

**The Executive's Role in Creating a High Performance Sales Environment™
By Robert W. Junke**

"We have the best products. Why are less than half of our sellers on target?"

"My managers act as glorified sellers instead of turning their reps into top performers."

"I don't trust our forecasts. Board meetings are a nightmare."

Sadly, these comments are often expressed by executives. Effectively managing the "bottom line" becomes very difficult when they view the "top line" as a "black art". But there is a way for executives to empower their entire sales organization and create a High Performance Sales Environment™. Our view of a High Performance Sales Environment™ is one where, because of the processes followed top-down, performance of the sales operation is highly predictable, improvement is measurable and sustainable, and executive management is confident that it will accomplish its objectives, even in down markets.

The underlying philosophy of the High Performance Sales Environment is that the achievement of consistent and reliable sales growth is closely linked to overall company culture. It is not just an issue for the sales team. In particular it is a function of how the sales operation is managed, starting with and driven by executives, down to and including the salesperson.

**The Key Role Played by Executives:
Inspect What You Expect!**

Business processes are not successful unless they are supported and driven from the top. The sales operation is no exception. Does that mean that executives must become sales experts? Not hardly.

Executives can create a High Performance Sales Environment by putting in place a tiered inspection process. By inspecting

appropriate summary information at the executive level, executives can drive effective process down their organization. Ultimately this inspection process will impact the real target of their efforts: the sales manager, whose #1 responsibility is to improve the performance of sales people in a way that is measurable and sustainable.

The "first tier" inspection process (called an *Executive Operations Review*) should be conducted on a monthly basis. The Review should be between the executive and his/her sales executive(s). A very finite number of key opportunities should be reviewed, followed by an analysis of each sales executive's pipeline. This, in turn, leads to accurate forecasts for each sales executive.

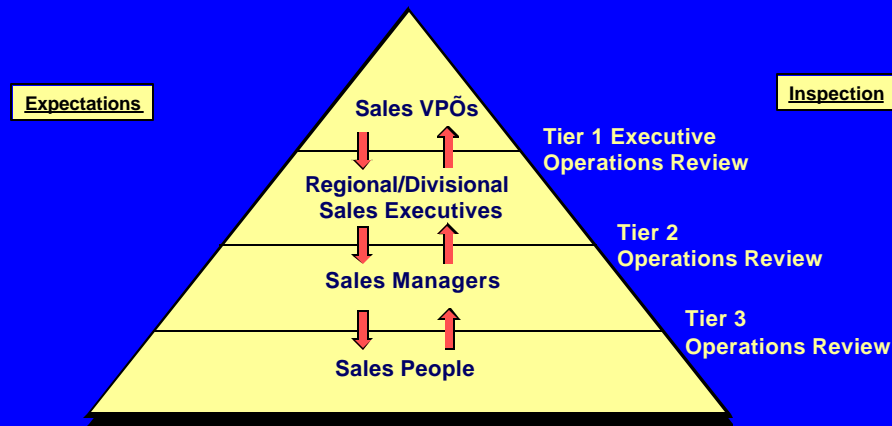
Most importantly, this inspection process will set a tone and level of expectation with each sales executive. Prior to the monthly Executive Operations Review, it will drive each sales executive to conduct similar "second tier" reviews between each sales executive and their sales management team. At this level, the operations review will be more detailed for the individual sales executive's regional or vertical operation.

Finally, this second tier operations review will in turn drive key third tier Operations Reviews between each sales manager and their team of sales people.

This process is depicted below:

Executive Operations Review

Inspect What You Expect



Inspection Process Scaled for Appropriate Management Level

Let us focus now on the conduct of the tier 3 Operations Review. As stated earlier, the real target of the executive is the conduct of high quality tier 3 Operations Reviews between the sales manager and their sales people. It is here that measurable, sustainable performance improvement will be achieved.

The operations review between each sales manager and their sales team effectively covers four key areas, called the Four Pillars of Effective Sales Management™:

**Opportunity Assessment
Pipeline Management and Forecasting
People Development
Measuring Results**

The Four Pillars of Effective Sales Management™

1. Opportunity Assessment

To inspect and accurately assess the quality of a seller's opportunities, managers use a tool called the Opportunity Analyzer™. This tool helps the manager determine if the seller successfully identified key qualification criteria with the buyer, which, in total, determines if the opportunity is truly a qualified opportunity. These criteria are:

?? Did the seller identify a critical business issue that is significant

enough to the buyer to drive a sell cycle?

?? Can the seller clearly articulate a solution to the buyer?

?? Is the seller at the appropriate power level?

2. Pipeline Management and Forecasting

The objectives of pipeline management should be to help each seller:

1. Achieve \$Win for each assessment period (monthly, quarterly, and annually).
2. Enter the start of each assessment period with a fully loaded pipeline

3. People Development

A sales person must master several skills so that they function at their optimum performance level. These skills are account planning, opportunity identification, prospecting, and account penetration, need development, qualification, sell cycle control, negotiating, and closing. Based on the capability level

the manager believes the sales person has achieved for each sales skill, managers should develop specific activity plans to help the sales person increase their performance capability for each skill.

Measurements to Achieve are identified to make sure each seller is achieving the results expected by management. These measurements should be checked on a monthly and/or quarterly basis. If the results being sought are not being achieved, specific "fine tuning" actions should be prescribed accordingly.

4. Measurement of Results and Continuous Improvement

Summary



By conducting the monthly tier 1 Operations Review, executives can drive effective sales process down their organization. This, in turn, translates to long-term, measurable performance improvement.

Bob Junke is the Founder and CEO of Adventace®, LLC. His vision in creating Adventace® was to help clients create a "High Performance Sales Environment"™ where a company's sales results are highly predictable, measurable, and can be sustained, even in down markets.