb is to get in the habit of weekly coaching sessions unless the rep's issues require more frequent touch points. For example, if a rep is struggling to keep the pipeline up to date and accurate, you may need to meet twice a week to review opportunities, clarify expectations, and answer questions that may come up.

Step 4: Making it official

To be truly successful, formalize the commitment and establish an accountability plan. That calls for a sales coaching agreement between the sales coach and the participant. Coaching agreements can be simple or very elaborate, but at the very least they should include the following:

>> Statements of what the coach and the participant expect to get out of working together

- **»** Areas of development

- **»** Actions that need to be taken to address those development areas

- **»** The logistics of where and how often meetings should take place, and what will happen if a meeting needs to be canceled

- **»** Timelines for interim check-ins and goal completion

- **»** Clearly defined success metrics and methods of data collection

- **»** The specific responsibilities of the coach and the participant

- **»** Ways that issues or disagreements will be addressed and resolved

- **»** An acknowledgement by the sales rep and the coach

Making Sales Coaching Work

As you build out your sales coaching program, remember that sales coaching is not just about achieving quotas or goals. Sales-people are *people,* so coaching should focus on the human side of selling, not just the technical aspects.

Sales coaching is as much a culture-building tool as it is a way of boosting productivity and performance. Coaching establishes connections, aligns everyone around a common purpose and vision, and conveys that you're invested in the sales reps' success just as much as they are.

Keep sales coaching separate and distinct from performance management. Prioritize changing negative behaviors, but be sure to recognize and reinforce positive behaviors. Coaching should support the normal day-to-day workflow to help reps solve challenges with real clients and situations. And never forget that coaching is an ongoing dialogue between the coach and the participant.

Chapter **5**

Ten (or So) Critical Sales Competencies Revealed by PXT Select

High-performing salespeople don't just achieve quota; they crush it. They accomplish this by prospecting relentlessly, nurturing relationships, and following scalable and repeatable processes that make them efficient and effective.

The PXT Select Sales: Comprehensive Selection Report boils it all down to the critical sales practices and uses a candidate's assessment data to tell you how potential sales reps are likely to measure up. This chapter summarizes those practices and contrasts how high performers achieve sales success while mediocre salespeople struggle.

Prospecting for Business

The ability to seek out new business is essential to excel in sales, but it's only part of the challenge. The willingness to go after a potential new customer even in the face of anticipated rejection requires resilience and, in some cases, stubbornness.

REMEMBER High-performing salespeople are relentless prospectors. They're always looking for growth opportunities by pursuing top prospects, but also seeking growth with their existing customers. For top performers, prospecting is a way of life. Mediocre salespeople, on the other hand, procrastinate, chase low-probability clients, or spend too much time on high-effort, low-impact activities.

Initiating Contact

Even in today's world, where prospects control more of the sales cycle than ever, sales rarely move forward without salespeople making direct contact. Most business-to-business (B2B) buyers still want to meet with sales during at least the consideration phase to determine whether a product or service addresses their needs.

REMEMBER High performers know how to disrupt a prospect or customer's day by giving them a compelling reason to sacrifice their valuable time. Top sales professionals use their confidence and acumen to quickly establish a connection with new prospects. Mediocre salespeople who aren't confident may squander a prospective lead. They're not persistent, they don't make a good case for a prospect's time, or they don't make contact at all.

Building and Maintaining Relationships

Sales are built on relationships, and relationships are built on trust. In a world where everyone is inundated with information, the difference boils down to how your customers or prospects feel about your salesperson and your business.

REMEMBER High-performing salespeople put in time and effort to get to know the customer or prospect as a person. They invest in the relationship to become not just a vendor but a trusted advisor. They know that providing personal support, even on an insignificant sale, sets the tone for larger opportunities. Mediocre salespeople may be too focused on the sale to make the customer feel valued for who they are, and they may bail entirely if a short-term deal seems unlikely.

Closing the Sale

Recording sales is a measurement by which all salespeople are scored. The ability to transition the prospect from discussion to transaction hinges on the delicate combination of understanding the prospect's pain points, formulating a solution, and demonstrating a value proposition.

REMEMBER High performers keep activities progressing even when there are unknown aspects. They keep conversations active and the potential client engaged, and they work to discern possible need changes. Mediocre salespeople put self-interest in front of customer needs. They don't take time to fully understand customer requirements.

Winning as a Self-Starter

Whether a salesperson is internally motivated by the challenge ahead or focused only on a positive outcome, being a great salesperson requires perseverance. The most successful salespeople take the initiative to personally identify and undertake the hard work to achieve results.

REMEMBER Winners dive in headfirst and understand that "failure" is just learning for the first time. They may set personal goals in addition to the sales goals given to them by their managers. Less motivated salespeople, on the other hand, require more time from their managers to negotiate goals and waste their time on non-sales and high-effort/low-probability activities.

Being Resourceful

Resourcefulness is the ability to find quick and creative ways to overcome difficulties. It's a core tenet of sales. Resourcefulness is the ability to be creative for your clients from nothing but an idea.

REMEMBER High performers overcome client objections and even internal obstacles that could prevent success. Mediocre salespeople feel defeated when encountering internal challenges and may surrender when clients push back.

Working with a Team

Some see sales as an individual endeavor, but the truth is, sales is usually part of a much larger machine, and salespeople must be able to work cooperatively to achieve shared goals.

REMEMBER

High performers understand that a strong team can accomplish more than individuals working alone. The best salespeople routinely demonstrate their commitment to the team by sharing their knowledge and mentoring others. A mediocre salesperson, on the other hand, may show a "lone wolf" mentality by refusing to share knowledge with others.

Embracing Coachability

Very few people are born to be top sales performers. Coachability means demonstrating a desire to improve, learn, and adapt. Top salespeople are nearly always easily coachable.

REMEMBER

High performers are open to the feedback of others, and they incorporate new ideas into their sales techniques. They demonstrate a commitment to development and see even negative feedback as an opportunity to improve. Mediocre salespeople often bristle at even constructive criticism, rejecting advice and sticking with unsound sales behaviors that limit their ability to succeed.

About the Authors

Crystal Thomas: Crystal Thomas is the senior manager of Sales and Client Services for PXT Select, A Wiley Brand. Crystal is a versatile and dynamic leader who has spent the last 13 years building the PXT Select business. Before joining Wiley, Crystal held the position of director of talent at a financial advising and wealth management firm for over a decade, where she honed her skills in talent development. With a background in psychology, Crystal specializes in Women in Leadership initiatives and has a strong passion for empowering future leaders to activate their talents. She has spearheaded two initiatives to help relaunch women in crisis through a partnership with CareNet. She then created Selah, a resting place for single mothers needing community and self-development through a local church organization.

In addition to her professional accomplishments, Crystal actively engages in religious organizations and nonprofit expansions, collaborating with diverse cultures and international communities. She specializes in facilitating strategic planning for culture transformation, bringing her expertise to organizations seeking to create positive change. Crystal is a versatile individual with a range of creative talents. As a worship leader, she brings her passion for music to the forefront, writing and performing her own songs. Crystal's creativity extends beyond music as she writes and directs screenplays.

Despite her busy professional life, Crystal is a dedicated mother of three. She balances her career with her family life, always striving to be a positive role model for her children. Crystal's commitment to her work, family, and passion for talent development make her a highly respected and influential figure in her field.

William Hull: William Hull is a seasoned professional with nearly two decades of experience in sales and business development. Currently serving as the senior director of sales and business development at John Wiley & Sons, he has played a vital role in the success of Wiley's workplace assessments and talent development solutions for ten years. Before joining Wiley, William worked at Pearson Education, where he sold custom education and technology solutions to colleges and universities.

With an MBA from Northcentral University and his ongoing pursuit of a doctorate in Business Administration at Liberty University, William combines his academic background with practical expertise. As an adjunct professor at the University of North Texas, he shares his knowledge by teaching professional sales and marketing courses.

As a former Army officer, William brings discipline and leadership skills into his professional and personal endeavors. In his spare time, William enjoys staying active through competitive softball, running, and regular workouts, balancing his passion for sports with his commitment to personal growth.

In writing *Building High-Performing Sales Teams For Dummies,* William hopes to share his wealth of experience and knowledge with others and make significant practical and academic contributions in the sales field.

Hire and coach your way to sales success

You can have a stellar product or service, but without effective sales, you'll be sunk. It's unrealistic, though, to think you can hire only superstars for your sales team. Your best bet is to hire candidates predisposed to success in a sales role and coach them to reach their full potential. *Developing High-Performing Sales Teams For Dummies* helps you do just that. It shows how data can predict sales performance when you're hiring and how data makes you a powerful coach. Then it introduces the tool that delivers the data.

Inside…

- Learn to avoid sales hiring disasters
- Use data to understand sales job fit
- Leverage data to predict future success
- Sales coaching is more than training
- See how PXT Select boosts sales coaching

PXT SELECT™
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