

INDUSTRY SPOTLIGHT: SALES TEAMS

Today's agile companies need processes and tools that enable them to move faster and more effectively. In particular, sales departments experience rising expectations of managers, high turnover, and require fast onboarding of new employees.

This paper dives into the world of sales teams at growing companies. It highlights their unique challenges and provides tried-and-true solutions from industry leaders and 15Five customers.

WHAT'S WORKING ON YOUR SALES TEAM (AND WHAT ISN'T)?

Sales teams are the lifeblood of every company that has reached a certain stage in their growth trajectory. Whether sales are stagnant or growing, many leaders of sales teams face the same challenges - they need to understand why their methodologies worked or didn't work, so that insights and learnings can be shared throughout.

In either of these scenarios, the sales organization needs a solution to navigate through underperformance or growing pains. Sales managers need to understand where things get stuck in the sales process, so that they can provide their teams with the skills and training necessary to close deals.

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The ability to ask pointed questions, gather information, consolidate learnings, and coach individual sales reps is incredibly valuable; yet difficult. Unfortunately, for many growing teams with first-time managers, they are underprepared to coach and develop their sales reps. But when done right, talent development translates to more revenue, lower attrition, and a better culture that attracts more A-players.

GROWING THE SALES ORGANIZATION “BEYOND THE DEAL”

Most sales people measure their careers by how many deals they get done or how many quarters they made quota. But some employees eventually want to develop their careers by managing people. They may have been amazing sales reps, but they lack management training. Without development opportunities, many sales reps begin looking for work elsewhere.

Turnover is a major issue for sales teams. A survey by [The Bridge Group and For Entrepreneurs](#) of 342 B2B SaaS companies, found the average turnover rate for sales reps is now 34%, the majority of which is involuntary. The same research suggests that one in ten companies experiences turnover rates above 55%. And [research by Glassdoor](#) indicates that of 1,000 salespeople surveyed across industries, more than 68% plan to look for a new job in the next year, and 45% plan to look in the next three months.

Career advancement is an important factor to keep your best people. Successful companies will create frameworks so that employees can be promoted to management and leadership roles. To do this, it calls for better coaching from managers and a focus on talent development throughout the organization.

COACHING YOUR SALES TEAM

The Challenger Sale by Brent Adamson and Matthew C. Dixon, is considered by many to be the Sales Manager's Bible. One of the findings that the authors are best known for demonstrates the enormous impact that coaching can have on a sales organization:

Median performers on a sales force could see a performance boost of as much as 19%, given a significant improvement in the coaching they receive. The impact of simply moving from the bottom third to the top third of coaching effectiveness would still result in a performance gain of between 6-8% for the core of the sales force. Not many investments can deliver that sort of productivity lift to a sales organization. (The Challenger Sale, page 152)

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The first step to coaching is creating space to be filled by the employee, and typically that process begins by asking an open-ended question. Below are a few questions that managers can ask and then respond to for immediate impact:

- 1 What challenges are you facing, where are you stuck?
- 2 What help do you need from your team or your manager?
- 3 If there's one additional sales tool that you could use, what would that be and why?
- 4 What's the most disappointing thing unrelated to a deal that happened this week?

Pose these questions at the end of the week, so that all open issues can be identified at the beginning of the following week, and managers can recommend a course of action. When managers and employees meet for one-on-ones, they don't have to waste time asking questions. Managers already know how sales reps are feeling, what went well, and where they're being challenged.

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Many sales teams use Salesforce to cache “deal reviews”, but that's not enough to surface particular issues. By intentionally structuring questions and providing contributors an opportunity to reflect, sales leaders can glean many insights. The retrospect on why a deal was won or lost, helps managers become aware of unmet needs and address them.

Some managers naturally excel at coaching, while others do not. In the next section, we'll highlight a customer story from WePay, and how their Global VP of Sales and Customer Success uses 15Five to level the playing field, so that managers are equipped with the right tools to surface employee feedback and provide better coaching.

CUSTOMER SPOTLIGHT

How WePay Develops Their Sales Talent



WePay is a rapidly growing company that has made the Inc. 500 List for the past two years. They are the leading payments provider focused solely on meeting the needs of online platforms that need to settle money between their users. Founded in 2008, WePay provides everything an online marketplace or cloud software provider needs to provide integrated payments from within their app while maintaining trust and safety. This includes not just credit card processing, but also complete solutions for managing fraud risk, regulatory compliance, and customer support provided at no extra cost.

CHALLENGES

Kurt Bilafer, Chief Revenue Officer at WePay, sought 15Five as a way to capture tribal knowledge stored in the minds of employees and convert it into institutional knowledge. WePay also had some issues around sales enablement and needed to understand where things were getting stuck in the sales process. Over the 20 months since Kurt has been leading sales, the company grew from 65 to over 200 people.

THE 5-15 METHODOLOGY

Kurt has run sales teams for over two decades, and has used [the 5-15 methodology](#) since 2003 as a great way to check in with employees on what's holding them back or going well instead of just focusing on the tactics of a particular deal. Individual contributors use the 5-15 process to recap the good and the bad of each workweek. That information cascades up as managers summarize the feedback from individual contributors

within minutes. For example, responses to “what are you hearing about our competition?” then get passed up to the CEO.

The old way of managing a sales team was to do a deal-review each week. After an hour of walking through all of the deals, managers would spend only several minutes actually coaching or guiding them. The questions asked outside of the deal-review were not standard or consistent across the team.

THE SOLUTION

Kurt now uses 15Five, an automated version of the 5-15 methodology to manage at the deal level also. Every week his sales-people provide details about what's happening in their particular deals. Additionally, 15Five provides detail on overall trends, obstacles, and cross functional wins, as well as highlighting the professional development of team members. With this feedback, Kurt can pinpoint where he needs to allocate more of his coaching time to efficiently influence specific deals.

15Five's framework allows Kurt to set consistent questions across the group and see the common themes of what's going on. For example, his SDRs are capturing all of the biggest objections that they receive early in the sales cycle. 15Five was able to help isolate several different themes that the marketing team then used to develop new sales materials.

One of the most impactful benefits of using 15Five is the ability to quickly see where people are off course and realign the team. With the channel of open and transparent communication the app provides, Kurt spends less time on status updates and more time focused on coaching and maximizing talent.

CONCLUSION

[15Five](#) is a performance management platform that helps create high performing organizations via a lightweight weekly check-in that combines continuous feedback, pulse surveys, objectives (OKRs), and peer recognition. This automatic weekly process does not rely on each manager trying to figure out what to ask and when to ask it.

The deceptively simple practice of asking questions allows employees to engage in much needed reflection. Managers can respond with support, essentially becoming coaches that bring out the best in their people. Sales managers in particular can quickly help individual reps improve, so that they can achieve their quotas while elevating their team culture. All this translates to longer tenure at the company for top employees.

15Five

ABOUT 15FIVE

15Five was created through a deep desire to bring out the best in people at work. Over 1,100 companies worldwide use the platform to allow employees to self-reflect on successes and challenges, stay focused on key objectives, and get regular feedback from managers who support them in reaching their potential. Founded in 2011 by David Hassell, 15Five is based in San Francisco and is backed by leading investors including Matrix Partners and Point Nine Capital.

For more information visit www.15Five.com