

# A SALES CONSULTANT'S GUIDE TO MOTIVATING YOUR SALES TEAM

SO YOU BOTH CAN WIN



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# A SALES CONSULTANT'S GUIDE TO MOTIVATING YOUR SALES TEAM (SO YOU BOTH CAN WIN)

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## FREE OFFER

As a way of saying thank you for reading this book, I'd like to offer you a free bonus worksheet to help you lead your sales team in a different way. The Team Motivation Form was designed to provide sales team leaders with a way to keep track of what each member of their team wants and how they will achieve it. It is a simple, very effective tool that has been called groundbreaking by sales leaders who have shifted the way they lead their teams.

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## WHO THE HECK IS JASON?



Who am I, Jason Cutter? Why did I write this book, and why would you want to read it?

I was not destined to be a sales professional. My early life and personality are not those anyone would consider as leading to the makings of a highly effective persuader and closer.

Growing up as an only child, I had a mom in banking and finance and a dad in engineering and project management. That means I had two analytical parents. Turns out my mom was also “anti-sales,” based on experiences she had working at companies where she watched what the sales reps did to customers, and what they said about those customers after they left the store. On top of that, I was shy, awkward, and a late bloomer, who didn’t fit in and ended up being bullied.

Thus, I was not a huge fan of people. My first job, other than delivering newspapers, was washing dishes at a restaurant. I just wanted to stay behind the scenes. My first retail job was at a pet store, in the tropical fish section. I liked fish, but I tolerated the people part. Then I went to college to earn my degree in marine biology, focusing on sharks.

I understood sharks way better than I did people. As I say all the time, sharks are simple—they have one thing on their mind and go in one direction. As long as you stay away from the business end, sharks are easy. People, on the other hand...!

Then, as you have guessed, life took me on a winding road to when I got my first sales job at age twenty-seven. I didn't even realize I was using persuasion. I just thought I was helping people get a mortgage. I was a much better Order Taker and sales operations guy than a salesperson. I spent the better part of the next eighteen years in sales leadership roles and then in my consulting company.

I never wanted to be in sales. I didn't play Store when I was a kid, pretending to sell my stuff to my toys, or even sell stuff to other kids. But after being in sales for so long, I realized a few things:

1. When done right, sales is all about service to the prospect.
2. Anyone can become great at sales if they choose.

Unfortunately, most people are like me—they fell into sales; they weren't planning on being a salesperson to earn a living. Even more unfortunate, and true, is that most people in sales don't receive adequate training, coaching, and mentorship. They are left to figure it out on their own.

That's what happened to me. And it was rough.

My guess is that is what happened to you as well.

Or maybe you are here, reading this, because you received training and want to brush up on your skills.

I wrote this book because it is exactly the kind of tool I wish I'd had in the beginning of my sales leadership career. I had no idea what I was doing. I was an operations manager at the time with no intention of running sales. Then they fired the original sales manager, so the CEO had me take it over. I wonder how many salespeople I could have helped succeed if I had known then what I have included in this book.

I wrote this book for you. How do I know that, considering we have never met? Because nearly every struggling sales leader—whether Team Leader or Sales Manager—has the same complaint: getting their team to stay motivated and produce week after week, month after month. To me, the best solution is clear, and it's what you are about to learn.



# INTRODUCTION



As Kim sat there, the only thought running through her head was that she was failing. And not a little bit of failure, but a lot, in what seemed like all directions.

She had been a good salesperson on the team. She was usually in the top spot for sales, and if not, in the top three each period.

That is, until one day when the Director of Sales “offered” her the position of Team Lead. Yes, she had the choice to decline, but she wanted to move up in the company and felt like it would be a bad idea to decline the promotion offer. So, she accepted, and the next week, she was magically a Team Lead.

Kim thought she would get leadership or management training, maybe access to management secrets, or maybe even get to peek behind the curtain to see what leadership did to make the company run.

After her first week in the new role, none of that had occurred. She changed her email signature, but she didn’t even change desks. Yet she was now in charge of eight other salespeople, who, last week, were her peers. She had a bonus structure for how well her team did while still being expected to close sales from her own efforts.

Basically, Kim got extra work, the dangling carrot of extra money, and now found she had more responsibility. There were emails flying back and forth all day and meetings she needed to be a part of, while still watching over her team.

Kim didn’t know what her priorities should be—her production or the team. There never felt like enough time in the day to do it all; it was like she had nine plates simultaneously spinning on little sticks. She soon realized a “good day” meant not all nine plates crashing to the floor.

Kim’s company never gave her real leadership and management training. They paid for her to go through a leadership course, but that was it. And yet her bosses seemed unhappy with her performance. She had some idea what they wanted, but she had no idea how to get there.

Unfortunately, this story happens a lot.

It happens with sales teams. It happens with operational teams. It happens with engineering teams. It happens with computer program teams.

The company reaches a point where it needs a leader for the team, so the owner and/or executives promote who they think would do the best job—typically the star player.

“Since they can sell/make/support/design/develop twenty widgets a month, they can surely help everyone else do it.”

At least that is what leadership is saying about the person they want to promote out of the options available.

But behind the scenes, what is being said is “We need someone to lead the team. Who do we have? What are our options? Really? No one with management experience? Okay, then who is doing well and could get others to do well?”

I have been in enough of these meetings that I know exactly how they go.

The company needs a sales leader—it could be a team lead or a manager—and usually the default mode is “Who do we have who will hopefully do a good job?” instead of “What do we need, and do we have anyone who fits our parameters? And if not, where can we find that person?”

Then, to justify the square-peg-round-hole promotion strategy, leadership does some math.

- Kim closes 20 sales a month
- The team she would lead averages 10 sales per month among 8 salespeople
- Yes, we will lose her production if we promote her, but...
- If she can get those 8 salespeople to close 3 more deals each per month...
- That will be 24 more deals ( $8 \times 3 = 24$ ), which will make up for the absence of Kim's sales

That makes sense, right? Seems like a solid strategy?

Yes, it makes sense.

Yes, it is some solid math.

No, it is not a solid strategy.

It's just math using the formula of *hope*.

It's built on the same *hope* strategy companies take with their salespeople.



Hire someone who has sales experience (or just hire lots of people), give them some basic training, and hope they can close enough sales.

The problem, from my experience as a sales leader and as a consultant, is that hope is not enough. Hope doesn't win Olympic gold medals. Hope doesn't win championships.

And hope isn't a good promotion and leadership strategy.

In this book, my goal is first to address the common reasons I have seen sales leaders fail. I already alluded to it, but I will go into four reasons in more detail. If you are failing right now, then you already know what is missing and the feeling you have each day as you are drowning of just wanting someone to throw you a life preserver.

In the second section, we will discuss the problem with humans. Don't get me wrong; humans are definitely the top species on the planet for good reason, but getting to where we are now has come with some serious evolutionary tradeoffs. These tradeoffs get in the way of people's success—the salespeople you manage as well as your own success.

The third section is about using motivation to lead your team. There are the two classic sales motivators (the Carrot and the Stick), but we will look at a more effective third option.

My goal is to give you both insights and practical strategies to help you succeed as a sales leader. Whether you are a Team Lead, Sales Manager, or Director of Sales (or any other manager title associated with the front-line salespeople), I want to see you win. And I want to provide you with what your company has most likely not provided you—success.

# SECTION 1

## WHY NEW SALES LEADERS FAIL



**B**efore we can dive into how to fix the problem, the challenges created, and the messes made from ineffectively moving someone into a sales leadership role, I feel it is best to break down why new sales leaders fail.

In this section, we will dive into the four main reasons they fail:

1. Top salespeople being promoted into leadership roles
2. Managers using the Golden Rule when leading
3. No training, coaching, or leadership provided
4. Getting stuck in admin/manager hell.

### FAIL REASON #1: PROMOTING TOP SALESPEOPLE

It happens all the time. It might even be the number-one way companies select their next team lead or sales manager: by looking at who is the best, or one of the best, salespeople on the team and assuming they can subsequently lead a team. Makes sense on paper, right?

I covered that already in the intro, where upper management does the math and expects that the top salesperson should be able to replicate their production across a team, thus creating more revenue than they could on their own.

Unfortunately, selling widgets is way different than successfully leading a team of people, who are unique in their own way (as we will cover a little bit later), day in and day out.

This assumption is the first and most critical flaw in the succession plan of promoting the top salesperson. And, just to be clear, this does not mean they can't be successful. It will just take some awareness of the situation and then the proper support for making it work long term.

## FAIL REASON #2: MANAGING BY THE GOLDEN RULE

The second potential reason a sales team lead or manager fails is that they follow the Golden Rule too far, and usually on autopilot. (We will cover the reasons behind this in Section 2.) The Golden Rule is to do unto others as you would want them to do unto you. Treating others with respect, dignity, empathy, and compassion are all great traits, and what the world truly needs more of all the time. Want people to be courteous to you? Hold the door open for other people. Want people to treat you with respect? Treat others with respect.

Whether someone actually does those things or just expects others to treat them that way, I think most people will agree to the Golden Rule being a good and important practice in our society.

But in sales leadership, it is a terrible rule, and detrimental to your team's success when taken too far.

Okay, let me back up just a little. The Golden Rule is great and should be followed all the time as a sales leader. Treat your team members with respect, kindness, empathy, compassion, and respect. But the Golden Rule of sales leadership is that everyone on the team is motivated the same way the leader is/was, likes being spoken to in the same way, wants to be held accountable (or not) in the same way, and wants to work as hard as the leader did.

Believing and practicing this rule is a recipe for disaster since no one will be exactly like you, so there will be a huge disconnect with your autopilot selling and leading mode and what your team needs from you to feel supported.

## FAIL REASON #3: LEADERSHIP ABDICATION

I can confidently say that as consistent as the practice is for organizations to promote their top salesperson into leadership, as equally assumable is that organizations also are not giving their new sales leaders the right support.

There is this weird unspoken abdication rule in sales leadership. Hire or promote someone who is good at sales. Give them a team to lead. Assume that since they were good at selling, they will be good at getting everyone else to sell (like we covered in Fail Reason #1). Then leave them mostly on their own while leadership goes off to do other things, fight other fires, or grow the company in other ways/departments.

The problem with this leadership strategy is that only a very, very, very small percentage of people can: a) solve all their own problems that come up, b) identify their shortcomings and blind spots and then resolve them, and c) keep themselves motivated at all times.

And, here is the truth: If someone can do those three things, they will leave the organization quickly and go off to start their own company.

Fundamentally, let's agree that no one can do all three of those categories on their own. Any successful person will share that they had help: guidance from mentors, hired a coach, attended training programs, joined a mastermind group. Each person's current reality is a result of what we know and believe, and to do something different or greater, it takes learning and believing new things, which takes getting some form of input from others.

## FAIL REASON #4: ADMIN HELL

You already know what this section is about because it has happened to you. You got promoted to a sales leadership role. You were excited to lead the team assigned to you, coaching them to success.

Then the emails start to hit your inbox. Then HR needs to meet with you about some of your salespeople. Then your boss adds you to the regular management meeting to talk about sales team stuff. Then more emails come in. Then HR has some paperwork your team needs to fill out. Then a few of your salespeople need to be "coached" (disciplined) for their performance. Then one of your salespeople keeps showing up late and forgetting to clock in, so you have to meet with HR, then with the salesperson, then fill out some paperwork. Then you have to have a meeting with the team to talk about the new required script changes. Then...then...then....

As I wrote that, it made me feel stressed inside thinking about balancing all of that and helping a sales team win day in and day out. And possibly needing to close your own sales.

One final then: Then your manager(s) gets upset with production and wonders if you just aren't good enough at your job of leading salespeople to victory. "Maybe," they think, "we made a mistake and should move them back to being only a salesperson, or just let them go." But they don't understand what they have done to you. They put you in the role of sergeant, leading your troops into battle, but then hit you with admin BS that caused you to get distracted during the war, which led to your troops being unprotected and unsupported, leading to casualties in battle.

# SECTION 2

## THE PROBLEM WITH HUMANS



All right, now that we have covered some of the main reasons sales leaders fail, let's discuss the problem with humans. Don't get me wrong; humans are great. We have become the dominant species on the planet, even if we don't generally make the best decisions regarding our own planet that we call home. One thing that sets us apart, and has led to our success, is we can think, plan, strategize, learn from the past, think about the future, and make different decisions as needed.

Squirrels, for example, don't do that. They don't sit down in the spring and say to themselves, "All right, we should really start thinking long-term—retirement—instead of going through the same routine each year. Maybe we could collect 10 percent more nuts than we need and store them away somehow for future use. Then after a few years, we can sit back, live off those stored nuts, and finally enjoy life, doing fun stuff that we always talk about but don't have time to do."

I have no proof, but I'm pretty sure that is not, has not, and would not be a squirrel "conversation." But we humans have that ability. That is why we are at the top of the pyramid.

It is also one reason being human can be so challenging. And why managing humans is even more difficult. Since we have the ability to think, plan, and strategize, we also have the ability to remember/regret the past and worry about the future. That served us well thousands and thousands of years ago because it helped our ancestors make safe decisions to keep us alive.

Now, in our current civilized world, things are much safer. But that primitive part of the brain still exists. The world around us has advanced way faster than our mind has evolved. So most people, myself included, get stuck in a self-centered mode, only thinking about themselves, what they want, what they like and dislike, and how the world looks through their perspective.

And when people are in this default, self-centered mode (again, this was a really important strategy for most of our existence), they assume everyone else thinks the same, feels the same, acts the same, wants the same things, and fears the same things.

Imagine that person is now in a sales role. Not only are they bringing with them all their own views, judgments, experiences, and perspectives, but they are also mentally carrying with them how they like to buy and how sales should be done: Pushy or Order Taker Mode, informative or assumptive, negotiating price or focusing on value.

The way they view sales, and how they operate in their conversations with potential customers, will be a result of their thoughts and beliefs. It will work within a small segment of their conversations when they encounter someone who buys the exact same way they like to sell. But it will fail far more frequently. It's not the leads. It's not the script. It's not the compensation plan. It's not the government. It's not the taxes. Their lack of sales is because of them.

Maybe you started out in sales wanting to fit everyone into your view of the world and your rules for selling, but hopefully, you shifted to realizing your potential customers are all different. That could be what helped you succeed and get recognized as a top salesperson, who was then selected for promotion.

Then, and here is where it gets really fun, when you got put into that leadership position, you defaulted back to YOU-Mode. Most new sales team leads and managers revert back to their self-centered view of the world and assume, by default and completely unconsciously, that their team of salespeople are all like them—motivated by the same things (if you got excited about money, you just figure everyone is motivated by money), afraid of the same things, wants to work just as hard as you do, cares about the same things, follows the same sales process, etc.

The most impactful advice/strategy/coaching I can give to a new or struggling sales leader is to step back and realize everyone is different, and as long as you treat your team all the same (and in your image), you will never win as a sales leader. When you make that shift and motivate each person on your team in a way they want, speak to them in a way that resonates with them, and hold them accountable to what they say they want, you will win.

This is what we will cover in the next section.

# SECTION 3

## MOTIVATION



**S**o, you want to be a better, more effective sales leader? First, let's ensure we are on the same page when it comes to the basic principles of leadership.

Leadership is about persuasion and motivation. It's about helping other people see your vision and get on board with your mission. It's about sharing what you want to do and why you want to do it. Then it's about helping your potential followers see what is in it for them—the value they will get by following you.

Great leaders are able to do this at a high level without manipulation, tricks, tactics, coercion, lies, controlling, or pushing. Great leaders inspire others to want to follow. They *pull* people into their mission and vision.

“But Jason, I am a Team Lead (or Sales Manager), not the owner of the company. I am not that kind of leader, and I don't have a mission and vision for people to follow!”

I will acknowledge that is true; as a Team Lead, you aren't in charge of the company, nor are you in charge of the organization's mission and vision.

I will also argue that you are still a leader, in the true sense of the definition. And your goal is getting your team on board with your organization's vision and mission, such that everyone is rowing in the same direction. Your job is to be a good steward of what the company stands for as well as what it needs from everyone on the team.

Your focus is setting the right example, as a leader of your team, in such a way that it inspires them. And your goal is to help motivate each person to do their best. This is what we will cover next—motivating your team.

But first, what does it mean to motivate? Most people think it's about hype and excitement, that it's the kind of thing someone does on stage, or standing on a desk, to get everyone pumped up. An image that comes to mind would be the “Motivational Seminar/Speaker” who tells inspirational stories, gets everyone excited and ready to take action in some way—maybe gets them to run to the back of the room to sign up for their course.

Yes, that is a form of motivation. But in my opinion, it is not a very long-lasting way to motivate someone. If you have ever gone to one of those types of events or sat through a “motivational” presentation like that, then you probably felt really excited as you walked out, maybe felt like you could take on the world. A week later, you were back to your normal mode of operating; nothing had changed, and you might even feel worse because you *could* have done more/bigger/better/greater things—you saw the light of opportunity—but didn’t do it. I have seen a lot of people actually become depressed after this scenario, judging themselves for not staying motivated.

I want you, the sales Team Lead, to focus on the Merriam-Webster definition of motivate: *to provide with a motive*. What is a “motive”? It is defined as: *something (such as a need or desire) that causes a person to act*.

When you motivate someone, as per the definition, you are providing them with a reason to take action. Keep this in mind as we go through the following ways to motivate your sales team.

## MOTIVATION TYPE #1: CARROTS & STICKS

Even if you have not heard the phrase, “The Carrot or the Stick,” I am sure you are familiar with that leadership style (and I use the term leadership here very loosely; it’s more of a management tool). The Carrot is any positive reinforcement for a desired behavior. It’s the money, treat, or reward you got as a child for doing something your parents asked of you, like cleaning your room, taking out the trash, or being good in the store.

With sales teams, the Carrot is easy to identify. It’s the spiff for achieving extra sales in a day; it’s the lunch given to the team that breaks the previous record. It’s the President’s Club. It’s the plaques and trophies handed out. It’s the trip to a tropical place for the top salesperson. It’s anything that is along the lines of “If you do more of \_\_\_\_\_, then I will give you \_\_\_\_\_!”

The Stick, in case you aren’t familiar with it, is the other end of the spectrum. It’s the negative consequences for not doing what is required or requested. When you were a child, it was losing your allowance for not doing your chores; it was getting grounded for bad grades in school; it was losing your TV/internet/phone time for not behaving at the store.



The Stick used on the sales team is the threats of consequences for failing to do what is required/requested in the sales role. It's the ultimatums given for not closing more sales. It's the disciplinary actions handed out. It's defaulting to terminations to handle underperformers (instead of coaching and leading).

Side note: The Performance Improvement Plan is not an example of a Stick when done properly with the intention of helping someone turn around their performance; however, most organizations use it like a Stick, and most salespeople assume it's a stick.

Here is the challenge with using the Carrot and/or the Stick: People can get desensitized to either one. This means the \$5 spiff you offered today that got the team fired up to close more sales will be met with a lukewarm response next week. The team will come to expect that \$5—it is their new baseline of additional incentive, which means if you want additional action, it will take \$10. Ultimately, the result is that for them, the \$5 needs to become \$10, which has to grow to a \$50 spiff (really, it's a bribe to get them to work harder), then to a television, then to a trip to the Caribbean, then a trip to space. And so on. The contest/reward/bribe will need to keep getting bigger and bigger to have the same effect. It's like if you drink coffee or caffeine long enough, at some point, your body gets desensitized to it; to get the same nice, jittery effect you got before will take drinking more caffeine. Same with the Carrot.

And, as you guessed, this is also true for the Stick. Threats of punishing for failure to hit the metrics will soon get tuned out without further consequences. So, the organization will follow through with punishments to correct behaviors, and eventually, get to the ultimate Stick—terminations. The challenge is that termination is the end game for that salesperson, and if that is the main negative leverage a company has, it will soon find it has no salespeople left. Or a very painful and expensive turnover problem.

The picture I just painted sure does make the Carrot and the Stick ineffective for long-term success when leading a team. They can be great, meaning effective, management tools to get short-term results above and beyond what is currently being produced. The challenge is those results are, indeed, short term. And, it is not leadership; it is management by manipulation. Bribing and threatening are manipulation tactics that focus on the briber and threatener's desires, not those of the one being bribed and threatened.

## MOTIVATION TYPE #2: INTRINSIC

What is the other option then, if the Carrot and the Stick are not effective leadership tools? The better focus is on having people follow for their own reasons. The spiffs and the punishments are extrinsic motivators—external pressures to yield a desired result. What I have found more effective is to focus on intrinsic motivators—internal pressures to yield a desired result. That desired result then becomes less about what you want as a sales leader or a company, and more about what that individual salesperson wants for themselves.

That is the key difference—to get that individual to take actions leading to achieving what they want in their life (or actions to avoid what they don't want in their life, like being homeless).

Think about a time when someone wanted you to do something for their reasons. As a result, maybe they offered you a bribe (reward of some type), or there was a threat of something unpleasant at the other end of the scale for not doing it. How did you feel? How motivated were you? Even if you were motivated in the moment, how did you feel afterwards?

Now think of a time when you had a burning desire inside to accomplish a goal, to achieve something, to do something no matter the obstacles. How did that experience feel? How motivated were you to take action? How did you overcome issues that came up? How did you feel about it afterwards?

My guess, if you are like me, is there was a dramatic difference between those two experiences. That is why you want your salespeople to be motivated by internal forces. Not for your reasons, but for theirs. In a way that leads to action taken, and hopefully, results achieved, whether you push them or not.

You want them to become self-motivated.

Now, the challenge is that most people can't sustain self-motivation. Humans struggle with two things: changing behaviors and willpower. We like our comfort zones; we like what we know, so it can take a lot of willpower to push ourselves to take new action until it becomes a habit.

So how do you help your sales team become self-motivated, given the fact that if they were actually intrinsically motivated, they would be crushing their quota already and not need your input?

The next three sections will provide you with the tools and framework to uncover what their intrinsic motivation is and how to keep them focused on their reasons for being successful.

## MOTIVATION STRATEGY #1: WHAT THEY WANT AND WHY

At the heart of intrinsic motivations is *what* someone wants. And more importantly, *why*. For the members of your sales team, your goal is to find out those two things.

We discussed in Section 2 the traps that sales leaders tend to fall into. The main one is thinking everyone wants the same thing they did as a salesperson. You might be on autopilot as you try to motivate your team or assume you know what they want. If you want/wanted it, then everyone would want it too, right?

An extension of that trap is thinking everyone is motivated by money. Most people who are successful in sales will default to saying it is about the money. They are there to make lots of money. The reason they want to be successful is the money, of course. Since that is what people will say on the surface, without understanding what lies underneath, as a sales leader, the constant Carrot being dangled will be the almighty dollar.

The first step to success in helping your salespeople shift to their intrinsic motivation is to become aware that they will have their own desires. Your mission is to find that out. But be warned: Most people don't know what they even want, so when you ask them what they want and why, you will get either "I don't know" or "Money, of course!"

You will need to probe deeper. Here is the most fascinating observation I have made in leading teams and watching Team Leads and Sales Managers, some succeeding and some failing, help their teams be motivated—the way you successfully lead a salesperson is the same way you successfully move a prospective customer forward to the closed sale.

Before you can try to "close" your prospective customer, you must understand what they want (or don't want, if they are in pain). You then need to get to the *why* behind what they want. Without that *why*, you are essentially an Order Taker, hoping they know *why* they want to buy. When you know the *why*, you can help them stay focused on that while moving them to the finish line.

In sales, when done as a professional, you are a leader of your prospect, inspiring them to follow you for their reasons. As a sales leader, you are a leader of your salesperson, inspiring them to follow you (and the company) for their reasons. Until you know *what* each member of your team wants and *why*, you will default to being a manager who focuses on using the Carrot and/or the Stick to get results.

Some of your team members will easily answer, clear on their *what* and *why*. Others will be like that prospect who just won't open up. Be persistent with an attitude of empathy, focused on your desire to help them succeed, and give them time to trust you with their hopes and dreams.

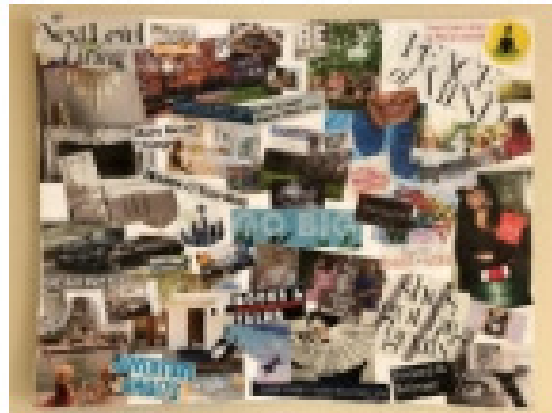
## MOTIVATION STRATEGY #2: VISION BOARD

All right, so you successfully found out *what* each member of your team wants and *why*. Now what? Help them create a visual reminder of those things. First, let's talk about what it could look like.

At some point when you were in school, maybe your teacher gave the class a bunch of magazines or newspapers, some scissors, and a poster board or piece of cardboard. Your task was to go through and find images, words, and quotes that inspired you (or whatever the theme of the project was), cut out those items, and then tape, glue, or pin them onto the board. If you were like me, this was a fun project and way better than the other subjects to cover that day.

This is what you want to have your team do. In this era, it is even easier since they can easily go online and find images and quotes to use. Most people don't have piles of magazines laying around anymore, so finding images online is the best way to go. Now, keep in mind, your team might not have printers at home (or enough ink to print everything in color), so if you have a good printer at the office, offer to have them send you their images to print. The other option is to make a digital collage using programs like Microsoft Word, Paint, or Photoshop. I am not skilled in graphic design, so I like to use the site [www.Canva.com](http://www.Canva.com), which is a free to use graphic design website. Then once they have the digital collage, it shouldn't just sit on their computer—it should be printed and displayed.

What you are wanting them to make is a Vision Board. Here are some examples:



Why do you want them to make a Vision Board? Because our brains work in pictures. They say a picture's worth a thousand words, and that's because our brain wants to make sense of images. If I say, "Don't think about a pink giraffe," I am pretty sure your brain just imagined—saw—a pink giraffe. If I said, "Now, imagine the new car you want to buy," it will do the same thing.

Having a physical representation of your goals and desires helps the brain focus on those. It is especially important for salespeople, where even the most successful sales professionals out there still fail more times than they win. Even if you had a 40 percent closing ratio, that still means 60 percent of the time, you didn't close the deal.

The Vision Board placed above the phone or computer monitor will help your salespeople stay intrinsically motivated. How can you get your salespeople to continue to pick up the phone and make calls after getting told no or being hung up on for their first fifty calls of the day? Why would they make that fifty-first call?

Sure, you could try the Carrot (bribe) or Stick (threats), but if they know why they want to make that call and push themselves to do whatever activity it takes to close the next sale, then they will crash through those barriers on their own.

Now, one caveat to the Vision Board and on leadership in general. Most people won't respect a hypocrite and won't want to follow them into battle. To avoid being a hypocrite, don't ask your team to do anything you aren't doing yourself. Before you can get your team to successfully create a Vision Board, make sure you actually know what you want and why; then get to cutting and pasting and make your own Vision Board. I think you should even share it with them as you explain the project you want them to do. But even if you don't show them what is on yours, the fact that you made it will create a different energy in your ask. I have seen many sales leaders take my advice as something that only applies to their team and is not necessary for them to do themselves. The team always senses it, and then the use of vision boards and goals for intrinsic motivation is not as effective.

## MOTIVATION STRATEGY #3: COACHING & ACCOUNTABILITY

So, the first step to successfully leading your sales team members to victory is understanding the *what* that they are working toward and the *why* behind that *what*. Second, you want to encourage them to put pictures, quotes, and phrases to that *what* and *why* so they can see it. This will help them to stay intrinsically motivated and push through the tough times and struggles that come with being in sales.

Next comes the most important part for you as the sales leader—knowing what each person's *what* and *why* are. Whether you write it down on your notepad, enter it into the computer on a document or spreadsheet, or just memorize it, you want to have it somewhere you can recall it.

It is not enough just to have the first two steps be an interesting or fun exercise for your salespeople; you want it to become a part of your leadership toolbox. That is why you want to document it on your end. Then you want to reference it in your coaching sessions with each salesperson, which will help you transition from manager to leader and coach.

Referencing their *what* and *why*, first you want to help your salespeople turn it into sales goals. Next, working backwards, turn those goals (with a deadline) into the required action steps that should lead to achieving their goal.

In case you missed it, that's one of the biggest keys...their goal. Not your goal for them. Not the company's goal for them. Their goal for themselves. (Note: Of course, ideally they would all be the same goal/target). It rarely works long term when you give someone a goal. It is always better, and more sustainable, when the other person sets their own goal.

The bigger key to success is when they set their own goal around what they want and their deepest, most emotional, and/or energized reason *why*.

Then, as a Team Lead, you have one mission. To help them stay focused and on track to achieve that goal. When they start to slip, their performance is not headed in the right direction; their activity level is not in line with what you both determined it would take to succeed; their attendance starts to suffer, and you notice a change in their attitude, which indicates your time to step in with a coaching and accountability conversation.

Here is an example of what that might sound like:

You (Team Lead): "Hi, Ken. I wanted to go over your activity levels for last week. When we set up your goals, we determined you would need to make fifty calls per day, which should lead to ten conversations, which would become around four appointments set. So, each week, you made it your goal to make 250 calls to set twenty appointments. Last week, you made 170 calls and set four appointments. Tell me how you thought the week went?"

Ken (Your Salesperson): "The week went okay, but I had a few rough days of calls and not many good leads."

You: "Okay, so the low appointment number was because of the leads. How about the low number of calls?"

Ken: "I got busy with some emails and follow-ups. And by Friday, I was feeling tired and not really into making more calls to just leave voice messages."

You: "I can totally relate. I know how that can feel. Just to confirm, your goal is still to buy that new car that is on your vision board, right?"

Ken: "Yes, hopefully by next month!"

You: "Okay. And when you put that on your vision board and set that goal, we worked backwards to determine it would take fifty calls a day, since we know that if you make at least fifty calls a day, it will lead to ten conversations. Some days, you might only get eight conversations, but long term, we know it will always work out to fifty calls to start ten conversations. Do you still agree with that ratio of activity?"

Ken: "Yes."

You: "Okay. So, if you want to hit your goal, it will take making at least 250 calls per week. Last week, you made 170 calls. I know it can feel like the calls aren't working, but we just agreed on the ratio. What is your goal for calls this week?"

Ken: "I will make 250 calls, maybe 300 to make up for last week."

You: "Sounds good. Remember, the point of the vision board and your goal is to help you stay focused, even when it feels like you aren't making progress. When you hit that point in the day where you want to stop making calls, look up at the picture of your car, imagine what it will feel like to drive it next month and that new car smell; then refocus on the calls. And if you are really struggling and feel stuck, let me know right away—I am here to support you in going after your goal."

Ken: "Thanks. Time to make some calls!"

With a dialogue like that, you need to cover several key points once the salesperson has set a goal:

1. Recap their action steps required to achieve their goal.
2. Review their actual activity level (that led to a lack of results).
3. Reconfirm that they still want their goal.
4. Help them connect the winning activity level with achieving their goal, and that their recent/past performance won't get them there.
5. Get them to recommit to the needed activity level, for their reasons (achieving their goal).
6. Offer support; if they fall, you want them to let you know so you can pick them back up.
7. Make sure to check in during the day/week/month to hold them accountable to the activity level they agreed to do.

As you went through that dialogue and the above key points, hopefully you saw that it all centers on your salesperson having a goal and you holding them accountable to what they need to do to accomplish that goal. Their goal, not yours for them. This is the intrinsic motivation—coming from within them for something they want.

This might seem like common sense. You might even be saying "Of course, I know this stuff; it's what I did in my own head that pushed me to make the calls each day and succeed. That's why they promoted me!"



If you moved up in your organization as a result of winning in your sales role, I know you were motivated internally, which led to closing more sales than the rest of the team.

I also know, from eighteen years of experience and working with hundreds and hundreds of salespeople, that most will revert to working via autopilot. And so many of the Team Leads and Sales Managers I have seen default to a) assuming everyone will know their own motivation, and b) using the Carrot and/or Stick like their manager did with them.

One thing to keep in mind is there are times when your salespeople's goal will change. Maybe they don't want that new car anymore. Instead, they want to buy a house. Or they could have given up on their goal completely. Reconfirming their goal is a vital step. Don't assume it is still the same. And if they have given up on their goal, then you want to have a new goal-setting conversation. Don't let them leave the meeting saying, "I changed my mind. I don't want to buy the car. I am okay with what I have now." Instead, get them focused on a new target. I promise that if they don't have a goal, you won't get the needed results from them as a part of your team.

## SUMMARY



Whether you were promoted to a sales leadership role because you were the best rep or you had good leadership skills, leading a team of salespeople can be challenging. A general observation is that the type of people who do well in sales succeed because they are skilled at persuading others to their point of view. This means your life in this role will be filled with your team telling you why their lack of success is not their fault, but your/company's fault, and it will seem like they only respond with activity as a result of the Carrot and/or the Stick.

You have now seen a different way to lead your sales team. A way that involves guiding them to setting their own goals, creating a vision board to keep those images clearly in front of them at all times, and then holding them accountable to what they said they wanted and how they said they would get there.

Of course, you need to help them close more sales by ensuring they have the sales skills needed and the proper tools available. And while the leads are rarely the actual cause of failure (it's either, or both, a lack of activity or a lack of skill), there are times when you need to ensure they have leads that are closable.

But when you follow the process outlined here, the meetings you have with your team members will go from bribing or threatening to accountability, coaching, and mentoring. To being a leader instead of a manager. To leading objectively, based on facts and stated goals, rather than subjectively where people *feel* like you are trying to push, control, or punish them.

Remember that the key to all of this starts with you being aware of your own view of the world and separating your preferences, goals, and motivations from what others want or respond best to. Be careful not to default to assuming that everyone is the same as you, wants the same things as you, thinks the same way as you, is motivated by the same things as you, and fears the same things as you.

It might appear that what you just read through is very simple and easy. It is simple in the fact that one of the biggest obstacles that causes sales leaders to fail is they are on autopilot when it comes to motivating, coaching, and leading others. The formula to shift to becoming a more effective, more powerful leader of people is simple—have a vision and mission that others will want to follow (in this case, set by your organization) and treating everyone how they want to be treated.

The challenge is that it's simple, but it's not easy. When I first realized this and began training sales leaders on it, on the surface most of them agreed that it made sense, that it could help them turn their team around. But once they got back into the daily sales grind, dealing with their own production and leading a team, most of them defaulted to being on autopilot, reverting back to thousands of years of evolutionary pressure that developed our brains the way it did. Remember, that part of your brain only cares about one thing—your survival. Yes, we are a tribal species, and we would like others to survive with us, but at the end of the day, it is all about us.

For some people, it actually takes a lot of effort to think about what other people want, how they want to be treated, and what might motivate them differently. Again, the formula is simple, but it is not always easy. That is why it's so important to do the process yourself: understand your *what* and *why*, create the vision board, and determine the activity level required. Then do the same with your team, holding them accountable to what they say they want.

My last recommendation...warning really...is that just like your salespeople will default back into the safety of their comfort zone and want to give up on pushing themselves to achieve their goal (which by definition is a stretch for them, or they would have already attained it), you will do the same. Very few people can be 100 percent self-motivated and driven at all times, through any and all barriers and challenges that come up. Keeping that in mind, make sure you find someone who can hold you accountable and point out your blind spots so you can achieve what you have on your vision board.

## WORKSHEET

Many people may have heard of a vision board (or something similar with various names), but usually when I train them, I have found it helps to give guidance. Here is a worksheet I give out to help people through the process.

If you would like to download a PDF version of this worksheet, go to

<https://www.sellingeffectiveness.com/guides>

DOWNLOAD NOW

## NOW WHAT?

You are now armed with a winning strategy and mindset shift for leading a team of salespeople (and really, it can be applied to leading or persuading anyone). What now?

Like any new skill you read about and then want to apply, you need to take action to make it effective. Here are my suggested action steps for you to take before jumping into using this skill with your sales team.

1. Write out notes from what we covered in this book. Don't just read the book and assume you will get it all locked into usable memory—especially in the heat of battle.
2. Spend some time thinking about what you want. This part might come easy; you might already know what you want, but challenge yourself to go deeper than just saying “money.” What do you want that money for?
3. Next, spend even more time thinking about why you want what you want. One great strategy to use is to ask why at least three times (some people recommend seven times). Why do I want to make money? To go on vacation. Why do I want to go on vacation? Because when I was a kid, we didn't go on fancy trips. Why do I want a “fancy trip”? Because I want to go on a trip and not have to feel guilty about spending money. Just keep going as deep as you can. The deepest level of why will provide the strongest motivating energy.
4. Gather pictures, quotes, and words, and make a vision board that will be physically in your workspace.
5. Share with your team what you learned. Ask them to do the same. Provide coaching and guidance if they get stuck.
6. Use the [Team Motivation Form](#) to document what each person wants, why they want it, and how they will achieve their goal.
7. To help build the habit, put a recurring event in your calendar to remind yourself to check in with everyone relative to what you put on the Team Motivation Form. Do your best to talk about it regularly rather than just bringing it up when someone is underperforming. You want them to see it as a positive conversation and not just another Stick.

That might seem like a lot of effort/steps—it is. But if your goal is to be successful as a sales leader, it will be worth it. And after you go through this the first time, and your what, why, and vision board are set, it will be easier when you get new reps on your team, or switch to leading a different set of salespeople.

Many sales leaders I have encountered agree this process should work, but they want to get help putting it in place and getting their team onboard. If you would rather get help with this process and/or you are looking for a mentor to help you get to the next level in your sales leadership career, check out my mentoring program: <https://www.sellingeffectiveness.com/for-salespeople>.

You can also check out these resources to help you become an Authentic Persuader:

- Read: *Selling With Authentic Persuasion: Transform from Order Taker to Quota Breaker* – <http://authenticpersuasion.com/>
- Listen: *Authentic Persuasion Show* [podcast](#)
- Watch: [YouTube Channel](#)
- Follow: LinkedIn where I post lots of sales and marketing related content – <https://www.linkedin.com/in/jascut>

And if you want to see everything I have available to support salespeople and teams/organizations with optimizing their selling effectiveness, go to [sellingeffectiveness.com](https://www.sellingeffectiveness.com).

Lastly, thank you! Lots of people talk about wanting to improve their skills. They list off big goals or financial milestones they want to achieve. But most of them are all talk and no action. By reading this book, and making it to the end, you have proven that you are different. I appreciate you for taking action. And I thank you for wanting to shift the way that sales leadership is done.

Jason

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be the name 'Jason', written in a cursive style.

## ABOUT JASON

Jason Cutter has a degree in marine biology from the University of California, Santa Cruz, and an MBA from Southern New Hampshire University. His life has been focused on selling and helping others to sell. He has led sales teams at multiple companies, across multiple offices, and in multiple countries, including working with offshore call centers. His niche is inside sales teams driven by inbound performance marketing.

Jason is the author of [\*Selling With Authentic Persuasion: Transform from Order Taker to Quota Breaker\*](#), and the host of the [\*Authentic Persuasion Show\*](#) podcast.

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