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**I keep hearing contradictory advice: Set goals or don't set them. What's your take?**

► There are three main arguments against setting goals: One, that they can lead people to focus on the wrong things (by, for example, becoming too aggressive in chasing sales targets) or cut ethical corners; two, that they become demotivating when it becomes clear they can't be reached; and three, that it's healthier to live your life focused on the present. The secret to smart goal setting, then, is to do it in a way that addresses these problem areas. That means:

1. Set challenging goals, but don't make a big deal of it if someone falls short.
2. Structure goals that focus on behaviors, so your people are learning and improving, rather than wildly chasing a financial goal.
3. Be specific. Setting vague goals can produce higher rates of success with motivated staff, but if your employees are normal human beings, being specific will prevent procrastination.

4. Make the first couple of milestones easy so that people can build momentum toward the major goal. Progress is a *huge* motivator.
5. And finally, don't make goals a death march; have fun trying to accomplish them.

**I'd like to hire a trainer, but I'm worried about the return on investment. How can I be sure it will be worth it?**

► To really get your money's worth, you need to focus on two things: **1.** Hard skills. Overinvest in training that helps to increase ability, rather than motivation. Focus on small but vital aspects of your staff's sales skills. It could be when to pause in a presentation, how many features to stress, or phone manner tips. Break tasks into discreet actions, practice within a low-risk environment and build in recovery strategies. **2.** And this is just as important: Follow up. Bring in a trainer, but only if you yourself are willing to buy into their lessons and do ongoing training and reviews.

# SALE INTERRUPTED

Butting into another associate's presentation will kill the sale.

Shane Decker  
On Sales



**T** rue salesmanship means bringing skills and professionalism, knowledge, truthfulness and politeness to a presentation — as well as always making the client feel like she's the most important person to come in all day, even if she is the 101st. We also have to bring a friendly attitude and be ready to support our teammates. But doing these things in the wrong way can backfire. Occasionally, when you try to be too friendly, it's a sales killer. Let me explain.

Sometimes when a client has just come in and someone else has greeted them and started a presentation, another sales associate sees the client. They think, "I know them," or "I've waited on them before," or they're a friend or a neighbor. But the client didn't ask for that sales associate when they came in. This can create a big problem.

The salesperson who is with the client is in the middle of the presentation and the other salesperson comes up and says, "Hello!" or "How are you doing?" This totally interrupts the presentation and now they may have to start over. They may even be in the 30-second window about to close the sale. The closing opportunity may now be lost.

There is a time for small talk and being neighborly, but this is not the time. Interruptions are deadly.

If the client had asked for the other

salesperson, it would have been their responsibility, but *never* interrupt a sales presentation. When the client is ready to walk to the door, that's the time that it's OK to make your approach and speak to them. No one should ever walk in on a sale besides the sales floor manager, the manager or the owner, and even then they should only do it to assist in the presentation (not "take over"; assist).

Some salespeople do this because they think they own the client and they think they deserve the sale, so they unprofessionally walk in uninvited. This is very uncomfortable for the client and it's uncomfortable for the salesperson who is with the client because they feel pushed out.

Clients do not like pushy salespeople. The salesperson also knows they could never team-sell with someone who is so unprofessional.

Our job as a sales team is to help others be successful. When one of your teammates is giving a presentation, your job is to grab tools, get drinks and cookies, and be a servant. Be a team player and don't worry about who is with the client; be aware if something is needed. If the client wants to talk to you, they will let someone know. I don't care whose name is on the ticket, but I do care that there *is* a ticket.

Our goal is a client who leaves happy and gave us money for something beautiful. Don't be an interrupter!

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