

# Cyber-Training for Automotive Managers

**Bi-Monthly Email Lessons**



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# **Cyber-Training for Automotive Managers**

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## **Disclaimer**

These articles are written in the masculine gender for ease of writing. Salesperson, Inc. has absolutely no bias to age or sex, and believes that any person who applies himself to the study and practice of automotive management can and should be successful.

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## Week 1

# Asking the Most from Your People — and Get It



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## Cyber-Training for Auto Managers

The universal question all sales managers ask at some time or other is: “How can I motivate my people?” There are many books and theories on the subject, but the fact is that *you cannot motivate other people*. What you *can* do is hire the best people, establish the right atmosphere and ask for excellent performance. Then sales managers should ask themselves: “How can I encourage my people to perform with excellence because they want to?”

You can motivate people only on their own terms. People respond for their own reasons, not yours. You may want someone to increase productivity to meet sales quotas or to enhance efficiency. But salespeople actually carry out your program because they have their own personal motive. Sometimes the reason is that they want to please you. But motivation is most enduring when salespeople have their own inner goals and when you recognize the nature of those goals. The reason most motivational techniques fail is that they don’t focus on the individual.

The most universally successful way to

motivate is based on discovering what the other person needs. And smart questions give you the tool for discovery. The right questions can help you discover the needs of individual sales team members as they develop, grow and change.

### **Golden Rules Of Motivation: The Essential Eight**

Through hundreds of research reports, one message rings out loud and clear: To increase motivation, create an atmosphere in which people motivate themselves. When people feel personally involved in a plan, they work to make it happen.

There are eight questions you can ask yourself to create a self-motivating atmosphere. Each one involves communications with your staff.

#### **1. Do your people know your plans?**

The best way to motivate people is to let them know your plans so they can participate in them. Make it a point to share information vital to your department with everyone on your team, including the green peas. Tell them your goals and the goals of your department. Let them see the big picture, and stress the importance of their contributions to it. When people are highly motivated, it's easy to accomplish the impossible. When they're not, it's impossible to accomplish the easy.

#### **2. Do you give feedback?**

People need feedback the way they need air. Even well-motivated people die without it. They want to be encouraged if they're doing well, and if they're not doing well, they want to know why. Give feedback immediately. When you see good or bad performance, tell the performer about it right then. Don't wait a year to correct a problem or to give recognition for a job well done. Let the person know - now.

When you give feedback, you help keep communication channels open. If your people know you're willing to discuss performance with them, they'll be more likely to bring you their problems and questions and to keep you better informed. Create an atmosphere in which people aren't afraid to tell you when something is wrong, and you will have fewer surprises.

#### **3. Do you build on strengths?**

When I begin a sales training class, I often ask participants to identify their strengths and weaknesses. Invariably, they say, "I don't know what my strengths are, but my weaknesses are . "We've been so programmed to focus on weaknesses, as though any imperfection would negate or detract from any strength. But this isn't so. All success comes from strength.

Once you get people operating from a position of strength, it is easier to motivate them. They will enjoy what they're doing, and they will do better. Look at positive, not negative, behavior first. For example, after a meeting, ask yourself, "What went right? How can I apply that in other situations?" Know the strengths of your people so you can help build on them. Know your own strengths so you also can continue to grow.

#### **4. Do you give constructive praise?**

Perhaps the most golden rule of management is: "Never be too tough on a person when he's down." When people are upset over failure, harping on the negative can hurt them and quench any incentive to improve. Even when giving criticism, you can create a positive framework: "I don't think this is up to your usual standard; how can we improve the situation?" For times when criticism is necessary, engrave this message on your mind: Give praise publicly; keep criticism private.

#### **5. Do you give rewards?**

If your people meet their agreed-upon objectives, they should be rewarded with more than kind words. Money, bonuses and incentives are key motivators for people. But another reward you can give a high achiever is your time. Most sales managers spend the bulk of their time with the poor performers while the best ones fend for themselves. When someone does a good job for you, recognize their efforts and set aside time to develop ways to motivate them to do even more.

#### **6. Do you listen and learn?**

It's reported that after finding himself at a dead end, out of money and out of prospects, Thomas Edison once asked his janitor this question: "I'd like to ask your advice, Pop. What do you think I should do in this situation?" The janitor was stunned. "Nobody ever asked for my advice before," he replied. "Well," said Edison, "then you should have a lot of good ideas stored up."

No matter what techniques you employ in the quest to motivate your people, you have to be prepared to ask questions and to listen at least as much as you talk. No one's ideas should be missed. You needn't seize on every suggestion, but if you don't at least get back to people and say, "That was a terrific idea," and thank them, they'll never give you another one. Always give proper recognition for every valid suggestion.

#### **7. Do you set an example?**

The best manager is a good role model - not once in a while, but every day. Your people pay 90% more attention to what you do than to what you say. Actions do speak louder than words. A good manager knows how to say no, to be tough but fair. In other words, if you don't handle the responsibilities of your own leadership position, you can't expect your people to live up to their job responsibilities, either.

**8. Do you get people to do their best and live up to their potential?**

This is the most important question of all. If you have hired high achievers (which you have hopefully done), they will strive to do more. In fact, they will be bored and stressed out if they aren't being challenged and living up to their potential. It is up to you to create an environment in which your people are constantly reaching and striving.

"The hard thing for me when I moved up to management," said a salesperson promoted to management, "was to admit that someone on my staff could sell as well as I used to and, in some cases, even better. Even harder, though, was to learn to be patient with someone who wasn't as good as I was." Successful sales managers are motivating all the time, not just when performance is down. They are always striving for maximum people potential — to get the best from each individual in their organizations. And the objective is always to let others determine the means to growth, to let them take the responsibility for their own development.

## Week 2

# The Sales Manager as a Coach



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## Cyber-Training for Auto Managers

Have you ever watched a professional sports coach working with a player? It's a hands-on event. The coach is actively involved in the process. There is pushing, directing, handling, pointing and instructing. Coaching may be a teaching process, but it's more than just teaching.

Sports and sales are learned in the field, and they are best taught by a coach who has experienced the event in the field. For instance, a teacher could conduct a tennis class with a text, slides, film clips and overheads, but it would take a coach to show the player how to serve and volley. Until the player hits the courts, everything is theory. It's the same with sales.

Selling skills, as well as most sports skills, are acquired through information, practice, follow-up instruction and hands-on coaching. Selling coaches understand this and become professionals at the skill of coaching. And while most successful coaches have field experience, the best players do not always make the best coaches.

There are hundreds of examples of great

coaches who were only mediocre talents on the field. On the other hand, if excellence in the field made a great coach, Hank Aaron would be on the field teaching and coaching Atlanta Braves sluggers how to hit. Instead, he is in the front office. No, the coach's greatest asset is his or her ability to observe others and patiently show them how to develop good habits and skills.

The committed sales manager is a selling coach. His or her goal is to help others improve their competence and, ultimately, their confidence at performing critical selling skills.

### **The Coaching Process**

To bring about genuine performance improvement, the coach needs to follow a predictable process. It is a process you need to learn and practice in order to use effectively.

Here are the essential rules of coaching:

#### **1. Set expectations**

Clearly and simply state your goals for each coaching session. For example:

*"Today, Marie, we are going to focus on qualifying your prospect."*

If you believe the salesperson needs the information, it may be desirable to explain why the skill is important, or why you are repeating a coaching session on this particular skill. Focus on just one or two skills. It is easy to confuse and frustrate people who begin to feel they can't do anything right.

#### **2. Confirm knowledge**

The coach needs to confirm that the salesperson understands the skills needed to meet the expectation. Does the salesperson have the knowledge necessary to perform? Can she recognize a customer need and grasp how that need can be solved by the vehicle you are selling? Does Marie know how to construct an effective qualifying session? Can she build an open-ended question based on a customer's comment? Ask her to give you some examples of good qualifying questions.

If she cannot perform these skills, coaching and teaching needs to begin in the training room. There is no sense in setting the salesperson up for confidence-breaking failure just to prove a point.

#### **3. Observe performance**

Once you are certain the salesperson understands the concepts and knows how to perform the skill, you are ready to observe performance on the showroom floor and evaluate the salesperson's ability. You should overlook minor skill problems that occur in the process.

Make a note of problems when you observe them and correct them later. Remember, it is always best to stay focused on a narrow set of skills that relate to the expectations you established.

Observe to determine Marie's ability to recognize the selling situation correctly. Does she understand what to do? Is it executed properly? Does she demonstrate confidence? A good coach is concerned with identifying and coaching Marie for long-term results. This is actually more important than the outcome of the qualifying session.

Please remember, the coach cannot go to bat for the player, even if he or she recognizes that the player is going to strike out. It's a hard lesson, and the coach must often bite his or her lip. But the player will never learn to hit a curve ball if the coach keeps taking the bat away.

#### **4. Coach the skill**

Begin the coaching process by asking the salesperson to evaluate his or her results.

*"Marie, tell me how you felt you did with your qualifying session."*

This gives her the opportunity to evaluate and explore options and alternatives to her own performance, and even ask for help in a particular area. Her responses will allow you to focus on her questions and concerns. Most of the time, people will underestimate their own progress, but sometimes they are off target. It's your job to challenge the excuses that lead to failure, and recognize and help the salesperson stop any destructive habits and behaviors.

Identify areas and cite specific examples within the qualifying session where you can offer advice:

*"Marie, what do you think you could have done differently when the prospect said he wasn't interested in purchasing today?"*

Here, you are giving the salesperson the opportunity to recognize a mistake for herself and develop her own answer to the problem.

If she solves the problem, you can congratulate her. You have reinforced that she is bright enough and has the skills to solve her own selling dilemmas. You can bolster her confidence while coaching her. She will buy her own solutions much quicker than she accepts yours.

If she does not develop an acceptable answer, you can then ask her to evaluate one of yours:

*“Marie, what would have happened if you had asked him why he wasn’t planning on purchasing today?”*

### **5. Recognize progress**

Most progress can be measured in small steps. Unless you recognize it and reward the behavior, the steps might start going backwards, as the salesperson begins to grope for answers and shortcuts. Point out areas of competence and strength and use them as stepping stones for skills success.

### **6. Follow up for success**

Come back to the skill and recognize where progress has been made. Acknowledge progress, encourage future improvements and point toward solutions and answers instead of focusing only on what went wrong. Help the salesperson focus on the wins. This makes the coaching process an event Marie will look forward to, and it will help her accept the coaching as well.

## **The Coach Needs Coaching**

The coach, like any other professional, needs coaching. This can come from one of two sources: other experienced coaches or players. The coach can discuss his or her coaching methods with others who understand the process. This mentoring process allows coaches or managers to learn from each other, to discuss cases and gain new insights or a second opinion.

Perhaps the most valuable source of information is the player. The wise coach makes a habit of trying to discover coaching strengths and weaknesses at the conclusion of each coaching session.

*“Marie, I need your help to become a better coach. Please tell me how today’s coaching session was helpful to you.”*

*“Marie, I also need to know how to make my coaching better. Please tell me what you feel I could have done better.”*

Please understand that the first time you interrupt Marie or begin a sentence with “But,” or begin to explain yourself, you have told her that her comments are “wrong” or that you are not really interested in her opinion. Your job is to listen with an open mind and try to learn, just as you expected her to do when you were coaching her.

The selling coach earns many rewards: the admiration and respect of successful sales professionals, the success of the sales team and the increased earnings from building a highly profitable selling staff.

And don't forget to attend some management seminars. There's so much more to learn in order to keep you sharp as a manager.

Finally, the sales coach must remember his or her own advice: Be open to feedback, keep learning and improving the skill, and *practice*.

## Week 3

# When You're Hot, You're Hot! But What if You're Not?



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## Cyber-Training for Auto Managers

Your sales team's morale is an excellent indicator of where your business is headed. A bit depressing? You'd better do something Quick!

But first, let's take a closer look at the problem. Staff morale is defined as the combination of their confidence and discipline. While poor confidence will only produce a token effort, poor discipline will see them stop even this.

As a rule, what we expect comes from our view of the past and present events. If your business is a little slow, or your dealership is having some internal problems, you'll need to establish in the minds of your salespeople that whatever went wrong is over, and better times are coming. However serious it was, your staff must put it behind them so you can all move on.

But to where? To start, we need to find something your team can feel good about. Who performed a miracle in the midst of your problems? How can we show that this accomplishment will lead to more in the future?

If you can identify even one person who produced a good result you have established the situation wasn't impossible, just challenging. And they will become an inspiration. Politicians use this technique all the time. They will even claim a victory when things are still getting worse, but at a slower rate. They know how important it is to find something to feel good about.

However modest your recovery plans, share them. Each positive step to recovery will give everyone a sense of achievement and added confidence in their ability to make it.

You don't need a massive success to change their outlook. Every improvement can provide each member with a share of pride in the accomplishment and a little greater expectation for the outcome. A series of small accomplishments will provide more reassurance than a single event.

**It really is a simple process to improve the morale:**

- Change their view of what happened
- Adjust their perspective
- Point out the good news
- Focus their attention on the future
- Share exactly what you are going to do and how they will know it is working
- Ensure everyone feels a part of the result
- Highlight Every Accomplishment!

Then watch how your customers respond to the change in your team!

## Week 4

# Splitting Deals



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## Cyber-Training for Auto Managers

One of the complaints I consistently get from salespeople is in the area of splitting deals. I think that this has become such a problem in many dealerships because there are no clear cut policies for what constitutes a split deal, and how it should be handled when the issue arises. My rule behind splitting deals is easy - if the other salesperson does 50% of the work, he/she deserves 50% of the commission. But here's what has happened. Some salespeople think that just because they help you deliver a car, or help your customer on an inventory walk, even though they're just sitting around do nothing, deserves a split deal. I'd hate to think that the only time they'd help another salesperson would be for compensation. But apparently that's where we've come.

One way to handle this problem is by working the Buddy System. I would pick another salesperson within the dealership to be my buddy. This person would closely exemplify the type of person I would want to deal with my customers and prospects. This person would be the only one who could handle my prospects and customers.

If I'm not in the dealership, and one of my customers comes into to buy another car, he would automatically be turned over to my buddy. There would be no split deals because it would all even out in the end. If my buddy wasn't available to help, and another salesperson needed to step in, then the 50% of the work rule would apply. Any mediation on the rule would always be handled by the Sales Manager, not between the salespeople.

Here are some situations that could happen whereby a salesperson would ask for a split deal. See how you would handle them:

### **Example 1**

A salesperson is coming back from lunch and sees a prospect on the lot. He approaches the customer and says, "Hi, can I help you?" The customer says, "No, I'm just on my lunch hour and thought I'd look at some cars." The salesperson says, "Well, here's my business card, if you ever need anything, feel free to call me," and walks away. A week later, the customer comes into the dealership, never asks for the salesperson, probably threw his business card away, and gets sold by another salesperson. When the original salesperson sees his name on the sales board, he immediately says, "Hey, that was my customer, you stole my customer. I want a split deal?"

### **Comment on Example 1**

Is this a split deal? Is it even the first salesperson's customer. He didn't do any work other than handing out a business card. He didn't even get at least a name and telephone number for follow-up purposes. And he definitely didn't do 50% of the work. As far as I'm concerned, this wouldn't even be a consideration for a split commission.

### **Example 2**

A salesperson is negotiating a deal with a customer, when her 5:00pm delivery comes in an hour early. She needs the truck to be brought up front so the customer can at least take a look at the vehicle while she finishes up with her current customer. So she asks another salesperson to help bring the truck up front and show the customer his new purchase. After the delivery is completed, the helping salesperson asks for a split deal.

### **Comment on Example 2**

Is this a split deal? It took the other salesperson 20 minutes to walk back, bring up the truck, and stand there while the customer looked it over. The salesperson wasn't doing anything at the time, and should realize that some day he may need her help in doing the same. As far as I'm concerned, this wouldn't be a consideration for a split deal. What I would consider is taking this person to lunch.

### **Example 3**

You're having a big sale. There are a lot of prospects in the showroom and around the lot. One of the salespeople keeps going up to customers and says, "Hi, I'm Bob, what's yours?"

Bill? Have you made up your mind yet on purchasing a vehicle? No! All right, here's my business card. When you're ready let me know. He does this to five additional prospects until he finds one who's ready. One of the prospects he gives a business card decides to deal with another salesperson. When he sees Bill with another salesperson, he immediately goes up to him and says, "That's my customer. I'm going to want a split deal."

**Comment on Example 3**

I don't need to comment on this one. It's the same as Example 1. But believe it or not, in some dealerships, Bob would get away with this.

**Example 4**

I greet the customer at the door, do a proper job of qualifying, an excellent presentation, and go into negotiations. I wasn't able to close the deal right now because the prospect wants to think about it, and walks. About a week later, the prospect comes back into the dealership unannounced and wants to purchase. I don't happen to be there that day, so another salesperson writes it up, takes him into Finance, and they deliver it the next day. Does this salesperson deserve a split deal?

**Comment on Example 4**

Absolutely! This salesperson actually did a lot of work on this deal. So he deserves 50% of the commission.

These are just four examples of splitting deals. I'm sure there are many more. If you happen to have more examples, or have a different opinion on any of these, please feel free to email me your examples and comments. I hope these will at least get you thinking about developing a policy in writing for your salespeople, and discuss it in your next sales meeting. Once you develop your policy, strictly adhere to it, and personally handle any disputes between salespeople. Don't leave it to the salespeople to handle it themselves. It's the easiest way to destroy a team you worked hard to create.



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