

Under New Management

**Sharpening Your Skills
as an Automotive Sales Manager**



Salesperson, Inc.



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Disclaimer

This book is written in the masculine gender for ease of writing. Salesperson, Inc. or the author have absolutely no bias to age or sex, and believes that any person who applies himself to the study and practice of sales management can and should be successful.



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Introduction

“The quality of leadership, more than any other single factor, determines the success or failure of an organization.”

— **Fred Fiedler**

“Excellence is not an accomplishment. It is a spirit, a never-ending process.”

— **Lawrence Miller**

Being a Sales Manager is a gift!

If you're like most Sales Managers, you came to this position because you had great success as a salesperson. But managing your own sales is not the same as managing your team. As a salesperson, you could easily measure your success through numbers of appointments made and vehicles sold. As a Sales Manager, your success is measured by the success of others. That's not always an easy transition to make. However, it is ultimately a rewarding one. Being a Sales Manager provides you with the opportunity to share your knowledge and expertise, and to help others grow professionally and personally. As the saying goes, when you elevate the success of others, you elevate your own as well.

Today, salespeople respect those Managers who are tuned into their needs, and who are willing to come out of their offices and give them the attention and training they want. The best Sales Managers are available whenever needed, but know when to let go and let a salesperson experience success (and perhaps failure) on his/her own.

Keep in mind that just because you were a great salesperson doesn't mean you'll make a great Sales

Manager. The best take the skills they've learned on the showroom floor, and add the traits of effective leadership. Your role as a leader will then be to encourage your people to succeed. There may be substantial monetary rewards in being a great sales leader, but the greatest reward is having helped others reach their goals. Your material possessions won't really matter once you're gone. Your greatest legacy is the people you've helped build, who are left to build others in the same way.

If you can look down the road and realize that you're changing the lives of the people on your team, that should be the major reason why you became a Sales Manager. The thrill is no longer in the individual sale; it's in your team's success. The times when you have to sit back and watch your salespeople fail are frustrating. But it's part of the job — to let go of the leadership position, where you show them how to do it — to letting them show you how they do it.

My suggestion to you is be passionate about your work, and remember that enthusiasm is catching. Be proud of what you do, and be proud of what you have to share with your salespeople. Let your effort and activity levels be a model for your salespeople to follow, and you'll find that your legacy will be intact.

Continued success,
Mike Whitty

ps: You should know that I became interested in Management when I first became a salesperson. We had several Sales Managers in my dealership. One of them was a task-oriented New Vehicle Sales Manager who concentrated on his own agenda and pretty much stayed to himself, and one Used Vehicle Sales Manager, Roger Board, who was people-oriented and cared about his staffs success.

Roger was the type of Manager that didn't have to tell his salespeople what to do. If the lot needed to be changed, he went out to begin the process and his salespeople followed. If we had a contest, he made it fun to participate. If he came in to help close a deal, he would develop a plan of attack with you before he went in. If we were in a slump, he wanted to know why so he could help us get out of it. If we were down, he was motivating. When we came to work in the morning, we were happy he was there. He wanted us to work with him to increase sales for ourselves and the dealership, not work for him.

I'm telling you this story because I learned from the very best Sales Manager there ever was. I truly feel my success as a Sales Manager, and eventually a business owner and trainer was directly related to having known Roger. I am his legacy.

Chapter 1

Accepting Your Role as a Sales Manager?

“The conventional definition of management is getting work done through people, but real management is developing people through work.”

— **Agha Hasan Abedi**

“If you pick the right people and give them the opportunity to spread their wings — and put compensation as a carrier behind it — you almost don’t have to manage them.”

— **Jack Welch**

Accepting the role of Sales Manager is by far one of the most challenging positions within a dealership, and one where an individual has to stretch beyond the normal duties of day-to-day business. Being able to achieve goals and objectives through others will be determined by how aggressive you are in pursuing this new challenge and by how responsive you are to your salespeople. Some of the hats you’ll be required to wear are those of leader, supervisor, teacher, communicator, guidance counselor, motivator, problem solver and technical expert. As you can see, the responsibility is enormous and should never be underestimated.

Once you accept a management position, the progress of the department and the success of everyone within the department lies mainly with you. When the department succeeds, the Sales Manager succeeds. And when a Sales Manager becomes successful, the success is due to the efforts of all the salespeople who helped make it happen. So, I think you can see that the role of a Sales Manager really is a two-way street. If the Sales Manager takes care of the salespeople, the salespeople will ultimately take care of the Sales Manager.

But we know that life and working conditions aren’t

always this perfect. Sales Managers are human and different people exhibit different personalities, behaviors and styles for managing that may conflict with idyllic situations. Those Sales Managers who make the working atmosphere very unpleasant fail to realize that unhappy and stressed out salespeople are less productive and less likely to stay at the dealership very long. Since we all spend a large portion of our time at the dealership, it makes good sense to spend it in an environment which is pleasant, stimulating and professionally rewarding.

Because salespeople will accept this position for different reasons, with the primary reason being the need to earn money, don't expect everyone to be as committed to the job as you are. Some are there to simply put in their time in order to collect a paycheck, while others are there because it is a stepping stone to something higher.

Since managing involves getting work accomplished through other people, a major objective for every Sales Manager should be to take average people and motivate and guide them to become outstanding employees. Regardless of the reason for someone taking a sales position, initially, the quality of every person's work will be directly related to the quality of management. When you can get your salespeople to accomplish their tasks in a willing and eager way, the quality of the work will undoubtedly be high.

Following are some challenges that you will face in your new role of Sales Manager:

- **TO RUN THE SALES DEPARTMENT SMOOTHLY**

As you ease into your new position, especially if you are stepping into someone else's shoes, remain sensitive and attentive to your salespeople. Now is the time to polish your communication skills. Get to know your salespeople as individuals and learn about their ambitions, what they expect from you and the dealership, and what motivates them. Don't make drastic policy and procedure changes immediately. Remember that salespeople resist too much change all at once. A new face along with a new style of managing and added responsibilities can be very traumatic at first. Make sure that everyone understands the importance of his/her job, and how to perform their tasks. Provide assistance and training to those who need to improve their skills. Discuss your goals and deadlines and explain which areas should take priority. However, don't get carried away and demand the impossible. Be realistic in what you expect them to accomplish. Encourage them to communicate with you and with each other, and to pitch in when someone needs help. Solving small problems along the way will prevent major problems from occurring later on and will result in a more efficient operation.

- **TO CREATE A POSITIVE WORK ENVIRONMENT**

It's a known fact that when salespeople feel good about coming to work they tend to be more productive. So creating a friendly atmosphere where conflict is minimal, where everyone is treated with respect is very important. However, this isn't always enough. There are other conditions within the sales department that can positively or negatively affect salesperson performance. For instance, employee morale and productivity may suffer if the sales department's room temperature is too hot or too cold, if office areas are cramped and inadequate, or if noise levels are too high and distracting. Some of these problems may often be out of your control, so you and your salespeople will have to cope. But there are others that you will be able to correct easily and inexpensively. The more obstacles you can remove, the more pleasant your work environment will become. After all, a workplace conducive to work is a necessity, not a luxury.

- **TO PROMOTE BUSINESS AND PERSONAL GROWTH**

Contributing to the growth and development of your salespeople can be a very rewarding part of your job. The more they're able to grow as individuals, the better they'll be as salespeople. By giving them more authority, more responsibility and the freedom to creatively express themselves, you'll help increase their confidence and self-esteem. You might also unlock hidden talents that could otherwise remain undiscovered. Whenever possible, involve them in planning and decision making processes for the sales department. Help them to increase their knowledge and improve their skills through continuous training. As they become more proficient in sales, give them more challenging assignments and inspire them to try new methods. Be supportive to those who wish to pursue their educational goals. Some dealerships even offer tuition reimbursement as an incentive. Recognize initiative, contributions and outstanding performance and reward accordingly. And remember, as you develop your salespeople you also create your own opportunities for advancement. After all, if you decide to accept a promotion to General Sales Manager or General Manager, you'll want someone ready to step into your shoes.

- **TO CREATE STABILITY FOR LONG-TERM SUCCESS**

Salesperson turnover is a major concern for dealerships because it is costly, disruptive and counter-productive. Just think of all the time and money that are wasted every time you have to recruit and train new salespeople to fill the same vacancies over and over. The dealerships that are successful in reducing turnover are the ones that give their salespeople all the essentials to help them succeed. Everything that we've

mentioned in this chapter is an essential when thinking about your employees' stability, loyalty, commitment, productivity, performance, security and success. When salespeople leave jobs, it's usually for reasons other than insufficient pay. They leave because they have been treated poorly by management. Treat your salespeople well and they will show their loyalty for a long time.

- **TO MAKE THE DEPARTMENT PROFITABLE**

Since you're managing a department that is profit-generating, then you must make a profit if you expect to survive. But profit doesn't just come from selling vehicles and services. It comes from creating good customer/dealership relations that will generate respect and referral business. Profit also means being able to reduce unnecessary expenses and running a more cost-efficient department. But the major source of your profit lies with your ability to manage and lead salespeople. It takes more than one person to come up with creative ways that will work. It's an entire team effort. You as an individual may have wonderful ideas and dreams. but if they are unrealistic, or if you can't get the support of your salespeople, then your ideas and plans will not materialize.

Ultimately, your success as a Sales Manager will be dependent upon your ability to put the needs of your salespeople above your own.

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