How to Develop a
Healthy Sales Culture

8 Steps to Create a Healthy Sales Environment in Your Organization

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✓ criteriaforsuccess [make sales success a habit.]

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Introduction

If you are a CEO, VP of Sales, or a Sales Manager, developing a healthy sales culture is of utmost importance.

In fact, I'd argue that it is the MOST important part of your business. Why? Because people are the most important asset that your company has. Without good people, what exactly do you have?

"Customers will never love a company until the employees love it first."

– Simon Sinek, Author of Start with Why

Having great people is essential, and that's why developing a healthy sales culture is so significant. It could mean the difference between keeping or losing your top sales producer. Or keeping or losing teams of people.

So, as you develop your sales team and build an empire, keep your people top of mind. Then follow the steps in this eBook to ensure that you continue to develop a healthy sales culture within your organization.

The 8 Steps

What's the difference between a functioning sales team and a dysfunctional sales team? Everything!
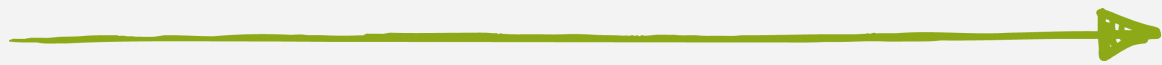
We believe in the power of the team. We also believe that when people are nurtured properly and work in a healthy environment, it reflects not only in their work, but in their lives as well.

Think back on all the jobs you've had in your life—paid or unpaid. Can you think of an experience where you felt a little down or unappreciated? How did that reflect on your work? And how did that transfer to your personal life?

We all have difficult times, experience challenging personalities, and face obstacles. But as leaders, it's our responsibility to ensure that our employees are provided the best environment possible, whenever possible. It's our job to lift our people up. And it should be our mission to create a workplace that makes the world a better place to be. After all, most of us spend the majority of our days working!

✓ **Do you want a motivated sales team?**

✓ **Do you want to provide a place of business that people love to come to each and every day?**

✓ **Are you looking to build something that's more than just a product or service?**

✓ **Are you on a mission to make the world a better place?**

If you answered **yes** to any of the above, keep reading. We're going to dive into the 8 steps you can take to create a healthy sales culture in your organization.

"No company, small or large, can win over the long run without energized employees who believe in the mission and understand how to achieve it."

- Jack Welch, CEO, General Electric

1.   Feed the Mind

The human mind is the most powerful thing a human being has. In her book *You Can Heal Your Life*, Louise Hay explains that humans "have the power to heal" themselves. "We think so often that we are helpless, but we are not. We always have the power of our minds." And she advises: "Claim and consciously use your power."
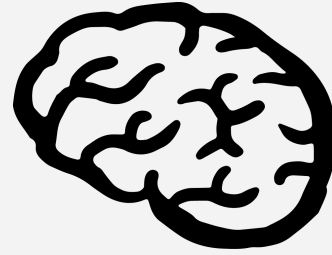
What we think directly impacts the world we live in. If your employees are constantly experiencing negativity and problems, and there is no coaching on how to overcome that negativity, then you'll want to focus on this area.

How can you create a healthy mindset within your organization and among your sales staff? Here are some recommendations:

- Encourage team members to read books on positive thinking and negative release. Books like *Don't Sweat the Small Stuff, The Power of Positive Thinking, You Can Heal Your Life, How to Stop Worrying and Start Living*, and anything by Jack Canfield, are great places to start.
- Consider having a morning motivation activity each day. For example, assign each salesperson with a week, and have them share a motivational quote each day of their week. You might choose to have them email or text the team, or you could create a discussion forum in your Sales PlayBook.

Create opportunities to motivate and uplift your team. Do you have weekly, bi-weekly, or monthly meetings? Add a motivational agenda item. Take a few moments to share success stories. Highlight an employee for their positive attitude. And always, ALWAYS, end your meetings on a high note.

"If you want employees to feel appreciated, you need to celebrate their achievements regularly and publicly."

– Logan Green, Co-Founder, Lyft

2. Fuel the Body

What is the one thing that every human being has? A body!

We all get this one body, and we all have to live with it. And many of us forget that what we put into our body impacts how we feel—until we put something bad in there, of course - then we remember!

The point is that as leaders, we don't often think of the body as a factor in how people live and work. But it's more important than you might think!

In addition to what we put in our bodies, what we put out also matters. Exercise has been proven to boost your mood, productivity, and ability to collaborate. And eating clean foods actually makes you smarter! According to a 2015 study by Neurology, "eating a healthy diet rich in fruits, vegetables, fish and nuts keep our minds sharper and our memories stronger by a whopping 24%."*
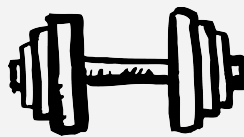
Now I know what you're thinking: "I can barely stick to an exercise and meal routine myself, how on earth can I train my staff on these matters?"

Don't fret. We don't expect you to become a health nut and run around passing out kale shakes. But here are some things you CAN do to help your employees live healthier:

- Encourage activity. At CFS, many of our staff members use activity trackers. We encourage each other to get up and move every hour. Fitbit recommends getting at least 250 steps each hour to stay active during the work day, so each hour we remind one another to get up and move.
- If you want to take things a step further, incentivize activity. Consider implementing challenges to see who can get the most steps each day or in a given work week. At the end of the week, the winner receives a prize or certificate. Though you'd be surprised at what a simple "great job!" can do.
- When it comes to food, make it fun! Your sales team is likely all over the place: sometimes in the field, sometimes in the office. Make it easier by providing healthy foods like bananas, oranges, apples, and nuts in the office.

*Reference: http://www.cleaneatingmag.com/blog/10-reasons-to-eat-clean/

"One of our values is that you should be looking out for each other. Everyone should try to make the lives of everyone else who works here a little bit simpler."

- Stewart Butterfield, Founder, General Electric

3. Provide Incentives

Financial incentives have long been used as a method for motivation. But financial incentives aren't the only way to uplift and influence people.

StackOverflow, a Manhattan-based internet company, created an entire environment based on what they believed would incentivize employees to stay and lead happy, productive lives at work. How? Well, they built a kitchen! And that kitchen has a dedicated chef that cooks delicious, healthy meals each and every day. The layout of the room encourages co-workers to sit together and build rapport, while the endless supply of fruits and snacks provides brain food to employees throughout the day. The best part? The company built these perks into their mission. Employees are not only saving money by not having to pay for meals, but they're also eating better and communicating more.

Here is a list of non-financial incentives you might consider:

- Early release Friday. This is one that is used here at CFS, and it doesn't go unnoticed. A few years back, our CEO instituted early release Fridays during the summer months. It was so successful that he decided to extend the incentive year-round.
- Work-from-home and travel-from-home options. Occupational burnout is a real thing. Ron Friedman, author of *The Best Place to Work: The Art and Science of Creating an Extraordinary Workplace* states that "There's no question that we're at greater risk of burnout today than we were 10 years ago," and believes that "opportunities for restocking your mental energy" are essential. Do you have salespeople that commute from long distances to simply cold call? Or do they have one day each week that's dedicated to "admin" type activities? What about employees that travel to the office first before going out in the field? You might consider offering work-from-home and travel-from-home options to ease the stresses of commuting.
- Fuel your team with your very own work kitchen! Learn a lesson from StackOverflow and consider adding a work kitchen and chef to your office. Not quite ready for that expense? Think forward. What can you do over the next five years to make a work kitchen a reality? How would it impact the quality of life for your staff members?

"There's no magic formula for great company culture. The key is just to treat your staff how you would like to be treated."

– Richard Branson, Founder, Virgin Group

4. Purge Gossip

Gossip has a powerful way of destroying relationships. And it's not just in our personal lives. Gossip in the workplace can wreak havoc and create a toxic, unbearable atmosphere.

If you feel tension among your team, it's important to get to the bottom of it. Lisa Quast, Forbes Contributor, has 5 tips for eliminating negative gossip in the workplace:

Tip #1 – Address the specific perpetrators.

Quast believes that "your first action should be to stop negative gossip on a personal level by directly addressing the key gossipers one-on-one."

Tip #2 – Meet with your entire team.

After you've met with the "perpetrator" of the gossip one-on-one, Quast recommends discussing the situation with the entire team. "This can be done by including 'gossip' as a topic for discussion in a staff meeting and helping the team understand the differences between negative gossip and positive gossip and the ramifications of each."

Tip # 3 – Encourage positive gossip.

This might sound counterintuitive, but Quast believes that "positive gossip can actually be good for companies and employees." She explains that when people share positive stories, it brings the whole team together.

Tip #4 – Model the behavior you want to see.

As a leader, what you do matters. "Employees will look to you for what behaviors are acceptable and unacceptable, and you need to ensure you are 'walking the talk' at all times and leading by example."

Tip #5 - Don't be too formal.

One of the big mistakes companies make, according to Quast, is being too formal. "Sending out an email blast to all employees that 'office gossip won't be tolerated' or trying to address the issue during an all company meeting" often does more harm than good.

*Reference: http://bit.ly/2kxxacL

5. Promote Team Building

We've discovered that sales teams that work together to exchange best selling practices for their Sales PlayBooks are 70% more successful than those who don't. Now, that's some collaboration to get behind!

"If you have an apple and I have an apple and we exchange these apples then you and I will still have one apple. But if you have an idea and I have an idea and we exchange these ideas, then each of us has two ideas."

– George Bernard Shaw, Playwright

Would you rather work with people who help make you better or people who you don't know at all? Team building activities not only allow employees to build camaraderie and connections, but they also boost morale.

Here are five team building activities from our very own Elizabeth Frederick* that will help your team improve communication, build trust, and allow them to get to know each other:

1. Improve Presentation Skills

Get your team together to exchange presentations. Encourage them to make their presentations as engaging as possible, and consider giving them points for presentation that might make up for some construction weaknesses.

2. Improve Internal Communication

For this activity, Elizabeth recommends having the team sit around a table, each person with a notepad. Ask each person to write a word or a phrase on the first page, then pass it to their right. They will then read what is written on the first page, turn the page, and draw what they read. Next, they'll pass it to the right, and each person will try to figure out what was drawn, turn the page, and write it down. Repeat these steps until the notebooks return to their original places. While this exercise doesn't involve much communication while you're doing it, it can spark a bigger conversation about communication problems and how you can all work together to improve communication.

3. Improve Question Asking

Asking good questions is important, and this exercise is a great place to practice team building.

Elizabeth recommends considering the "what one question" game, where you ask the team to work together in groups to identify the one question they could use to determine someone's suitability for a specific situation, such as leading the company, joining the team, babysitting a child, or anything else. Coming up with one perfect question is much harder than building a list of good questions – and it's a great skill to have in sales. If your team is remote, you could work together on this over a conference call. If you're together in person, you could break your team into groups of 3 or 4 and then compare questions.

4. Improve Listening Skills

Along with asking good questions, listening is also very important. Elizabeth advocates adding listening exercises to your sales team meetings.
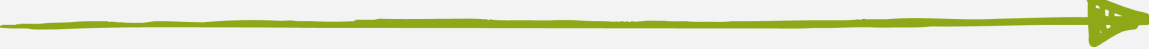
5. Improve Teamwork

Team building is all about *team*, and in sales that's often been forgotten. Some teams seem to focus more on competing than on working together. But a team with a healthy winning culture is able to achieve more than a team that's always competing.

Encouraging team members to work together will help improve teamwork ability. Consider having team members exchange ideas and best practices, personal stories, or even work together on a charity project.

*Elizabeth's full article: http://criteriaforsuccess.com/5-sales-team-building-activities-winning-culture/

6.   Focus on Communication

If you're looking to develop a healthy sales culture in your organization, don't breeze by this one! Words hold power. Are there words that are hurting or helping members of your team?

"Words are singularly the most powerful force available to humanity. We can choose to use this force constructively with words of encouragement, or destructively using words of despair. Words have energy and power with the ability to help, to heal, to hinder, to hurt, to harm, to humiliate and to humble."

– Yehuda Berg, Author

According to Kevin Daum*, author of *Roar! Get Heard in the Sales and Marketing Jungle*, solving most communication issues in the workplace is fairly simple. He suggests the following:

1. Have one conversation at a time. Give the other person your undivided attention.
2. Look people in the eye. Studies show that doing this conveys truth and honor.
3. Ask two questions. Identify a couple of provocative, relevant questions and ask them before you finish talking.
4. Write things down. It doesn't matter where—text yourself if you have to!
5. Read and respond to entire emails (not just portions).
6. Create a response schedule. Setting a routine for communication can help both with your productivity and with managing expectations of the people with whom you interact.
7. Assume best intentions. With the increase in texting and short e-mails, it's often hard to know the intended tone of communication. Be cautious—and if in doubt, pick up the phone and give them a chance to insult you directly—just so you can be sure.
8. Close the loop. If a request was made or promised, set up a system to ensure you don't drop the ball. Or, that the other party has done what they've said they will do (like provide an introduction).

Keep communication flowing by encouraging team members to share. Talk about vision, speak positively about differences, and always keep your door open.

*Reference: http://www.inc.com/kevin-daum/8-ways-to-improve-your-communication-right-now.html

7. Encourage Creativity

Companies exist and thrive as a result of creativity and innovation. When was the last time you flew on an airplane? Or drove or rode in a car? Or made a call on a cell phone? Many of the things we take for granted today were considered crazy in years past. Where would we be today without the wheel, compass, automobile, steam engine, railway, airplane, tools, and electricity?

See, creativity is at the heart of the most incredible inventions in history. If you want a healthy sales culture, encourage creativity and innovation!

"A lot of people forget how important it is to be creative. We get caught up in getting ahead and in day-to-day minutiae. But creativity is a fundamental mode of expression, as is being tenacious and standing by your own convictions and passions, even if it's not the 'popular' choice."

*– Tabatha Coffey, Hairstylist, Salon Owner, & TV Personality*

Here are a few ideas to help you encourage creativity among your sales team:

- Use a segment of your team meetings to share ideas. Stress the importance of creativity and encourage team members to share their ideas by leading by example.
- Make time for brainstorming each day. Here at CFS, brainstorming is a daily activity. If a team member is working to develop a new approach, article, or idea, we are comfortable pulling others aside to help with our endeavors. We use paper, whiteboards, and post-it notes to work through and further develop our ideas.

8.   Support Growth

Do you want to train employees that stay for days or years? My guess is years. And if you want to keep employees for years to come, supporting growth is our eighth tip to creating a healthy sales culture.

What do I mean by support growth? It's simple really. Do you currently have opportunities for your salespeople to grow in their current position? Or into a more responsible position? Without opportunity to grow or develop, your salespeople are likely to hit a ceiling and move on.
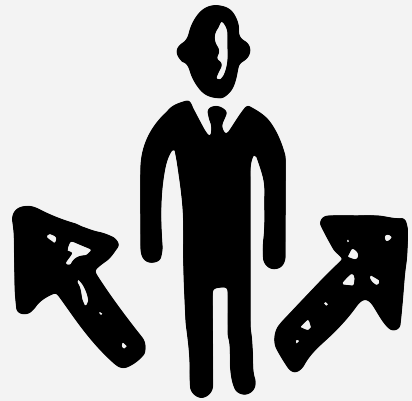
"Satisfied employees mean satisfied customers, which leads to profitability."

– Anne M. Mulcahy, CEO, Xerox

In a study by Quantum Workplace*, employees listed professional growth opportunity as one of their highest drivers of engagement. Conversely, existing employees listed lack of growth opportunity as the second highest reason for leaving. If you find yourself with a high turnover rate, consider improving opportunities for growth in the following areas:

- Financial. Do you offer the possibility of increased income? This can be tied to performance or independent of it.
- Career. Do you offer the opportunity to move up in rank? Are senior sales positions or management position options available to sales staff?
- Professional. Do you offer sales training and opportunities for your salespeople to continue learning and developing their skills?
- Personal. Do your employees have happy work-life balances? Do you offer flexible work schedules or the opportunity to work remotely?

*Reference: http://bit.ly/2jM2NdX

Conclusion

As you've read, there are many factors that make up a healthy sales culture. Perhaps your organization is strong in some of the areas mentioned, but weak in others. That's OK! The first step to developing a healthy sales culture is committing attention and focus.

Then, assess where you are in the eight areas:

1. **Feed the Mind**
2. **Fuel the Body**
3. **Provide Incentives**
4. **Purge Gossip**
5. **Promote Team Building**
6. **Focus on Communication**
7. **Encourage Creativity**
8. **Support Growth**

Which areas will you focus attention on? As you work through the list, determine how you'll solve for each area and put a plan in place. Keep yourself accountable by checking in with your team on a quarterly basis to see how they're doing and how you're doing.

Whatever you do, never stop learning. Never stop growing. And never stop communicating.

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