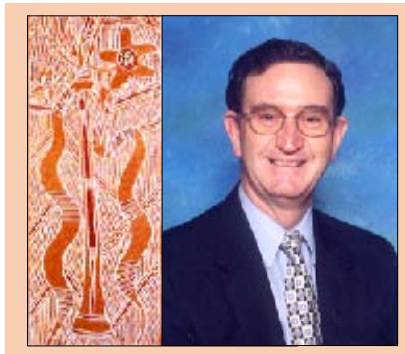


## Improving productivity through better sales and sales management: Part 2

**P**art 1 of this article in the August 2006 *APO News* discussed sales-related productivity issues by comparing and contrasting the approach of two competitors to a common sales situation. The present article concerns successful sales management. From a business process management perspective, it is important to understand the difference between sales and marketing. Some organizations and employees confuse those two processes and blur the very real distinction between them. Selling requires specific skills. A salesperson's job is not sim-



ply to fulfill a customer's perceived needs, it is to sell products and/or services that can help fulfill customer requirements, sometimes called "selling through." Creating a need through intangibles, by raising awareness and arousing interest, is the task of advertising from the marketing area. That, however, is not selling. Communicating appropriate messages to the marketplace through advertising campaigns, positioning brands for recognition, direct-mail campaigns, and other marketing methods all seek to arouse customer interest that will lead to a sales inquiry. The inquiry

### How good is your sales leadership (a sales manager's checklist)?


Do you plan to win?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are you active in recruiting new resources for your team?</li> <li>• Do you continuously rank your team and take corrective action with those not meeting expectations?</li> <li>• Do you plan for the assignment of resources to a territory and guide those resources to sales opportunities?</li> <li>• Does your resource placement maximize the use of all sales channels?</li> <li>• Do you assign sales quotas responsibly and fairly, communicate quotas clearly, and adjust quotas seldom?</li> <li>• Do you set incentives to drive sales which achieve strategic objectives?</li> <li>• Do you avoid overplanning?</li> </ul>
Do you lead your sales team?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do you set an example by selecting priorities and focusing on what is important for winning?</li> <li>• Do you honor your commitments to others?</li> <li>• Do you act enthusiastically and project a winning attitude?</li> <li>• Do you recognize individual and team success publicly?</li> <li>• Do you provide quick and clear feedback based on facts?</li> <li>• Do you seek advice from and share power and responsibility with your team?</li> <li>• Do you support executive decisions?</li> <li>• Are you and your team having fun?</li> <li>• Is there good work-life balance in your team?</li> <li>• Are you considered a role model by your team?</li> <li>• Are you considered a winner?</li> </ul>
Do you drive sales execution?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are your customers your No. 1 priority, and is this evident to your team?</li> <li>• Do you analyze sales opportunity details so that you can focus on exceptions?</li> <li>• Do you consistently spend time on one-on-one reviews and insist on accurate data in sales databases?</li> <li>• Do you insist on following a common selling process?</li> <li>• Do you observe and guide your team's interactions with customers?</li> <li>• Do you know enough to make accurate sales forecasts without requesting your team for additional information?</li> <li>• Are you monitoring and managing activities, not just results?</li> <li>• Does your team consider you a great coach?</li> <li>• Do you promote consistent use of the corporate sales processes?</li> <li>• Are you promoting shared learning among your team through reviews?</li> </ul>
Do you lead wider team involvement?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are you consistently promoting the sale of integrated solutions?</li> <li>• Are you responsive to requests from other business units in the organization?</li> <li>• Do you actively participate in cross-business unit meetings to promote and drive sales for the whole organization?</li> <li>• Do you seek win-win solutions with other sales or business managers in the business?</li> </ul>
Do you exploit information technology and knowledge?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do you make decisions based on facts combined with sound judgment and intuition?</li> <li>• Do you use the standard information resources available?</li> <li>• Do you actively promote the sharing of knowledge among your team?</li> <li>• Do you actively promote the sharing of knowledge with other teams and business units?</li> </ul>

should lead to a sales call of some description, and that is when sales skills come into action. The world-renowned sales trainer Zig Ziglar is known for the assertion: “Nothing happens till somebody sells something!” That “something” can be a product or a service. Sales are what makes enterprises tick. Making the sales process tick productively should be the focus of the sales manager.

While working as a process improvement executive some time ago, a very practical checklist came across my desk. Having spent several years as a salesperson, sales manager, marketing manager, and more recently as executive in charge of the customer relationship process at IBM, I can commend this table to assist in improving efficiency, effectiveness, productivity, and competitiveness in a sales force.

Being a successful sales manager involves all the attributes of top management leadership. It should be remembered that not all successful salespersons make top sales managers. The path to top managerial positions in many outstanding global organizations is through successful sales and sales management, and this is certainly the case within IBM. When we examine the table below, it becomes very clear that successful sales managers ensure that their sales teams identify opportunities; manage those opportunities; manage relationships with customers; and ensure that the appropriate solutions are proposed and designed for customers which will meet or exceed their requirements and will be delivered and installed on time, every time.

Please note that this checklist is very process oriented. Also note that the productivity improvement elements are apparent. This is the type of summary sales management checklist/document used in world-class, high-performing organizations and can be adapted to suit the circumstances of any enterprise involved in sales and sales management.

Sir Edmund Hillary once said: “You don’t have to be a fantastic hero to do certain things—to compete. You can be just an ordinary chap, sufficiently motivated to reach challenging goals.” That is what top salespeople and sales managers are: “ordinary people doing extraordinary things.” They constantly strive to overachieve and carry their work teams and organizations with them for profitable and competitive results. 

*Richard Barton is the Managing Director of Business Improvement Advisory Services. Previously he was the Business Process and Quality Management Executive for IBM in Australia & New Zealand. Prior to that he was General Manager with the Australian Quality Council. He has had a long and close association with the APO since 1992. Mr. Barton writes this column regularly for the APO News.*