

**FOR: Bank Sales Managers**

## Why Bank Sales Managers Struggle

*“At most banks, sales productivity remains at abysmally low levels. Too many managers provide excuses for poor performance rather than taking the obvious but tough steps required to improve performance. Obvious but tough step number one: make sure sales managers demand effective selling...Many banks operate with sales managers who either lack the will, the insight, or the chutzpa (a New York phrase) to get the job done.”*  
--Charles B. Wendel, Financial Institutions Consulting

So why aren't sales managers getting it done? Here is a partial list of reasons, based on my observations over the last two decades of consulting with banks of all sizes.

1. No time: Almost every harried sales manager I know says, “I'd love to be coaching my people, but there just isn't enough time.” Most senior bankers are wearing multiple hats, which leads to an inordinate amount of time in internal meetings. Many team leaders have their own production goals, which sometimes seem to weigh more heavily than their team's performance when bonuses arrive.
2. Never been trained: Oh, they may have been through a one day crash course in coaching, which usually focuses on how to critique a face-to-face sales call. Not that such instruction isn't useful, but most sales managers know a fair amount about making sales calls. What they're not as conversant with are other aspects of the sales process (e.g. how to help their team analyze market opportunities; developing prospecting strategies that fit the skills and background of their team members; goal-setting; running productive sales meetings; recruiting, etc.)
3. Never seen a good sales manager in action: This isn't GE or IBM. The chances that a banker has worked for a first-rate sales manager are increasing, but let's face it: sales management is still a new discipline in most banks. The absence of good role models is definitely holding banks back.
4. Too narrow a view of their job: This is obviously related to #3. Many “sales” managers in commercial and business banking think that coaching is really about getting loans through the credit approval process. While important, that's usually not enough to boost sales performance to the next level.
5. Banks don't place enough value on sales management: Money talks. Unfortunately, it can send the wrong message. High-performing salespeople in banks are often told that the only way to make more money is by assuming managerial duties. That sometimes works out, but it often turns “A” players in one

role into “C” players in another. (The skills and temperament of successful salespeople are often at odds with those of the best managers.) In way too many instances, the newly-minted sales manager is required to continue handling customer accounts and bring in new business—which doesn’t leave a lot of time for learning anything about coaching or leading a sales team. Over time, the producing sales manager model makes even the most conscientious managers into administrators, not coaches.

Here are steps you can take if your sales managers aren’t getting the job done:

- Make sure you have the right people in sales management slots—this is not a job for everybody.
- Provide the tools and support sales managers need to be successful.
- Institute ongoing training that addresses the major challenges sales managers face at different stages in their management careers.
- Coach your sales managers—they need to be given feedback too!
- Pay sales managers based on how well their teams perform.
- Constantly reinforce your bank’s sales management process.

