How Sales Forces Sustain Competitive Advantage
Research Report
Acknowledgments

We are grateful to the 111 executives who participated in the research. They represent 96 of the world’s leading companies. We have agreed not to identify the companies by name.

While we sampled from a broad range of industries and different geographical areas, the participating companies share similar challenges in growing their businesses in highly competitive markets. The executives provided rich insight into the business challenges they face, the relative strengths and weaknesses of their sales forces, and the strategies that enable them to win in today’s environment. We appreciate their willingness to share their views so that others can learn from their experience.
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Section 1: Executive Overview

The purpose of this study was to identify the factors that enable sales organizations to be highly successful. Companies today are relying increasingly on their sales organizations as engines of growth and productivity. The sales role has never been more difficult—customers are more demanding, products more sophisticated, competitors more aggressive. Not surprisingly, many sales organizations are delivering disappointing results; they have not been able to find the right formula for success in today’s business environment.

After doing an extensive review of research by Forum and other companies, we interviewed 111 executives in 96 major companies around the world, representing 17 industries. All of the companies had strong sales organizations; about half (46) were listed as “most admired” by Fortune magazine or rated among the top 15 sales forces by Selling Power. We asked the executives to rate their sales force’s performance on specific results metrics, such as revenue, profitability, and account retention and penetration. We then asked them to rate their sales organization and describe it in detail, focusing on the skill of the sales force, the capability of managers, the quality of processes and systems, and the organizational climate. Finally, we correlated each sales effectiveness factor with the performance ratings to determine how strongly it predicted sales force results.

Fourteen factors correlated significantly with results. The strongest predictors were salespeople’s skills in finding and winning customers, followed by the quality of the opportunity (“funnel”) management, performance management, and strategic account management systems. The role of the manager also figured prominently; sales forces whose managers think strategically, provide coaching and feedback to salespeople, and create a motivating environment perform much better than others.

The following were among our conclusions:

- **It takes an organization, not just skilled individuals.** The formula for success consists not of one factor but several, including skilled and motivated salespeople, sales managers who provide direction and support, and reliable systems and processes.

- **The sales manager role is critical.** Sales managers directly influence many of the success factors, including helping salespeople to think strategically, providing coaching and feedback, and enforcing discipline on processes such as performance management. (Unfortunately, executives tended to give their sales managers relatively low marks in these high-leverage areas.)

- **Keeping customers is not enough.** While retaining customers is related to sales success, even stronger predictors are salespeople’s skills in finding and winning new ones. The best sales forces can find, win, and retain customers.

- **Sales forces need to “retool” and sharpen their skills.** Salespeople have significant skill gaps (such as getting high-level appointments and differentiating their offerings in a highly competitive market) that prevent them from achieving greater success. Companies can close these gaps not only with formal training but also by improving managers’ ability to provide coaching on the job.

- **There is no “silver bullet,” but building on the basics works.** There is no quick fix for sales performance; even the best sales organizations are challenged to retain their edge. They do so by relentlessly developing the skills of their salespeople, providing day-to-day leadership through their sales managers, and ensuring that their processes support their salespeople and customers—as opposed to just adding “noise.”
Section 2: Introduction

The last several years have been challenging times for salespeople, regardless of their company or industry. The global economic slowdown has changed customers’ buying behaviors as well as their expectations of salespeople. Companies have delayed and cut back spending, demanded price concessions, and involved more players in the buying process. Salespeople have had to work harder to demonstrate the unique value of their products (which are increasingly viewed as commodities), and to provide high levels of service simply to retain customers. Even as the economy improves, many sales organizations are finding that selling is as demanding as ever. The rules of the game have changed.

Looking ahead, companies are relying on their sales forces as engines of economic growth and profitability, yet the sales role has never been more difficult, as products and services become more complex, customers more sophisticated and demanding, and competitors more aggressive. As new people enter sales roles and experienced ones leave them, sales organizations are struggling to help salespeople reach competence quickly, and to provide the leadership and support necessary for them to perform well. Not surprisingly, senior executives often lack confidence in their sales force’s ability to execute their strategies; they tend to be disappointed in their results.

Previous studies by Forum and others have attempted to understand the characteristics of the emerging sales environment and what it takes to succeed in that environment. We conducted an extensive review of recent research and identified a number of themes. These include the need to move toward a consultative, relationship-based sales model (and away from a transactional or informational approach), improving sales knowledge management systems, better funnel management (by identifying high-value leads, for example), and enhanced performance management processes. While there is general agreement that selling today involves something new and different, there is no single formula for success.

How can companies best prepare their sales organizations to succeed in the current “white water” sales environment? We set out to build on prior research by identifying the key factors that accelerate sales performance in business today and recommending ways in which companies can improve their sales effectiveness by focusing on these factors.

The research was guided by four main questions, which are derived from Forum’s systems approach to improving sales performance (see Section 3):

- What critical business challenges do companies face, and what priorities have they set for their sales forces?
- What are their key metrics, and how are the companies performing against them?
- What factors distinguish sales forces that are performing well from those not performing well?
- What best practices, or “points of pride,” enable companies to succeed, and what would companies change if they could?

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1 For example, a survey by Accenture found that 56 percent of senior executives rated their sales force as simply “mediocre.”
The Research

We conducted personal interviews with 111 senior executives, who represented 96 companies. The interviewees were senior sales executives with responsibility for their company’s sales organization—or for a business unit within the company⁶. All companies had direct, field-based sales forces and complex sales processes, more than 90 percent of them selling business to business. In some cases senior HR or training executives were interviewed in addition to or instead of line executives. The companies represented 17 industries, including manufacturing, financial services, pharmaceuticals and health care, business services, and consumer products (see Exhibit 1). A third (32 percent) of the interviewees were current Forum clients—which provided a rich perspective based on our previous knowledge of their sales organizations and challenges. Two thirds (68 percent) of respondents had no prior relationship with Forum—which ensured a “fresh” outside perspective.

Exhibit 1

Research Sample by Industry

⁶ Four of the interviewees were senior HR or training executives with extensive knowledge of the sales force.
The companies were headquartered primarily in North America (85 percent), although a third of them (34 percent) had international operations. The median size of the sales force for which the executive was responsible was 75 people; 18 percent of the executives led sales forces greater than 500 in number, while 35 percent led sales forces smaller than 50 in number. The median annual revenue for the sample companies exceeded $1 billion.

The sample was intentionally weighted toward more successful sales organizations. Companies were selected based on solid track records of performance as rated externally—45 of 96 were listed by *Fortune* magazine as "most admired" either in the U.S. or globally, and/or were rated as one of the top 15 sales organizations by *Selling Power*. Some companies were too small to be listed by *Fortune*, but were nevertheless viewed as consistently strong players in their industries.

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7 Some companies were not publicly held, and financial data was not available. Revenues were for the total company, not the specific business unit that participated in the study.
Section 3: Sales System Model

Our questioning strategy was based on an underlying view that superior sales performance is a systems issue, rather than simply a matter of hiring the best salespeople or enhancing sales techniques. Exhibit 2 shows a model that begins with the company’s business strategy and leads to specific sales force priorities. For example, a company may plan to drive profitable growth by offering target customers a sophisticated solution (such as a communications system, diagnostic services, or comprehensive health-care plans) to a complex business problem. The priorities for the sales force are to identify target customers and to be expert at consultative selling (consulting with customers about their business needs and describing how their own solutions are superior to alternatives, and so on).

Implementing strategy effectively requires a robust learning system that helps salespeople develop and hone the consultative selling skills they need in order to differentiate themselves from competitors. The learning system may include classroom- or technology-based instruction as well as on-the-job practice and coaching by others, or combinations of methods (“blended learning”).

As important as a learning system is, even the best one will fail unless it is combined with a set of performance support systems. These include processes for recruiting and hiring the right candidates; managing performance against objectives; providing leadership, coaching, and feedback; rewarding and recognizing excellent performance; and managing the opportunity “pipeline” or “funnel.”

The sales system enables salespeople and sales managers to take effective action (such as making appointments, asking the right questions, and providing creative solutions) that leads to results (such as larger, more profitable deals).

Exhibit 2
Section 4: Business Challenges and Sales Force Priorities

Business Challenges

There is a lot of competition for high-level clients. Everyone is calling on the same people.

—Financial services executive

There is pressure to discount prices. It’s difficult to differentiate products.

—High-tech executive

It’s difficult to find quality people.

—Manufacturing executive

When we asked executives to describe their greatest business challenges, the most common response was competitive pressure (cited 40 percent of the time). Economic downturns within the last year had caused companies to cut spending, and, while the recession may have ended, the economic uncertainty made them reluctant to invest again. The net result for sales forces in many industries was that more salespeople were chasing fewer opportunities. Also, the buying process had slowed, and customers had become both more demanding (asking for discounts or additional services, for example) and more sophisticated (requiring more information about the solution and its value to their business, for example). Sales organizations were also more focused on profitability than they had been in the past, which put added pressure on salespeople to sell higher-margin solutions—not an easy thing to do in today’s tough business market.

Business Challenges: The Selling Environment

- **Competition is intense.** Participants also cited new players entering their markets and old players challenging traditional boundaries of service and product offerings. Differentiation was seen as crucial and extremely hard to achieve.

- **Customers are more sophisticated, knowledgeable and demanding.** This raises the bar for sales interactions and requires salespeople to deliver value. Procurement departments are playing a stronger role in the buying process today. Salespeople need to understand the value drivers in each buying center and respond effectively.

- **Acquiring new customers and opening new channels were reported as increasingly important to growth strategies.** Often customer acquisition was tied to customer retention strategies that sought to expand relationships and increase buying centers in existing accounts.

- **Profitability has replaced revenue growth as a critical focus of sales organizations.** The sales force is expected to achieve price targets and deliver margins—but also to be more consultative and solutions-oriented.

- **Commoditization/shrinking markets was a theme in most industries.** There is a perceived need to differentiate through value-added services, innovative product-applications, and insights about customers’ customers.

- **The roles of sales representative and sales manager are described as more complex and demanding.** The search for talent seemed universal, and expectations that the current sales force could achieve growth targets were generally low.
Sales Force Priorities

We asked sales executives to describe the most important priorities they set for their sales forces, given the formidable challenges they face. Several of their priorities sound similar to business challenges. Sales organizations were putting their efforts into selling, in order to overcome the business challenges.

At the top of the sales executives’ lists was “retaining current customers and building loyalty” (cited by about half of the respondents). Apparently sales organizations well understand the message of business consultants such as Fred Reichheld, author of *The Loyalty Effect*, whose research has demonstrated the value of repeat business. A close second (cited by 40 percent of the respondents) was “winning new customers,” followed by “improving profitability” and “providing differentiated value” (which are often linked).

Beyond these main themes of winning and keeping customers, sales executives described differing priorities, from cutting costs to growing market share, depending on their strategy. A number of executives cited improving sales management, sales systems, and capability to execute strategy as main priorities.

Sales priorities fell into two distinct categories, outcomes and approaches.

Outcomes included:
- Building loyalty and retaining customers
- Winning new customers
- Improving profitability
- Growing revenue
- Growing market share

Approaches to achieving those outcomes included:
- Differentiating offerings and adding value
- Cross-selling into existing accounts
- Launching new products
- Addressing the sales system and process
- Sales managers focusing on strategy execution
- Sales managers coaching more effectively
- Implementing strategic account management (SAM) processes

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Section 5: Metrics and Performance

The companies we studied, like all sales organizations, tended to measure sales performance comprehensively. In fact, the executives often commented that their company had too many—versus too few—measures of sales performance, which made it difficult to focus on the “critical few” metrics.

The worse we perform, the more we measure. —Health care executive

The metrics tracked most often included both financial measures (revenue, orders, and margin) and activity measures (number of sales calls, leads, proposals, and so on). Sales executives most frequently rated revenue as the most critical measure (see Exhibit 3, below).

Customer satisfaction and retention appeared surprisingly low on the list of metrics, considering that customer loyalty was described as the most important priority. They were cited by less than 15 percent of the respondents as most important.

Exhibit 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Metrics</th>
<th>Percent Mentioned</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Revenue</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sales Calls, Leads, Proposals</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Account Probability</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orders</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pipeline Quality Mgmt.</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Y/Y Growth</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Achieve Quota</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organic Acct. Growth/Ren.</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gross Margin</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customer Retention</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Market Share</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customer Satisfaction</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Win Rate</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Revenue by Product</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bill, Scorecard, Mktg.</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

10 Total responses exceed 100 percent because individual respondents could give multiple responses.
We asked executives to rate the overall performance of their sales organization, and then analyzed the performance ratings in relation to the other variables in the study. Exhibits 6 through 9 display the results for executives giving higher ratings of their sales force’s performance versus those for executives giving lower ratings.

In general, the sales executives in our study were disappointed with the performance of their sales forces (see Exhibit 4, below), rating them 7.0 on average on a 10-point scale (“grade C”). This finding is consistent with studies by Accenture and others that indicate that senior managers are not satisfied with the performance of their sales organizations, and they lack confidence that their sales forces can achieve growth targets.

Remember that our sample was skewed toward high-performing organizations, so this performance dichotomy suggests that even high-performing organizations see need for improvement.

Exhibit 4

Performance Against Expectations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Lower Ratings</th>
<th>Higher Ratings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than 7.0</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 to 7.9</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 to 8.9</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.0 or Higher</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Section 6: Drivers of Performance

What distinguishes sales organizations that perform successfully from those that don’t? To answer this question we divided the sample of interviewees into two groups: those who were relatively satisfied with their organization’s sales performance (rating it 8.0 or higher) and those who were disappointed with it (rating it lower than 8.0). Thirty-seven interviewees fell into the first group and 74 into the second. The sample population and questioning strategy are illustrated in Exhibit 5.

Exhibit 5

We then compared how these two groups rated their sales organization on each dimension. We also correlated performance ratings with each dimension in order to determine its relative importance. Of the 19 factors we considered, 14 correlated with performance to a statistically significant degree (see Exhibit 6).
Sales Skills

We considered three broad groups of sales skills: finding customers (prospecting for new opportunities, for example), winning customers (exploring solutions and closing, for example), and keeping customers (building loyalty, for example).

The higher-performing group rated their sales skills, overall, much higher than did the lower-performing group (see Exhibit 7). Both groups rated their ability to keep customers as relatively strong, which is not surprising given the importance their organizations placed on customer loyalty and retention (see Section 4: Business Challenges and Sales Force Priorities). Finding and winning new customers were significant challenges for both groups, who rated this as their weakest area. The higher-performing group, however, far outpaced the lower-performing group in their ability to find and win new customers.
Exhibit 7\textsuperscript{12}

All three sales skills correlated significantly with performance, in the following order:

- Winning customers (.51)\textsuperscript{13}
- Finding customers (.49)
- Keeping customers (.28)

Skills in finding and winning customers were highly correlated with sales force performance. In fact, of the 19 factors we considered, these two skills were the strongest predictors of success. While keeping customers continued to be important, the skills that made the biggest difference in the new sales environment related to expanding one’s “turf” by competing for new customers more than to retaining existing customers.

Prospecting is a continuous challenge.

—Financial services executive

We need to get enough actual contact time in front of customers and prospects.

—Manufacturing executive

The challenge is to get reps to work on more leads and more accounts.

—Health care executive

\textsuperscript{12} Differences between higher and lower performers are all statistically significant at p<.05.

\textsuperscript{13} All correlation coefficients reported in this section are statistically significant at p <.05.
Sales Management Skills

On average, the sales executives did not rate their managers as having strong skills—the average rating was 6.8 out of 10. Executives attributed the relatively low ratings to different causes. In some cases managers were former top-performing salespeople who had been promoted due to their sales performance—not their management ability. In other cases the requirements of the sales manager role had changed, demanding a higher level of leadership and management skills than in the past. In general, sales executives viewed sales management as a major point of leverage for their organization and viewed management development as a critical need.

We considered three sales management skills: strategizing (that is, developing a strategy for the unit and helping reps think strategically about their accounts), motivating the sales force, and providing individual coaching and feedback. We had identified these skills in previous research as key success factors\textsuperscript{14}.

Although the ratings of both groups were relatively low on all three skills, the higher-performing group rated their managers as significantly stronger in each area—strategizing, motivating, and coaching—than they did the lower-performing group (see Exhibit 8).

The correlations of the three sales management skills with performance were:

- Strategizing (.36)
- Motivating (.34)
- Coaching (.33)

The profile of the manager who is successful in driving performance is one of versatility. The manager must have analytical skills to develop strong business plans and also “people skills” to motivate the whole team and provide developmental coaching and feedback to individual players.

Exhibit 8\textsuperscript{15}

\textsuperscript{14} “Sales Effectiveness in World-Class Organizations: Identifying Sales Force and Sales Management Capabilities,” The Forum Corporation, 1998.

\textsuperscript{15} Differences between higher and lower performers are statistically significant at p<.05.
Climate

One factor that has been strongly linked to organizational effectiveness is climate. The study of climate began in the late 1960s by George Litwin and Robert Stringer, two Harvard researchers who determined that certain aspects of the work environment can have a powerful effect on motivation, which in turn drives performance. Since the ‘60s, the concept of climate has been further refined, and its influence on organizational results well-documented16.

Managers have the strongest influence on setting the climate for their sales unit. Each unit has a unique climate that consists of six dimensions that combine to set the tone for performance:

- **Clarity:** Salespeople are clear about what is expected of them.
- **Commitment:** Salespeople are committed to doing whatever is asked of them.
- **Standards:** Management sets a “high bar” and challenges people to improve.
- **Responsibility:** Salespeople do what is needed without relying on others for direction.
- **Recognition:** Salespeople believe that excellent work will be recognized and rewarded.
- **Teamwork:** People work as a cohesive team.

Both the higher- and lower-performing groups rated their climates highest on commitment, clarity, and responsibility—that is, they perceived their salespeople as knowledgeable about the results they are expected to achieve and as dedicated to achieving the results without relying on outside help (see Exhibit 9). While this pattern was similar for both groups, the executives of the higher-performing group rated their climates significantly higher on each dimension.

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The climate dimensions that correlated with performance most strongly were:

- Recognition (.36)
- Commitment (.35)
- Responsibility (.34)
- Clarity (.31)

The profile of the top-performing sales force that emerges from these trends is one in which salespeople are clear about what is expected of them and are confident that their contributions will be rewarded. In such an environment they are willing to take responsibility and to demonstrate high levels of commitment to getting the job done.

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17 Differences between higher and lower performers for clarity, commitment, responsibility, and recognition are statistically significant at p<.05. Differences for standards and teamwork are not significant.
Sales Support Systems

Executives rated the effectiveness of each of seven systems or processes that support sales performance:

- Recruiting and hiring (acquiring high-quality candidates)
- Performance management (setting objectives and tracking performance)
- Opportunity management (“funnel” or lead management)
- Strategic account management (assigning teams to high-value accounts)
- Reward and recognition systems
- Information systems (such as sales force automation systems)
- Training and development

Higher- and lower-performing groups showed a similar pattern of ratings, although executives of higher-performing organizations rated their sales forces significantly higher on average than did executives in lower-performing organizations (See Exhibit 10). For both groups the strongest factors were performance management, strategic account management, and reward and recognition systems. Also, organizational information (Client Relationship Management or CRM) systems were rated as weak by both groups—especially the lower-performing group (whose mean rating was 5.4 out of 10).

18 It is surprising that the dissatisfied group rated their reward and recognition systems as relatively strong, while they rated the climate dimension of recognition as relatively weak. We suspect the reason for this is that all companies have a formal system for dispensing tangible incentives (bonuses, prizes, raises, and so on), but high-performing sales organizations also have managers who use formal and informal tactics for helping salespeople feel recognized and rewarded for superior effort.
The systems factors that correlated with performance most strongly were:
- Opportunity management (.41)
- Performance management (.40)
- Strategic account management (.38)
- Information systems (.25)

While the interview questions about systems and processes pertained to formal procedures (having a reliable process for segmenting and serving strategic accounts, for example), they yielded responses that confirmed the critical role of the sales manager: Regardless of how well the processes are designed on paper, it is the role of the manager to provide clarity, set objectives, offer support and guidance, and track and reinforce their implementation day to day.

19 Differences between higher and lower performers for performance management, opportunity management, SAM, and information systems are statistically significant at p<.05. Differences for other factors are not significant.
Summary of Success Factors

Most of the factors we studied (14 of 19) correlated strongly with sales performance\(^{20}\)—which confirmed our view that superior sales results coincide with a whole sales system functioning well, not with any one factor (such as hiring strong players) alone (see Exhibit 6). When combined, the factors predict sales performance exceptionally well. The correlation of .65 means that 42 percent of the variance in sales performance can be accounted for by these 14 factors. In other words, without knowing anything about the industry, product, sales force, or local market conditions, we can make a reasonable estimate of how well a sales force performs simply by knowing how an executive rates it on the factors. More importantly, our findings suggest that executives can boost their company’s sales performance by assessing their sales organization on the factors and making appropriate improvements. See the Appendix for a set of tools to use for this purpose.

The greatest single predictors of sales performance were salespeople’s skills, followed by the systems that support them. The manager’s importance was also clear: All three sets of management skills correlated strongly with performance.

One important way in which a manager influences sales performance is by creating a high-performance climate—an environment that recognizes performance, clarifies expectations, and encourages salespeople to take responsibility and commit to achieving goals. High-performance climates foster business results because they tap the full motivation of the sales force, encouraging salespeople to go the extra mile to deliver results.

Regarding support systems, opportunity management was the strongest factor—companies that used a robust process for identifying and tracking opportunities from leads to closed business fared better than others. Those that used better processes for performance management and for serving strategic accounts also performed significantly better. While information systems were viewed as a potentially significant weakness by most sales organizations we studied, top performers seemed to find a way to use these systems to their advantage.

Some factors—such as the climate dimensions of teamwork, and standards and financial reward systems—failed to predict performance; both the higher- and lower-performing groups performed reasonably well on the practices—which can be considered the “price of admission” for a strong sales organization (necessary for playing the game, but not strong points of differentiation).

Other factors—such as recruiting and hiring, and training and development—failed to distinguish the two groups; neither performed particularly well on them. We view these as opportunity areas; sales forces can succeed in spite of weakness in them, but would perform much better with a steady stream of well selected and trained candidates.

\(^{20}\) Statistical significance levels for six factors were \(<.05\) for six factors; \(<.01\) for 1 factor, and \(<.001\) for six factors.
Section 7: Approaches to Learning

Our findings confirm clearly that salespeople and sales managers must be highly skilled in order to compete effectively in today’s business environment. The executives we interviewed, however, lacked confidence in their companies’ processes for attracting skilled candidates. Therefore, their companies had a high need to "retool" the skills of their current sales forces to meet new challenges.

A study in the insurance industry found that the average sales force spends as much as $120,000 to on-board each new salesperson before it begins to see a return on the investment\(^\text{21}\) (in salary and recruiting, training and development, use of staff and management time, and lost opportunity, for instance). Many companies spend considerably more than this. In order to determine ways in which the learning process can be accelerated, we asked executives to rate their sales training process and to identify key challenges in developing salespeople.

Few sales executives in our sample were satisfied with the effectiveness of their training and development process; the average effectiveness rating was 6.8 out of 10. The single greatest challenge to providing training, cited by almost half of the executives, was taking salespeople out of the field to participate in it (see Exhibit 11). Time out of the field was more than three times as likely to be mentioned as a key obstacle than were training costs, scheduling, geographical dispersion, or gaining the commitment of salespeople and sales managers.

Exhibit 11\(^\text{22}\)

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\(^{22}\) Total responses exceeds 100 percent because individual respondents could give multiple responses.
Sales forces are faced with a dilemma: It is expensive to take people out of the field for training, yet it is even more expensive to have under-trained people selling to their customers. The premium placed on keeping salespeople in the field seemed to influence choices of learning methods; sales executives tended to prefer on-the-job learning and coaching by sales managers, or a combination of classroom and on-the-job learning—not classroom-based learning alone. Technology-based learning (such as individual web-based tutorials) was their last choice as a stand-alone method. Executives often commented that their salespeople learn best in “live” interactions with each other or that they are averse to using technology because of personal preferences or organizational culture.

The implication of these findings is that sales training methods must become more flexible and faster-paced than ever, if salespeople and sales managers are to develop critical skills. Learning methods must also be highly targeted—for example, they need to use classroom training (including role-play practice) for content that can best be learned in a classroom (such as the nuances of selling specific solutions to specific customers)\(^{23}\). Conversely, learning designs need to help salespeople take maximum advantage of on-the-job learning opportunities, through action planning, assignments, and coaching.

The highest-performing sales organizations rely heavily on managers to provide ongoing coaching and feedback—managers’ coaching skills are significant predictors of sales organization performance. Many sales managers appear to be under-prepared to play this role, as sales executives tended to rate sales managers’ coaching and feedback skill levels relatively low (see Section 6). The challenge is to provide ways for managers to continuously develop their skills in a time-pressured environment.

Section 8: Best Practices

When asked to identify the best practices, or “points of pride,” of their sales organizations, executives in both higher- and lower-performing sales organizations tended to cite their ability to build solid relationships with clients as well as the dedication, passion, and commitment of their sales forces. These might be regarded as the “basics” in selling today. Higher-performing sales forces also took pride in their ability to serve global or strategic accounts and in the responsiveness and accessibility of their sales reps (which presumably enables them to serve these complex accounts well).

For lower-performing sales organizations, the points of pride did not have a consistent theme—they ranged from the ability to sell value, to hitting sales targets (such as growth and win rate), to the recruiting process, to product knowledge and presentation skills.

Each of these categories of best practice, for higher- and lower-performing sales forces, might seem like a reasonable focus for companies aiming to improve sales performance. Our research suggests, however, that companies can gain greater payoff by targeting a smaller set of high-leverage areas. These include:

- Attracting and developing reps who are not only motivated and dedicated, but also highly skilled in finding and winning customers
- Improving key sales support systems such as performance management and opportunity management, and strategic account management
- Developing sales managers who are able to set strategic direction, serve as coaches, and motivate the sales force

There is not much overlap between the topics listed above and the full range of best practices displayed in Exhibit 12. The implication is that sales executives have an opportunity to improve performance by asking:

- What are our best practices?
- Are we focusing our efforts on the areas of best practice that have the greatest payoff?

This research report, especially Exhibit 6, provides direction for selecting high-payoff factors.
What would executives change?

On the flipside of best practices, we asked executives what one thing they would change about their sales organization if they could. The most frequent response of all the executives in companies in our sample involved improving information systems to better support sales. Since information systems received low marks, on average, from the executives in all of the participating companies (see Exhibit 10), it is not surprising that it was a target for improvement. Also, as information systems are correlated with performance (Exhibit 6), it is wise to invest in them.

Beyond the common frustration with information systems, the concerns of top-performing companies and others varied. Top performers thought they could gain the greatest return by having more effective recruiting systems (remember that these systems tended to be rated low, as is shown in Exhibit 10), as well as by helping reps to increase their selling time, improve their skills in selling solutions, and use technology more effectively. The responses of executives in lower-performing organizations ranged from helping reps to develop better skills in strategic thinking and qualifying to lower selling costs, to providing better coaching and learning opportunities.

As we saw in the best practices responses (Exhibit 12), the range of responses for lower performers was greater than that for higher performers, which suggests a lack of focus. As with the best practices described earlier, each of the areas that executives would target for change could yield an improvement in sales performance. The challenge is to select a limited number of high-priority areas for improvement, given the company’s business objectives, strengths, and weaknesses. Again, this research, especially that shown in Exhibit 6, can provide guidance in selecting factors that are likely to yield the greatest payoff in performance.
Summary

Considering the data for best practices as well as that for areas for improvement, the findings indicate that the sales executives were relatively pleased with the quality of their sales forces in terms of their motivation and ability to build solid relationships with customers. Some executives expressed pride in their sales forces' track record of delivering profitable business or rolling out new products, while others commented on how well their sales forces worked together as teams in serving major accounts.

Areas of relative weakness related primarily to systems and issues (lacking a useful customer information system, lacking a reliable process for recruiting and selection, and qualifying opportunities, for example). Another theme was salespeople lacking strategic focus; they are not always able to identify high-value opportunities or spend their time in ways that generate the greatest payoff.

Two areas were conspicuously under-reported. We were surprised that there was so little mention of:

- Finding and winning new accounts (as opposed to building current customers' loyalty); we were especially surprised since salespeople's skills in these areas were found to be the strongest predictors of sales performance.
- Improving the performance of managers. Sales managers play a key role in enforcing process discipline and helping salespeople to develop skills such as strategic thinking. While most sales executives gave their managers relatively low marks in all three skill areas—strategizing, motivating, and coaching—these skills correlated highly with performance. In other words, companies can make dramatic improvements in the performance of their sales force by increasing their managers' effectiveness.
Section 9: Conclusions and Recommendations

Conclusions

Our findings confirm strongly that companies now have a major opportunity to improve their business performance by improving their sales functions. The 96 companies we investigated were relying heavily on their sales forces—even “betting the company”—to execute bold and challenging business strategies, such as growing new markets, taking on strong competitors, creating strategic partnerships, and introducing new technologies. Yet few of the companies’ sales executives were highly satisfied with their sales force’s performance in relation to these goals.

Some organizations are seeing more success than others in building and sustaining sales forces that deliver results reliably in a turbulent economic environment. This report identifies several key lessons that the best sales forces have learned to use in order to separate themselves from the rest of the pack (see Exhibit 14).

Exhibit 14

Summary and Conclusions

Lesson 1: It takes an organization, not just skilled individuals.

Salespeople need to be more highly skilled than ever if their clients are to view them as value-adding consultants. However, a company’s sales performance requires more than talented individuals to deliver results over time. Of the 19 aspects of sales organizations we studied, 14 correlated significantly with performance. These included not only sales skills, but also processes and systems—such as performance management and opportunity (“pipeline”) management—as well as the influence of the manager. Taken together, these factors had a highly predictive relationship to sales performance (correlation = .65)—a relationship much more highly predictive than that of any one factor alone.

This study reinforced Forum’s previous findings that the most successful sales organizations focus not only on skill development but also on organizational processes and systems that support sales performance. The model in Exhibit 15 shows four approaches that companies take to achieving results. The vertical axis represents a focus on individual skill development and tools, and the horizontal axis represents a focus on processes and systems.
Embodied in these axes is another sales effectiveness dimension that refers to the extent to which sales force development is relevant to the business. For example, a lower-relevance activity might be “generic” sales training that a salesperson elects to take outside the company to address a specific need. While relevant to the individual salesperson’s need, such training provides little opportunity for shared understanding and development of skills needed to drive the business. More highly relevant training is linked to a competency model that identifies specific skills and abilities required to execute the business strategy.

Along the horizontal axis, companies provide processes and systems that are more or less relevant to the business. For example, a lower-relevance process or system might be a “generic” time management tool that individual salespeople use at their own discretion, while a higher-relevance process or system might be an online system for sharing “live” customer information among the members of a global account team. One respondent told us jokingly that his sales force used their CRM system to share information so quickly that “if you’re calling on a customer, you can check the system right before your visit to see what he had for lunch.”

Our experience is that high-performing companies focus in the upper right quadrant—that is, they create a differentiated sales force by developing sales skills and processes in a way that is closely linked to their business strategy. For example, a supplier to the health-care industry in our study was executing a growth strategy that required selling high-end diagnostic equipment to sophisticated buyers, while also serving the needs of purchasers of commodity products, such as laboratory supplies. The company had created a complete curriculum for sales managers and salespeople to develop the skills they need to identify and sell to different types of buyers, and at the same time had re-engineered its processes to provide tracking information and tools that support salespeople in their new roles.
Lesson 2: The sales manager role is critical.

An underlying theme throughout our data is the critical role the sales manager plays in driving performance. Three sets of management skills were linked strongly to sales performance: providing strategic direction, motivating, and serving as a coach. To borrow a military term, an effective sales manager is clearly a “force multiplier”—that is, he or she amplifies the performance of everyone on the team.

Our data indicates that the manager boosts performance in at least five ways:

- Applying strategic thinking to analyze business opportunities and create plans
- Helping salespeople to develop their skills by providing feedback and coaching
- Setting a climate in which salespeople know what is expected of them and feel that exceptional performance is recognized
- Reinforcing the disciplined use of processes such as opportunity management
- Providing support and tools to salespeople, while reducing organizational “clutter,” such as unnecessary administrative work and approvals

While we found sales management to be a strong differentiator between top sales forces and others, we also found that sales executives, on average, were disappointed in the performance of their sales managers (average ratings were lower than 7 on a 10-point scale). The clear implication is that companies can unleash a great source of untapped competitive advantage by focusing more intentionally on the development of their sales managers.

Lesson 3: Keeping customers is not enough.

Many companies have discovered the value of customer loyalty in recent years, due to the work of Fred Reichheld and others who have demonstrated the economic value of loyal customers. We agree that customer loyalty continues to be important, since we found that salespeople’s skills in keeping customers was a strong predictor of sales performance.

Even stronger predictors of performance, however, were the skills of finding and winning new customers. An apparent trend in recent years is sales organizations improving their ability to keep customers; they seem particularly concerned about “defending their turf” in an economic downturn. We found that salespeople in both high- and low-performing sales organizations were best able to keep customers, versus finding and winning new ones.

The next challenge, as the economy recovers, will be for salespeople to find and win new customers and keep current ones. People in the lower-performing sales forces we studied experienced difficulty in this area, while their counterparts in the higher-performing sales forces did it well. Executives in higher-performing sales organizations also rated their opportunity management systems as stronger; these systems provide salespeople with more information and support in pursuing new business. Our findings indicate that, by focusing more intentionally on the process of and skills for bringing in new customers, sales organizations can make dramatic gains in sales performance.

Lesson 4: Sales forces need to retool and sharpen their skills.

Many of the executives we interviewed complimented their salespeople’s passion, dedication, and commitment (see Section 8). Most, however, also pointed to significant gaps in the skills of salespeople and sales managers—gaps that must be closed if they were to be more successful.
For salespeople, these skill gaps involve thinking strategically about their territory and accounts, getting appointments at higher levels, understanding the customer’s business needs, differentiating the offering, and so on. For sales managers, the gaps involve thinking strategically, serving as a role model and coach, keeping the sales force motivated, implementing sales support processes, and so on.

While sales executives were quick to point out urgent learning needs, they tended to be dissatisfied with their company’s training and development process as a way to meet them. On average, sales executives rated their training function 6.8 out of 10 in effectiveness, with no significant differences emerging between higher and lower performers. Since both higher and lower performers rated training and development relatively low, we suspect that top-performing organizations do not rely solely on formal training but find other ways to help their salespeople develop and sharpen their skills—particularly by engaging the sales manager as teacher and coach.

The implication is that sales organizations can enhance their performance not only by using formal classroom training, but also by using faster and more flexible learning methods. Sales managers are ideally suited to model and reinforce learning (see Lesson 2, above). Possible additional learning methods include:

- Sharing top performers’ practices
- On-the-job skill clinics
- Field coaching by trainers
- Action learning projects

Forum’s workplace learning research\^{24} provides guidance in selecting the right blend of methods to accelerate learning. For example, salespeople can “learn about” topics, such as product, company, and customer information, through self-study. The best methods for them to “learn to do” things such as asking questions and handling objections include “live” practice and feedback. Salespeople “learn to be” by focusing on their attitudes and beliefs, which are best shaped by dialoguing with others in a group or one-on-one setting (see Exhibit 16).

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Lesson 5: There is no “magic bullet,” but building on the basics works.

Our study found a number of points of leverage that enable sales forces to gain competitive advantage. Investing in these areas is likely to improve the performance of many sales organizations. It is not, however, a quick fix or “magic bullet.” Rather, the path to success seems to consist of the following components:

- Providing leadership through sales managers setting direction, modeling skills, enforcing standards, and supporting and rewarding performance
- Fostering the fundamental sales skills of finding, winning, and keeping customers
- Creating disciplined processes and making sure they support serving customers—versus adding “noise”

Recommendations

In order to apply the results of this study to improving sales performance in your own organization we recommend the following:

- Size up the strengths and weaknesses of your organization using the Sales Effectiveness Diagnostic Tool (see Section 10: Appendix), which lists all of the factors in the study.
- Consider other data that relates to your sales organization’s effectiveness (such as skills inventories, performance evaluations, and feedback from salespeople, sales managers, and customers).
- Test your assumptions and observations with others in your organization. Consider surveying your sales force on the success factors (see Sales Force Survey in Section 10: Appendix).
- Identify as many as three priorities for action, such as:
  - Increasing the quality and frequency of field coaching by managers
  - Improving salespeople’s skills in identifying profitable opportunities
  - Improving the lead management process

- Implement an improvement plan that includes one or more of the following components:
  - Management development to enable managers to lead and support salespeople more effectively.
  - Skill training to address critical gaps, such as prospecting for new opportunities.
  - Improving key processes, such as opportunity management.
  - Organizational effectiveness measures, such as creating a more motivating climate.
  - Creating opportunities to share common challenges and best practices.

- Revisit your assessment of the Sales Effectiveness factors periodically (say, once a quarter).
Section 10: Appendix

This appendix includes:
- Sales Effectiveness Diagnostic Tool
- Sales Force Survey
- Sales Manager Survey
Sales Effectiveness Diagnostic Tool

Introduction. The purpose of this tool is to help you size up the effectiveness of your sales force on a number of factors in order to identify improvements that would provide the highest payoff in sales performance. Think about your company’s business objectives and priorities for its sales force, given current challenges. Then respond to the questions below.

Sales Skills. How would you rate the effectiveness of your sales force in each capability area? How would you rate the importance of each capability area to your sales force’s performance?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Salespeople Capabilities</th>
<th>Effectiveness 10 = Extremely 1 = Not at all</th>
<th>Importance 10 = Extremely 1 = Not at all</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. Finding Customers. This includes all of the preparation and planning required to identify and advance sales opportunities—skills such as:</td>
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<td>- Knowing products and services</td>
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<td>- Knowing markets</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Developing sales opportunities</td>
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<tr>
<td>B. Winning Customers: This includes the process of converting a potential opportunity into closed business, with such activities as:</td>
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<td>- Planning and strategizing</td>
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<td>- Identifying and meeting customer needs</td>
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<td>- Negotiating effectively</td>
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<td>C. Keeping Customers: This includes delivering the solution in a way that earns the customer’s loyalty and expands the relationship, by doing things such as:</td>
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<td>- Orchestrating resources</td>
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<td>- Demonstrating results for customers</td>
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<td>- Building long-term relationships</td>
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Sales Manager Skills. How would you rate your sales manager’s effectiveness in each skill? How would you rate the importance of each skill to your sales force’s performance?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sales Manager Skills</th>
<th>Effectiveness 10 = Extremely 1 = Not at all</th>
<th>Importance 10 = Extremely 1 = Not at all</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. Strategizing: Developing plans for growing the business within a territory or a specific account</td>
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<tr>
<td>B. Coaching: Providing salespeople with direction and feedback</td>
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<tr>
<td>C. Motivating: Tapping the full energy, commitment, and creativity of the sales team</td>
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</table>
**Climate:** How would you rate the extent to which each dimension applies for your company? How would you rate the importance of each dimension to your sales force’s performance?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Climate Dimension</th>
<th>Extent 10 = To a very great extent 1 = Not at all</th>
<th>Importance 10 = Extremely 1 = Not at all</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. Clarity: People are clear about what is expected of them. (A military organization might have a high level of clarity about roles and expectations, while a start-up firm might have less clarity.)</td>
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<td>B. Commitment: People are committed to achieving challenging goals. (That is, they do whatever is asked of them.)</td>
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<td>C. Standards: People feel pressured by management to continuously improve performance. (That is, management sets the bar high, demanding excellent performance and monitoring it regularly.)</td>
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<td>D. Responsibility: People take personal initiative and feel responsible for getting the job done without relying on others. (That is, they don’t need much direction.)</td>
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<td>E. Recognition: People feel that their good work is acknowledged and rewarded—not that they are criticized for poor performance. (There are plenty of financial or non-financial incentives to perform well.)</td>
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<td>F. Teamwork: People feel that they belong to a cohesive and supportive team. (For example, salespeople, technical support staff, and customer service reps all working well together.)</td>
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</table>
Sales Performance Support Systems. How would you rate the effectiveness of each system in driving sales performance in your organization? How would you rate the importance of each system to your sales force’s performance?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sales Performance Support Systems</th>
<th>Effectiveness 10 = Extremely</th>
<th>Importance 10 = Extremely</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. Recruiting and hiring process (that is, attracting and hiring the best)</td>
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<td>B. Performance management system (establishing objectives and reviewing performance periodically, for example)</td>
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<td>C. Opportunity (“funnel”) management process (tracking business opportunities from initial leads to closed business, for example)</td>
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<td>D. Strategic account management process (creating partnerships with key clients, for example)</td>
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<tr>
<td>E. Rewards and recognition systems (that is, financial and non-financial rewards for high performance)</td>
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<td>F. Information systems (such as automated Client Relationship Management, or CRM, systems)</td>
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<tr>
<td>G. Training and development system (classroom and on-the-job structured learning activities, for example)</td>
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Interpretation Guidelines

Analyze your patterns of responses, and answer these questions:

- In what areas did you give your sales force the highest marks? What areas seem to be its greatest weaknesses? Any trends? (For example, salespeople are good at keeping existing customers but poor at finding new ones, or sales managers have strong skills, but the systems that support them are weak.)
- What factors are most important in your business? Identify the three factors to which you gave the highest importance ratings.
- What are your sales force’s relative strengths and weaknesses with regard to these three factors?
- If you could make improvements on only three factors, which three would provide the greatest leverage in improving your sales force’s overall performance?
Sales Force Survey

Note: This survey template enables sales executives to gain input from their salespeople on the factors addressed in Forum’s Sales Effectiveness Study. You may wish to customize the instructions and insert your company name.

Introduction. The purpose of this survey is to collect your views on factors that affect sales performance. Your individual responses will be kept anonymous; data will be analyzed on a group basis only, to identify the strengths of our sales organization and opportunities for improving our effectiveness. Thank you for your feedback.

Rating Your Skills

1. How would you rate your skills in finding customers? That is, the preparation and planning required to identify and advance sales opportunities.

<table>
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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1 Not at all skilled</th>
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<th>10 Extremely well-skilled</th>
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<tr>
<td>A. Knowing products and services</td>
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<td>C. Developing sales opportunities</td>
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Comment:

2. How would you rate your skills in winning customers? That is, the process of converting a potential opportunity into closed business.

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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1 Not at all skilled</th>
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<th>10 Extremely well-skilled</th>
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<td>A. Planning and strategizing</td>
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Comment:
3. How would you rate your skills in keeping customers? That is, delivering the solution in a way that earns the customer’s loyalty and expands the relationship.

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<td><strong>Extremely well-skilled</strong></td>
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</table>

A. Orchestrating resources

B. Demonstrating results for customers

C. Building long-term relationships

**Comment:**

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**Rating Your Manager’s Skills**

4. How would you rate your sales manager’s skills in each of the following areas?

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</table>

A. Strategizing: Developing plans for growing the business within a territory or specific account

B. Coaching: Providing salespeople with direction and feedback

C. Motivating: Tapping the full energy, commitment, and creativity of the sales team

**Comment:**
## Rating the Company's Climate

5. Consider the “climate” of the sales organization. What does it feel like for salespeople to work in the organization? Rate the extent to which each dimension applies for the sales organization.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Climate Dimension</th>
<th>Rating</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Clarity:</strong> People are clear about what is expected of them. (A military organization might have a high level of clarity about roles and expectations, while a start-up firm might have less clarity.)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Teamwork:</strong> People feel that they belong to a cohesive and supportive team. (For example, salespeople, technical support staff, and customer service reps all working well together.)</td>
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</table>

**Comment:**
Rating the Company’s Sales Support Processes and Systems

6. How effective are each of the following systems in helping you to achieve your goals as a salesperson?

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1 Not at all skilled</th>
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<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>9</th>
<th>10 Extremely well-skilled</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. Recruiting and hiring process</td>
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<td>B. Performance management system</td>
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<td>C. Opportunity (“funnel”) management process</td>
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<td>D. Strategic account management process</td>
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<td>E. Rewards and recognition system</td>
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<td>F. Information systems (such as CRM)</td>
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Comment:

7. What is an example of “best practice” in the sales organization (that is, something the organization does particularly well in supporting business development)?

8. What one thing would you change to make the sales organization more effective?

Thank you for your feedback.
Sales Manager Survey

Note: This survey template enables sales executives to gain input from their sales managers on the factors addressed in Forum’s Sales Effectiveness Study. You may wish to customize the instructions and insert your company name.

Introduction. The purpose of this survey is to collect your views on factors that affect sales performance. Your individual responses will be kept anonymous; data will be analyzed on a group basis only, to identify the strengths of our sales organization and opportunities for improving our effectiveness. Thank you for your feedback.

Rating Your Salespeople’s Skills

1. How would you rate your salespeople’s skills in finding customers? That is, the preparation and planning required to identify and advance sales opportunities.

2. How would you rate your salespeople’s skills in winning customers? That is, the process of converting a potential opportunity into closed business.
3. How would you rate your salespeople’s skills in keeping customers? That is, delivering the solution in a way that earns the customer’s loyalty and expands the relationship.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>Not at all skilled</th>
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<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>9</th>
<th>10 Extremely well-skilled</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. Orchestrating resources</td>
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<td>B. Demonstrating results for customers</td>
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<td>C. Building long-term relationships</td>
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Comment:

**Rating Your Skills**

4. How would you rate your sales management skills in each of the following areas?

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<th>1</th>
<th>Not at all skilled</th>
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<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>9</th>
<th>10 Extremely well-skilled</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. Strategizing: Developing plans for growing the business within a territory or specific account</td>
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<td>B. Coaching: Providing salespeople with direction and feedback</td>
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<td>C. Motivating: Tapping the full energy, commitment, and creativity of the sales team</td>
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Comment:
Rating the Company's Climate

5. Consider the “climate” of the sales organization. What does it feel like for salespeople to work in the organization? Rate the extent to which each dimension applies for the sales organization.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Climate Dimension</th>
<th>Rating</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. Clarity: People are clear about what is expected of them. (A military organization might have a high level of clarity about roles and expectations, while a start-up firm might have less clarity.)</td>
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<td>B. Commitment: People are committed to achieving challenging goals. (That is, they do whatever is asked of them.)</td>
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<td>C. Standards: People feel pressured by management to continuously improve performance. (That is, management sets the bar high, demanding excellent performance and monitoring it regularly.)</td>
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<td>D. Responsibility: People take personal initiative and feel responsible for getting the job done without relying on others. (That is, they don’t need much direction.)</td>
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<td>E. Recognition: People feel that their good work is acknowledged and rewarded—not that they are criticized for poor performance. (There are plenty of financial or non-financial incentives to perform well.)</td>
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<tr>
<td>F. Teamwork: People feel that they belong to a cohesive and supportive team. (For example, salespeople, technical support staff, and customer service reps all working well together.)</td>
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Comment:
Rating the Company's Sales Support Processes and Systems

6. How effective are each of the following systems in helping you to achieve your goals as a sales manager?

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>1 Not at all skilled</th>
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<tr>
<td>A. Recruiting and hiring process</td>
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<td>B. Performance management system</td>
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<td>C. Opportunity (&quot;funnel&quot;) management process</td>
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<td>D. Strategic account management process</td>
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8. What one thing would you change to make the sales organization more effective?

Thank you for your feedback.
Bibliography

Accenture (2004), Changing Sales Force Behavior to Achieve High Performance.


Forum is a global professional services firm that mobilizes people to embrace the critical strategies of their organization and accelerate results. We help senior leaders with urgent strategic agendas equip their organizations to perform, change, and grow. Our expertise is built on decades of original research; our business insight keeps companies out ahead of their markets, competitors, and customers. Harvard Business Press published Forum’s latest book Strategic Speed in 2010.

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