

Assessing Your Sales Force

Is your sales effort effective and efficient? Are your salespeople willing to go the extra mile to get the sale? What can a sales manager do to improve outcomes?

If you are responsible for the management of the sales effort within your healthcare organization, you probably are asking yourself these questions often. One way to assess the current situation, to plan for improvement and to trend achievement is to use the following evaluation tool. Take a few minutes to rank your organization by answering the following: (5 = Always, 4 = Usually, 3 = Sometimes, 2 = Occasionally, 1 = Never).

My sales force functions well as a team.	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
My sales force is highly motivated to sell.	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
Measurable performance standards are used to track the accomplishments of the sales team.	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
My current sales incentive program is working well.	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
The products/services the sales force sells meet the needs of the target audience.	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
The sales team has attended healthcare specific sales training.	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
I go on periodic sales calls with the sales staff.	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
The sales staff has the support necessary to keep them in the field selling and focused on results.	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
The sales team uses an automated sales database to track activity and results.	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
I work with the sales team to develop a sales plan that clearly defines goals, strategies, objectives and tactics.	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 1

Now, take a look at the results—paying particular attention to any comments that rank a 1, 2 or 3. Are the lower-scoring areas ones that require correction in order to improve your sales efficiency and effectiveness?

You may find that you need to provide additional sales training. If so, specific training areas may include the buyer’s needs, benefit-oriented selling and management of objections. Or, they may require hands-on field training on client interactions, scripting and overall customer account management. The results may indicate a need to revisit the current sales plan with the sales team to ensure that everyone is on the right page and focused on the right results.

Develop a plan to make the changes necessary for improvement.

Once you come up with one or two areas that you know require immediate action, meet with the team to start the ball rolling. Brainstorm ideas with the group. Determine strategies that can be used to improve areas of concern. After the initial meeting, put together a draft of a 90-day action plan that states the strategies and objectives and detail tactics proposed to meet the objectives. Include the implementation and completion dates for each tactic, as well as the team member responsible for the task. Identify roles and responsibilities. For tasks, make assignments, create a timeline and build rewards for recognition to increase fun and team spirit.

Schedule a second meeting with the team to discuss the action plan draft. A day before the meeting, distribute the draft for pre-meeting review. During the meeting, involve all members of the team. Discuss any issues or concerns about the plan. Determine options for completing tactical elements. Make sure each sales team member understands their responsibility and has the time needed to perform the tasks without jeopardizing their sales activity. Before adjourning, agree on a start date and begin implementing the action plan.

Hold weekly sales meetings with the team to discuss the progress of the action plan. Any questions specific to an individual tactic should be discussed with the responsible party. Make sure everyone understands that, as a team member, you are available to assist anyone on the team. It is imperative that everyone meets his or her own completion deadlines.

Develop a process to track that the improvement plan has worked.

Learn from your successes and mistakes. The team may choose to tackle any other areas of concern identified by the evaluation tool and begin the process again. Annually, the sales manager or sales team should complete the evaluation tool in order to identify areas of improvement and detect new areas of concern.

Not only will this approach improve your sales effort, but you also will experience a higher level of ownership and energy in the sales team. They will now feel their sales experience and opinions are valuable in making your organization a larger success. More importantly, you will have a re-energized team of sales professional; with this, the sky's the limit.

For more information, please call 1-888-334-2500 or visit www.corporatehealthgroup.com.