

**Your Field Sales Managers Affect Company Sales and Profits, therefore . . .**

## Develop Your Field Sales Managers

WILLIAM R. RADOS

Q. Why develop field sales managers?

A. Because they are key men in your company's objective of perpetuating better volume and profit.

In today's competitive market, management is "open to buy" profit-increasing ideas. In this connection, look to the sales department, because the face-to-face interview is the court of last resort. No matter how sound the home office plans may be, it is what your salesmen say and do—or fail to say and do—in the face-to-face interview that collectively determines your company's future.

### *100,000 Opportunities*

I know one sales organization whose men average one million calls a year. This company believes in continuous training of salesmen and development of field managers because even a 10% improvement in selling increases their

opportunity against competition by 100,000 times a year. And in this company, as in all national or regional firms, the sales organization breaks down into small local groups each headed by a field sales manager. How he hires, trains and handles his group directly affects volume, cost and profit showing. Therefore, both he and his superiors are vitally interested in building the best possible sales organization.

How is this "best" sales force built? By doing a better job of local sales management. For instance: When your policies of hiring and training salesmen are better than yesterday, you automatically produce a better sales force. And when your sales personnel procedures are better than the competitions, you gain an edge on your industry.

So let's look at the six personnel functions which are the prime duty of field sales management:

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| 1. Recruiting and Hiring.      | The place where costs begin immediately, future hopes are planted.                      |
| 2. Training new men.           | Bring them up through the break-even point quickly.                                     |
| 3. Developing established men. | Increase their production by 10-30% or greater by thorough sales training.              |
| 4. Motivating new and old men. | Accomplishment is in proportion to desire to excel.                                     |
| 5. Sales-closing tools.        | Visual presentations are 40%: visual aids that get around objections and close are 60%. |
| 6. Direction of effort.        | Planning men's work: selling them: supervising them.                                    |
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James H. McGraw, founder of the McGraw-Hill Publishing Company built his fabulous success on the platform, "find a need and satisfy it." Well, as a training director, these six areas of opportunity spell out your company's need and indicate the solutions. In my work in thirty different consumer and industrial fields, I have never found a company which did not recognize the possibility of improvement in one or more of these six field sales management functions.

### A CASE HISTORY

*Company A, a publisher,* operates on this seven-point manager development plan:

1. It is company policy that all employees, from top brass down periodically undergo development training in their job functions. On the field sales manager level this policy includes:
  2. Carefully-selected top salesmen are promoted to assistant field manager and undergo months of apprenticeship under field and home office management.
  3. Concurrently they study the manager's manual titled "Manpower Development Guide" which includes all applicable methods by which they can train and motivate their salesmen.
  4. Also, they likewise study the companion manual "Pick Stars and Sell More" which is a college education in the difficult art of selecting new salesmen.
  5. After appointment as a full-fledged field manager, both new and veteran managers attend an annual management conference, lasting one week, and devoted entirely to practical techniques of field manager personnel functions.
  6. Since the sales force is far flung, a special monthly bulletin keeps all

managers abreast of latest current solutions to manpower problems.

7. Finally, all field managers are rated periodically and, as needed, are given individual assistance and coaching on their manpower problems.

This seven-point sales manager development plan has played an instrumental part in the company's continuing expansion despite increased competition.

#### *"Manpower Development Guide"*

Here's the outline of this key manual:

1. How to get maximum sales from new men.
2. How to raise production of established salesmen.
3. How to promote and supervise home study.
4. How to train a man on calls.
5. How to conduct the man-to-man development conference.
6. How to conduct effective sales meetings.
7. Sales Manager's talk on importance of using the standard sales talk.
8. 30-60-90 day plan of rating and developing new salesmen.
9. Quarterly Progress Report on all salesmen.

#### *"Pick Stars and Sell More"*

The subjects covered in this manual are:

1. Profits and losses in hiring salesmen.
2. Outline of Interview Procedure which analyzes applicants objectively.

3. Salesman job description.
4. The success qualifications required of a salesman.
5. Recruiting methods for today's market.
6. Selling the qualified applicant and his wife on the job and compensation.
7. Conducting the screening interview.
8. Salesman Failure Traits to seek and measure.
9. The Application Blank as a diagnostic instrument.
10. Objective analysis of Applicant's conduct in executive's presence.
11. Analyzing applicant's Background for Plus or Minus signs.
12. Measuring value of the "experienced salesman."
13. Analyzing military service history for clues to future selling production.
14. The significance of family and education and how to measure it.
15. Methods of verification and check-up.
16. How to make the final decision to hire or reject.
17. How to become an "infallible" interviewer.
18. How to control company hiring policy.
19. Procedure when two or more executives interview.
20. When only one executive conducts the interview.
21. After hiring, what?

This manual, supported by annual clinics, follow-up bulletins and related activities has resulted in a 100% increase in the number of good men hired.

## MANUAL COMES FIRST

As these illustrations suggest, actual development of field sales managers starts with a custom-built manual which consists of all the practical techniques which apply to the particular company. Of course, the manual is not the only training tool, but until you agree on a manual you don't have a management development plan. Once the manual has been sent to press, you can support it with films, bulletins, charts, cards, mass meetings, discussion conferences, quizzes, case problems.

Since the manual comes first, how should it be developed and organized? Here are ten tips from personal experience gained in writing more than one hundred manuals:

1. *How-to*: Manuals which are best received, put to use, and last longest are those which are saturated with how-to material bearing directly on the field sales managers' problems. This also goes for all other training methods.
2. *Three-way organization*: Organize your manual so it can be used for:
  - a. Instant reference
  - b. Self-study
  - c. Group training
3. *Three periods*: From the time of promotion until he moves on, a manager undergoes three periods of development, and these should be reflected in your manual:
  - a. *Get started period*, which occurs during his first week on the job.
  - b. *Break-even period*, of his first season or months during which he adjusts to the job and starts

producing as a manager of salesmen.

- c. *Forever after*, during which he is constantly striving to improve upon yesterday's performance.
4. *Packaging*: One of the greatest aids in gaining acceptance for your manual is to package it impressively. Your advertising production manager or agency can suggest many inexpensive ways to dress up a manual. For Hotpoint I pasted a dollar bill in the manual as a sample of increased override possibilities. It cost \$200, but we were asking for several millions sales increase. P.S. We got it.
5. *Reflect the Voice of Experience*: The easiest way to get a projected management development program off to enthusiastic acceptance is to bring your field people together and have them tell you what to put into the course. In one such session I conducted for Kelvinator, 160 ideas developed out of a three-day discussion. Results: (1) we collected a large chunk of how-to "for instances" which otherwise would have taken months to gather; (2) we immediately killed the suspicion that arises when word gets around that some home office staffer is dreaming up another program; and (3) we made the event pay for itself, by sending the managers home loaded with practical ideas which they could put to immediate use.
6. *Produce the program fast*: Once you have formally announced a future program, don't take forever to finalize the script, produce the finished pieces, and arrange for launching. Otherwise, initial enthusiasm evaporates. For General Motors Truck, we knew that it would

take a year to launch the major program. That's a long time in this fast-moving world, so while we were busy on the big job, we served the field by issuing several temporary pieces which played the dual role of furnishing helpful information at a time when it was needed, plus maintained and increased enthusiasm for the future main event.

7. *Create a theme:* Instead of lukewarm functional titles such as "manager manual," try newsworthy titles which dramatize the benefit to the manager, such as: "Multiply Yourself, Multiply Override," "Green Lights Ahead," or "Seven Steps To Bigger Paychecks."

8. *Launch dramatically:* The very first time your group formally sees the finished new program should be an occasion for maximum dramatics and showmanship. First impressions are basic to acceptance. Therefore, allot a suitable portion of your budget for color slides, impressive displays, attractive packaging.

9. *Three types of meetings* should be included in your development plan:

- a. Presentation-type meetings.
- b. Drill meetings, especially for newer managers and managers who need special help.

c. Discussion-type meetings.

All three types can be worked into any one session, and will increase understanding, acceptance, enthusiasm and application.

10. *Follow-up:* Field managers are busy: will forget your good intentions unless you keep them reminded. Issue Bulletins. Hold refresher meetings. Visit the field. Get a spot on each national sales convention. Give special attention to newly-appointed managers. Work with individual managers who need special help. Audit results and keep both field and home office informed. Inject a new twist, stunt, skit, bit of showmanship in repeat clinics, discussions, conferences. After a few years, bring out a new edition to reflect the lessons of experience.

To sum up, a field sales manager's success depends upon the success of his salesmen. And collectively the success of the salesmen affects the success of the company. Therefore, any move that improves the manager personnel functions automatically benefits all concerned. Consequently, here is an opportunity for training directors to make a substantial contribution.

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