

Sales Motivators

I have managed sales people and consultants for many years and I have always known that these people are motivated by more than just money. To get longer lasting sales results and to keep staff motivated and engaged it is important to understand what 'really' motivates sales people and then to create interventions designed to tap into this. Relying solely on money orientated incentive schemes is unlikely to produce sustainable results and it can be very costly. After all, our main objective for any sales person or sales team is to move the performance curve to the right permanently, to increase sales and profit.



I am interested in what 'really' motivates sales people or people who are involved in sales so I would like to share some of my findings into this topic with you.

I reviewed three sales motivator studies. These are;

1. A study conducted by a psychometric sales test provider on sales motivators
2. A study compiled by The Institute of Sales & Marketing Management (UK) and
3. Research by Dan Pink, author of 'Drive, the surprising truth about what motivates us'

Study one

An analysis compiled by a psychometric sales test provider produced the following eight motivators for sales people. The importance of each motivator is presented as a percentage at the end of the definition. Interestingly, money sits at number four. Whilst money is therefore an important motivator, we need to be mindful of what's more important.

1. Achievement – the extent to which one is motivated by overcoming successful challenges: enjoys challenges for their own sake. (50%)
2. Developing expertise – The extent to which one values becoming an expert in developing skills in their chosen field. (20%)
3. Affiliation – the extent to which one is motivated by interactions with other people. Enjoys helping and dealing with people (8%)
4. Money – The extent to which one is motivated by financial rewards, such as money and material possessions. (7%)
5. Security/stability – the extent to which one is motivated by stability and security of life and their career (7%)
6. Freedom – The extent to which one values personal freedom to make decisions and function independently. (4%)
7. Control – The extent to which one prefers positions of leadership with control, like being in charge. (2%)

8. Recognition/attention – The extent to which one values recognition for work well done; enjoyed being the centre of attention (1%)

Based on this study, I believe that one simple and cost effective way we can motivate our sales teams is by sharing success stories of the challenges the sales people have overcome. This will allow others to learn and develop their expertise. This also allows the sales team to interact with each other and develop deeper supportive relationships. Employees are often loyal to each other and developing this commorardery will enhance engagement.

Study two

The institute of Sales & marketing management (UK) conducted research in 2010 and 2011 into what motivates sales people. In 2010 the questions were asked of sales people only, in 2011 the questions were asked of 481 people from a broader audience. The results were very interesting for two main reasons, firstly the results themselves and secondly the difference in results once non-sales people were asked about the motivators of sales people.

Below is a comparison on the results for the two years.

	2010	2011
Compensation or incentives	35%	49%
The thrill of the chase	15%	8%
Making progress or winning	41%	27%
Recognition	9%	15%

In 2010, the sales people indicated that all factors were important with the majority stating that making progress or winning was the most motivating. However, once non-sales people were added to the survey, the results changed significantly to compensation or incentives as the most important at 49%.

I believe that if non sales people can alter the results so significantly this says a lot about what they think of sales people! Think how this might impact how marketing, engineering, support, or finance people communicate and interact with their sales colleagues? Whilst financial reward is important, perhaps the rest of the workforce need to realise that sales people also want to feel they are achieving and are doing their best. Nevertheless the old tired view of money being the most important factor for sales people looks like a view still held by many, though not the sales people themselves.

Study three

Dan Pink, author of 'Drive, the surprising truth about what motivates us', also suggests that financial incentives may not be the best motivator for sales people as it narrows the sales persons focus, and actually reduces the creativity they demonstrate in their roles. He goes as far as to say, that larger rewards, can in fact, lead to lower performance than lower rewards. Dan suggests, what works in terms of motivating sales people boils down into three main areas, which agrees with much of the previous research. The three areas are:



- I. Mastery – becoming the best at what you do
- II. Autonomy – freedom to do what you want
- III. Purpose – the yearning to do what we do in the sense of something better than ourself

Dan gives examples of alternative motivators to financial reward, one I particularly like is called giving “fedex days”. This is where sales people are given a day off to work on what ever they think may benefit the company, but they have to deliver their idea the next day. Hence fedex, it is delivered over night! Google, allow their staff 20% of their time off to work on anything they like, and not surprisingly this is where 80% of their new ideas come from.

Financial incentives are clearly important however these studies show that intrinsic motivators are also extremely important in motivating sales people. By training and developing your teams to achieve mastery, the return on your investment, which improves your sales teams performance, can be huge. By developing and showing value in your sales people you tap into the top motivators identified in these three studies; achievement, developing expertise, making progress and mastery. To get the best results incentive schemes need to tap into more than just a sales persons financial motivation.

Seven Degrees provides performance breakthrough sales training interventions that focus on internal and external factors which delivers lasting tangible benefits. Our training combines, ‘what people think and feel’ on the inside with ‘what they say and do’ on the outside. This creates massive performance improvements. For more information on our training, coaching or consulting please contact June Parker at june@sevendegrees.com.au

Also consider!

Beware, sales incentives can sometimes lead to frustration and demotivation if a sales person possesses any unconscious sales reluctance. I have seen this in teams I have worked with in the past, where the focus on sales incentives only demotivates the person because they have to do more of the behaviour that they dread, such as for example, asking for referrals or making new business development calls. If you find this is the case for anyone in your teams, simple diagnostic tools can identify any sales reluctant behaviour, then training or coaching interventions can be used to deliver massive performance breakthroughs. By recognising and eliminating call reluctant behaviour at the core where it exists at an unconscious level, sales people feel more engaged, empowered and are able to deliver improved performance results more easily.

If you would like more information on how to identify and address any call reluctance behaviours in your teams please contact us to find out how we might be able to help.



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