
The Traits of Great Sales Leaders

We stated previously that the key to sales performance is the quality of an organization's salespeople. That includes, and starts with, having a great sales leader. But, what makes a great sales leader? There isn't a single extraordinary defining characteristic. But, there are common traits and practices.

A profitable growth focus is the foundation of the great sales leader's operating approach. Sales strategies are built around acquiring and retaining business. The strategies are particularly defined, disciplined and resolute. Losing revenue (and therefore growth) that was hard fought for is unacceptable.

An ability to **energize and inspire** sales resources to achieve **high performance standards** distinguishes the great sales leaders from the ordinary. They use every opportunity to unify subordinate managers and energize sales resources – creating a singularity of belief, purpose and *esprit de corps*.

Great sales leaders regularly **communicate** their high performance standards, encouraging and pushing to make profitable growth happen. There is little tolerance for the uncommitted. Low performers are swiftly removed. No one who works for a great leader has to wonder what the leader expects or wait for an annual review to find out whether his or her performance is satisfactory.

Disciplined sales processes guide the action plan for field sales resources. Tools facilitate customer management and tally the conversion of leads to customers. The sales pipeline and customer management system reveal what's working well, what's not, when and why. In combination, the processes and tools drive continuous refinement of the customer acquisition approach to ensure accomplishments match expectations.

While they spend considerable amount of time in the field and are involved in the sales effort, great leaders achieve results through the **delegated responsibilities and accountabilities** of their people. They resist the urge to jump in and save or close the sale, recognizing that sales people will neither rise to higher levels of competence nor assume accountability for results without having had the experience of handling difficult situations themselves.