



## Swimming in shark infested water? Thinking about getting back in the boat?

### The Proper Care and Feeding of ... Sales People

Salespeople are on the front lines every day and they are the people that can make or break any business. Keeping them happy and motivated is not just important, it's imperative to the continued success of your business.

So, it shouldn't be any surprise that these successful\* salespeople can make you crazy. They are often highly driven, money-oriented individuals who like to do things their own way without you or anyone else getting in their way. They're probably what we call a type "A" personality. Confident, persuasive, aggressive, risk-taker, extrovert, larger than life egos with sharp teeth!

The problem is that these same great sales qualities can also cause them to wreak havoc when they get back to the office and interact with the rest of the staff. That thick skin that helps them handle rejection out in the field will, at times, cause them to come up a little short on the "warm and fuzzy" side back at the office. And that energy, determination and persistence you so value in your top producers? Expect it to be turned on you and your staff and sometimes with much undesired results. Almost by definition, a great salesperson is going to try your patience. In fact, if your salespeople aren't driving you at least a little bit crazy, you probably have the wrong salespeople in place (and revenue problems to boot).

Instead of worrying about it, getting mad or frustrated, why not become interested in this exceptional but valuable species—and learn how to handle, "care and feed" them effectively?

- For starters a sales manager has to have a *personal, strong presence*, because if you're going to swim with the sharks you can't show fear. They can smell weakness! Your personal strength must equal or exceed that of your sales team or they'll be in charge of you.

- You need to *respect their independence*, trusting them even though they're out of sight, as they should be most of the time. If you have trust issues, you probably won't find sales management a rewarding job.
- Most professional sales people have big egos, but are also highly social and able to establish rapport with customers quickly. To *maintain control and a sense of teamwork*, you will have to show individual attention to each of your sales people every day and I mean every day. Leave them alone long enough and you'll wish you hadn't.
- Provide consistent *encouragement* and you'll reap the rewards. Because they can be demanding and temperamental they can be difficult to deal with so brush up on your negotiation skills and find ways to keep them happy but do not spoil them.
- Because a salesperson is so driven to succeed they may occasionally step on the toes of others in order to get what they want. As sales manager you've got to be proactive and *head off potential conflicts*. And, if one sneaks up on you you've got to handle it immediately.

The trick in managing sales people is in who you are. Can you swim with the sharks? If not, get back in the boat because you're shark bait.

*\*Disclaimer: this article is about "successful" sales people, those that are producing and exceeding their goals on a consistent basis. If this doesn't represent your sales team please disregard the above and call me!*