



INTEGRATING COMPETENCIES:

MAXIMIZING PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT INITIATIVES FOR SALES AND BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

When we explore the concept of performance management in the context of sales and business development, we look at a myriad of actions that need to occur in order to achieve the individual goals of executives and staff level professionals and meet the business goals of the firm they represent.

By definition, performance management is the task of recognizing and enabling ability, and managing that ability to produce desired results that are based on stated business objectives. From an application point of view, performance management generally addresses two areas of staff responsibility. The first includes those responsible for managing the performance and success of others, which would include executives and sales managers. The second includes those responsible for managing their own performance and success, which includes individual members of your staff. Strong performance management initiatives will focus on creating higher levels of clarity regarding goals, personal and professional strengths, weaknesses that impede performance, and an awareness of the appropriate courses of action that will produce results congruent with stated individual and company-wide goals.

That clarity will produce employee development initiatives designed to educate management, sales and business development staff on the skills necessary for creating higher levels of competency and performance.

For our purposes we will distill the many skills required for success in executive, management and staff level sales and business development roles into 3 key competencies or, what I'll choose to call 3 areas of intelligence. Each will focus on an individual's ability to self-manage and direct his or her level of performance as a means of achieving individual success and the success of the business at large.

OPERATIONAL COMPETENCY

Education promotes right skills. Our first competency is operational competency. It is defined by the knowledge of job specific skills and best practices that must be performed in order to achieve success in a specific role. With respect to sales and business development, examples would include:



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- Client acquisition skills consisting of prospecting methods, methods of engagement, qualification and discovery, proposal, presentation and closing skills
- Client retention skills consisting of strategic account management, customer service and cross-selling skill
- Sales business planning skills
- Sales activity tracking and reporting skills
- Time management skills
- Management and leadership skills.

Knowing that each example has best practices associated with it, a more detailed example would include the development of a thorough sales business plan that defines specific personal and professional goals, the definition of ideal prospects and clients best suited for your products and services, geographic areas of operation, targeted business demographics, multiple methods for projecting new accounts, methods of strategic account management for generating cross-selling opportunities, defined sales targets, defined levels of activity and specific courses of action as well as high payoff and time management strategies.

Without the knowledge and execution of these skills, performance will be limited. For those of you that are advocates of sales process, the compilation of best practices into a well-defined sales process will provide the structure for introducing, directing and sustaining the execution of those operational skills and best practices.

BEHAVIORAL COMPETENCY (PERSONAL LEADERSHIP)

Right skills promote right behavior and right behavior creates the right actions that produce desired results within the framework of performance management. More importantly, the primary focus of skill development is the creation of intelligent and competent behavior that empowers each member of your staff to recognize situations, assess implications, evaluate options, and make appropriate actions based on choices that support specific goals, the goals of a team, or the goals of a business.

As sales process creates a structure that defines the right skills, the intelligent strategies of personal leadership and accountability transform operational skill into real world application that empower staff to act with increasing levels of self-awareness. Evaluating actions and results, an individual that is self-aware will make proactive course corrections that produce better results, promote continual increases in skill that thereby promote continual increases in intelligence. By its nature, behavioral competency creates higher levels of performance efficiency.



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Based on our previous example, our behavioral component would address the daily execution of sales related activities defined in a sales business plan such as prospecting, scheduled meetings, the number of new account opportunities generated as well as projected and actual business closed. Again, a sales process that relies on a detailed form of sales activity tracking would provide an excellent method of feedback for gauging performance and making appropriate changes to meet specified goals as outlined in the plan. Lack of results over a given time period would require an evaluation of circumstances, choices and actions that will shed light on behavior, potentially dictating increases in activity or changes in the type of activity given levels of effectiveness in meeting goals.

EMOTIONALLY INTELLIGENT COMPETENCY

Most skill development initiatives emphasize the operational and behavioral components of performance management. However, the third and most important element is the emotionally intelligent component.

Using our model for personal leadership, the emotionally intelligent component of performance management provides individuals with another side of self-awareness – the ability to recognize and overcome the attitudes beliefs and emotional blocks that create resistance to change, limit skill development, and sabotage advances in individual and organizational achievement. Many individuals will resist or alter their level of participation in behavioral competency, knowingly or unknowingly, because of their emotional point of view.

In our previous example, lack of results around prospecting activity could be labeled with accuracy as call reluctance. Conventional wisdom dictates the use of a prescribed strategy using scripts, role-play and in-field coaching to build skill, confidence, momentum and results. In some cases, enough action will create results. A question worth posing is “what kind of results and in what period of time?” In other cases, sales people may stumble, fail and give up.

The human side of performance management is more critical to success. Many of us have come to rely on the amounts of desire, commitment, outlook, responsibility and capability to predict success in a sales and business development role. In some cases augment that knowledge with information about personality types, communication styles or even the presence of job specific skills.



However, there are a set of beliefs and emotions that can create resistance and sabotage the skills and best effort associated with operational and behavioral competency. They include:

- Fear
- Anxiety
- Resistance
- Anger
- Need for control
- Defensiveness
- Feelings of Insecurity
- Lack of self-confidence
- Feelings of inadequacy
- Lack of self-worth
- Lack of confidence and self-esteem
- Need for approval
- Fear of rejection
- Fear of failing and fear of success

In addition, attempts at performance management and skill development can be compromised by perception. Many sales and business development professionals are uncomfortable with their roles, or more aptly put how others may view them as sales people. Having developed negative opinions of sales people themselves, they strive to offset the traditional pushy, manipulative, self-centered and uncaring sales stereotypes. In their attempts to be “not salesy”, many salespeople acquiesce into information and price providers that ignore the operational and behavioral sides of performance.

As with traditional personality, communication style and skill assessments, emotional intelligent assessments provide useful information about the natural tendencies of assessment takers. But as with any comprehensive approach to performance, complimenting assessment tools with additional resources like employee-centered surveys and one-on-one discovery can round out the process for identifying, clarifying and addressing these potential blocks to performance and success. Any times all that is needed is a directed conversation held in a positive light that allows the members of your staff to speak freely about issues, concerns and their personal and professional situation.

Since the principles of emotional intelligence align themselves well with the strategies of personal leadership, self-awareness and accountability that comprise behavioral competency, the specification of goals with complimentary courses of action that permit staff members to recognize situations, assess implications, evaluate options, and make appropriate actions based on choices that support specific goals should provide a roadmap for creating change.

Since performance management emphasizes the recognition of individual strengths and weaknesses and their contribution to ability and performance, a comprehensive skill development initiative that addresses the operational, behavioral and emotionally intelligent competencies that relate to your staff’s sales and business development performance can have a significant impact on the success of your business.