

# ARE YOU MANAGING OR SUPERVISING YOUR SALESPEOPLE?

Successful Organizations Do Both

Human nature does not change.

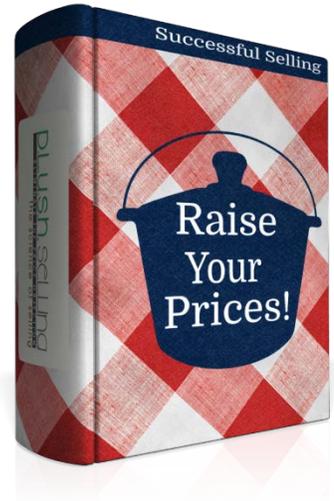
This is the primary reason why salespeople are treated differently from other employees. Sales is a process that involves two humans interacting, each with their own agenda, education and approach. This final element, approach, is the result of their nature. Lacking any other influence, our natural approach will determine how we use our knowledge to achieve our agenda.

After working with hundreds of sales teams in many different industries, I've found that few of them are managed and supervised. Some are managed and some are supervised. The most successful teams have both processes in place.

Unlike most employees, salespeople often operate unsupervised. This is especially true for outside salespeople and applies to inside salespeople more often than is usually appreciated. They are usually managed using quotas and compensation programs. However, lacking supervision, they meet their quotas and earn their compensation using what comes naturally to them.

## THE DIFFERENCE

What image comes to mind when you think of a manager or a supervisor? Perhaps the manager is someone who primarily sits behind a desk while the supervisor is more likely to walk the floor and oversee the activities of others.



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To understand the difference in managing and supervising, compare the process of baking a cake to that of making a sale. The kitchen is **managed** and the process of baking the cake must be **supervised**.

*NOTE: You can skip to the end of this article for a quick-read chart, if you prefer.*

Managing the kitchen includes having the right tools and the right ingredients. Before the cook can even consider baking a cake, there must be bowls, implements, perhaps a mixer and an oven among other tools. Salespeople also need the right tools such as a device (laptop, tablet, desktop, etc.), programs (CRM, Office programs, etc.) and communication devices.

For the baker, ingredients will be needed, perhaps flour, sugar, milk and other fixings. The salesperson needs ingredients like catalog sheets, PowerPoint<sup>1</sup> decks, calculators, configurators, etc.

The properly-managed kitchen does not produce anything. Neither does a well—managed sales team. Production results from activity – from execution. Products do not sell themselves any more than ovens create cakes. The best results happen where there is supervision.

With the kitchen environment in place, the baker can begin creating the cake. Bakers are supervised by a recipe that lists the necessary ingredients before describing the process for creating the cake. First, the baker ensures they have all the necessary ingredients in place. If only one is missing, the result can be an inedible, unsuccessful cake. They have learned that omitting any ingredient or making a last-minute substitution can be disastrous.

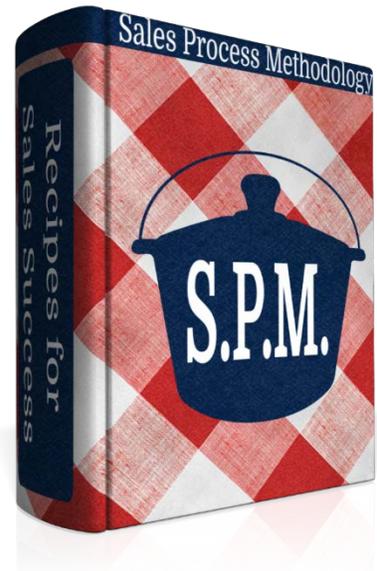
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<sup>1</sup> See Chuck's White Paper and training on "Depth, not Death, by PowerPoint"

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Salespeople use pre-call planning to determine if they have all of the “ingredients” they need to engage their customer. Their ingredients can include reviewing previous contacts with the customer, determining who they will be meeting, developing quality questions, pre-determining which features and benefits might be most applicable, and having a plan for using each of them.

The baker follows the recipe. Even if they have created other cakes recently, it may be best for them to review the recipe occasionally. Salespeople follow a sales recipe known as a sales process methodology, SPM. It guides them in determining what actions they will take and in what order. After all, if they omit or substitute something, it can result in a lost sale.



Just as the baker must follow the recipe thoroughly and in order, salespeople must follow their SPM **thoroughly and in order**. For instance, just as adding an ingredient too early in the process can ruin a cake, asking the customer for the order too early can ruin a sale. Doing the right thing at the wrong time is one of the most common reason sales do not close.

The baker places the containers with the properly-mixed ingredients into the preheated oven.

Notice how many steps have been omitted in that previous sentence. Was this to be a single-layer or multi-layer cake? Round or square? Was the oven preheated at the right time so that the pans of ingredients are not forced to sit and possibly deteriorate?

There are many “assumed” activities in baking a cake just as there are many assumptions sales managers and supervisors make.

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In my experience, failures in sales supervision result from the fatal assumption: "Everybody knows that." An SPM can prevent that when it is followed thoroughly and in order.

Of course, "everybody knows" the oven must be preheated ahead of time. Does every salesperson ensure that the customer must know in advance what to expect from the sales call? When the customer is expecting a simple product demonstration and the salesperson expects to close a sale, someone is not going to have their expectations met. Pre-prepare the customer for the call by stating the purpose of the call during pre-call planning.

Of course, "everybody knows" the ingredients must be properly mixed in the right order. In successful value-added sales, the message, delivery, desired outcome and other factors have all been predetermined.

The proof is in the finished product. The baker can look at and taste the cake to determine how satisfied they are with it. Maybe they will change the ingredients or the baking time in the future for a better-looking or better-tasting cake. In sales, this is known as a post-call critique and can be as valuable as pre-call planning. What did the salesperson do that worked well, that failed or could be done better next time?

The similarities are numerous, but you get the idea. The fact that you have a great product or service, an infrastructure that allows for quality, timeliness and support does not mean the product or service will sell itself. Your CRM can alert your team members to what is supposed to happen and can record the results, but it does not supervise how the "sale is baked."

The sales process methodology, SPM, does that. Think of it as a sales recipe.

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The best SPM allows the salesperson to use their personality, knowledge and experience to execute the sales call following the prescribed professional principles.



I recommend my SPM, P.L.U.S.H. Selling as a flexible, easy-to-remember, effective SPM. This sales recipe works equally well for products and services and is most effective in B2B sales. It works for pre-call planning, call execution and post-call critique. It allows the sales call to be supervised from concept to execution to post-call review.

Here is how it works. The sales professionals learn the five principles behind a successful value-added sale. The sales supervisor can use questions to increase the likelihood that the sale will be successful.

Some examples using the five principles during Pre-Call Planning include:

**P – POSITIONING** The sales supervisor asks, "Where are we positioned in this account?" In other words, who will you be contacting? There are reasons why some contacts need to be ignored and others must be involved.

**L – LISTEN** The sales supervisor asks, "What will you ask this customer you have never asked any other?" This helps eliminate rote sales calls.

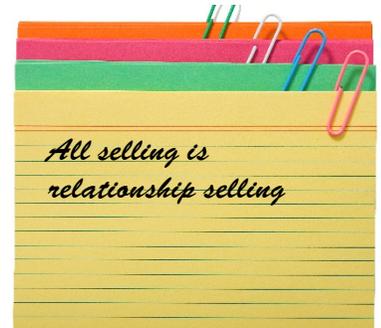
**U – UNIQUE** The sales supervisor asks, "Based on what you have learned so far, which of our differentiators is most likely to be important to this customer?" This helps ensure proper pre-call planning has been done.

**S – SOLUTION** The sales supervisor asks, "What are the top three problems this client is facing and how do they manifest themselves?" Nobody wants what you sell, they want what they think it will do for them. The value of your solution is determined by the

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customer's perception of the cost of their problem. Qualifying and quantifying the problem using the customer's terminology helps when doing a cost justification later – if needed.

**H – HELP** The sales supervisor asks, "What extra-mile actions can we take for the customer, not us?" Relationship selling is a redundant term, all sales are selling. Companies do not do business with companies; people do business with people. Relationships are give-and-take. Giving without expectation is giving; expecting something in return is investing.



### SUMMARY

Leading salespeople does not have to be a "herding the cats" effort. Having the best sales environment (product, price, people) is sales management. Having the best sales process is the function of sales supervision. Use any title you like; just have someone on your team be responsible for supervising ongoing sales activities. And have them focus on CQI: Continuous Process Improvement, continuously improving your sales recipe.

ADDENDUM

	BAKE A CAKE	MAKE A SALE
MANAGEMENT	Purpose: What is the cake for?	Outcome: What is the customer's desired outcome? What is the purpose of the sales call?
	Kitchen: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Right equipment?</li> <li>• Right utensils?</li> <li>• Right ingredients?</li> </ul>	Environment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Right device (tablet, etc.)?</li> <li>• Samples, brochures?</li> <li>• Right, viable products?</li> </ul>
SUPERVISION	Recipe: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• List of ingredients</li> <li>• Orderly activities</li> </ul>	Sales Process Methodology (SPM) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pre-Call Planning</li> <li>• Orderly activities</li> </ul>
	Review: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Taste, adjust</li> <li>• Appearance, adjust</li> </ul>	Post-Call Critique <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Results +/-</li> <li>• Adjust (CQI)</li> </ul>

Q&I – QUESTIONS AND IDEAS

Q: Can one person be both the sales manager and the sales supervisor?

I: Yes, and in fact, that is the case in most organizations. This only works when the individual does both efforts intentionally. As a sales manager, the person may direct the salespeople to call on accounts that meet a certain criterion. As a sales supervisor, the person would ensure that the call was planned, executed and reviewed in detail.

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Q: How does the sales manager respond when the sales supervisor says a lower price or significant product improvement is required in order to sell around the competition?

I: This is one of the weaknesses from having one individual serving as manager and supervisor. After enough customers have told the salesperson that the competition has a better product or better price, the salesperson will often buy into the message. After enough salespeople have passed the message to the sales supervisor, the supervisor may buy into it. Someone in a leadership position must be able to stop the downward thinking and do one of the following:

- Remind the customer-facing employees of the differentiation
- Provide training or refresher training to help the sales and service employees use a cost justification process
- Develop cost justification tools
- Refresh the salespeople on the feature-benefit analysis to overcome the perceived superiority of the competitors' offering.

Q: Should the sales manager or the sales supervisor be responsible for developing sales strategies?

I: Neither. Sales strategies belong at the C-Level, ideally at the Chief Sales Officer, CSO, level. Strategic thinking and planning have long-term implications and needs to be coordinated with the corporate vision. The CEO or president is usually responsible for communicating the vision. C-Levels develop strategies and managers break down the strategies into implementable tactics. Salespeople operate at the task level, they are on the street representing the company and its offerings to the customers. Sales supervisors ensure that the right approach is being used on each call and that it will follow the corporate tactics that will support the corporate strategies in order to achieve the corporate vision.

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This helps explain why having one person functioning as CSO, Sales Manager/VP and sales supervisor can be problematic.

Q: Should the company or the salesperson pay for their sales training?

I: The company should reimburse the salesperson when the training is completed. When something is free, what is it worth? When we have skin in the game, we are more likely to value what we have. Reimbursement following completion also ensures the person will complete the course faster. Having quizzing and other statistics will give the supervisor insights into just how thorough the salesperson was with their learning experience.

### CONSIDER USING CHUCK'S P.L.U.S.H. E-LEARNING

Begin training your salespeople today. There are two versions of the P.L.U.S.H. Selling SPM available online. Of course, Chuck will come onsite and train your team with specialized classroom training. But if you want to begin increasing your sales success now, use one of the formal e-Learning courses.

In-house, DIY training is a great way to have your sales team members collaborate with each

Basic – Teach your people the five principles behind value-added selling. In 13 lessons, they will learn why sales is a science, not an art, pre-call planning, the principles behind a successful value-added selling and more. This is training only; there is no reporting available. However, when you use this for in-house, DIY sales training, it can be very effective.

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