



SELLING IN SYNC:

What To Do When Conflicting Beliefs Create a Sales Roadblock

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

It happens every day in sales organizations: a salesperson, in danger of missing quota, is implored by their manager to increase their sales activity.

This is particularly true as more companies charge people in non-traditional sales roles with identifying revenue opportunities.

But the low level of activity isn't the problem; it's only a symptom of the problem. And most organizations aren't going beneath the surface to understand what the real problem is.

What's going on beneath the surface?

This paper explores:

- The primary reason why salespeople struggle to adopt a sales mindset
- Four profiles of salespeople whose beliefs and values are out of sync
- Tactics to help each profile overcome their obstacles
- Latest data on what separates top performers from the pack
- How sales leaders can put this all together to remove roadblocks for their team

Meet Jody & Todd

Jody landed her dream job. With her education and experience as a clinician in healthcare, she had earned this prestigious sales position. But even though she loved engaging with people and believed wholeheartedly in the benefits patients would receive from the product she'd be selling, she was scared. She felt like a fish out of water.



Todd, meanwhile, had always wanted to work in finance, so he was proud when he got the job as a teller with a local bank. After six months, just as he was starting to feel comfortable and confident in the role, bank leadership made a big announcement: All tellers were going to be expected to take on more of a sales role. His comfort level and confidence plummeted.



Jody and Todd's situations aren't uncommon. As companies look for ways to embrace and instill a sales mentality across the organization, responsibilities like upselling and cross-selling are falling to people who aren't in traditional sales roles and don't have sales experience. At the same time, sales professionals are facing more demanding sales expectations and an increasingly complex and challenging competitive environment.

All of this is happening against the backdrop of declining sales quota achievement in most organizations. Salespeople are feeling the pressure, people in non-typical sales roles are struggling, and morale, engagement and retention are on the line—not to mention revenue and market share.

As companies look for ways to embrace and instill a sales mentality across the organization, responsibilities like upselling and cross-selling are falling to people who aren't in traditional sales roles and don't have sales experience. At the same time, sales professionals are facing more demanding sales expectations and an increasingly complex and challenging competitive environment.

So, what are organizations doing about it?

One of the first areas many leaders will look at is the person's actions and activity level. The pharma salesperson who's making 25 calls a week but can't seem to hit her numbers will be "coached" by her manager to make 40 calls a week. A teller who's now expected to find cross-selling and upselling opportunities will be coached to ask customers more probing questions when they make their weekly deposits.

And still, everyone continues to struggle...

The reason: The level of activity isn't the problem; it's only a symptom of the problem. And most organizations aren't going beneath the surface to understand what the real problem is.

What's going on beneath the surface?

Getting to the Root of the Problem

While bank or credit union tellers, CSRs and call center agents pride themselves on their customer service focus, many have a negative view of selling, seeing it almost as in conflict with great customer service. If Todd thinks selling means pushing products on people in a self-serving way, then he's probably not going to have a high commitment to the activities associated with it, like asking probing questions.

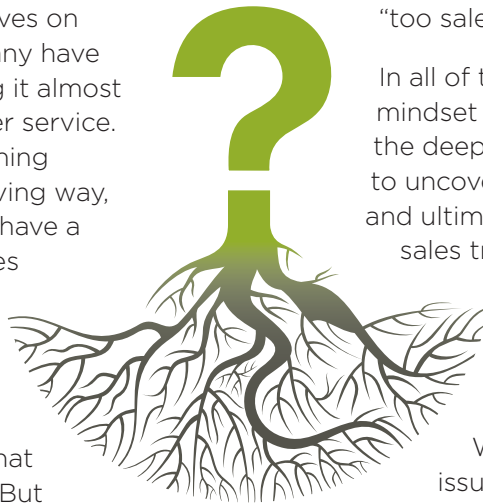
Many sales leaders focus almost entirely on activities and managing the numbers, issues that fall within the realm of "skillset." But sales success is also a factor of *mindset*—of will.

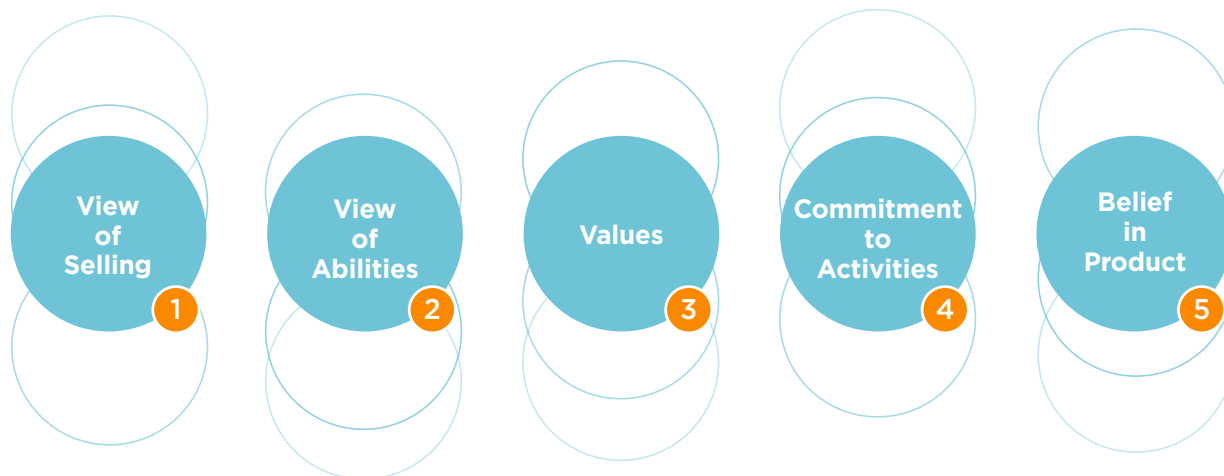
In Todd's case, for example, he may not be asking the probing questions because he doesn't know

how to ask them, or he feels like it would be "too salesy," or maybe he fears rejection.

In all of these cases, there's an underlying mindset that is preventing Todd from asking the deeper questions that could lead him to uncover needs, advance opportunities and ultimately create more value. While sales training often focuses on expanding product knowledge and building skills, that's not going to solve a problem like this one, which is one of *will*.

When you're dealing with a will issue vs. a skill issue, you have to understand what's at the root of the problem. Many factors play a role in a person's selling success, but there are five critical areas that get to the very heart of sales performance achievement. These are the person's:





- 1 **View of Selling:** The degree to which a person understands and believes sales to be a profession that creates value and helps people. Common profiles where this is often an issue include service-focused, non-sales roles that evolve into some sales related responsibility. Examples include a bank teller, call center agent, clinician, or even an inside account manager.
- 2 **View of Abilities:** The belief that he/she has the necessary talents and abilities to be successful in sales. For example, this could appear in a new technology company hiring mostly new college graduates in sales positions to sell an evolutionary SaaS solution. While they understand the technology very well, they are intimidated by having to call on C-level decision makers... in this case CIOs.
- 3 **Values:** Consistently demonstrates a high degree of integrity, sincerity, and honesty in all sales interactions. This could crop up in a medical device firm that is experiencing higher turnover than expected in one region. The area sales director, whenever under pressure to meet production quotas, has been known to 'cut corners' in order to close business. His reputation begins to erode confidence and commitment, as multiple sales reps begin to plot a way out.
- 4 **Commitment to Activities:** Diligently does all the activities required for long-term success. This is really more of a derivative or symptomatic effect of the other four factors. And this is also why, when activity levels are

low, 'coaching' cannot simply focus on pressing for those activities to increase. Something deeper is going on...

- 5 **Belief in Product:** Has a passionate belief in their products and services and the value they personally create for customers. This could manifest itself in a manufacturing firm that has invested significantly in a new product launch. Sales reps are trained on it and asked to promote/sell it as a priority. In doing so, they soon experience both production delays and quality problems. In effect, sales people are being asked to sell something that they are hesitant to offer, knowing it could negatively impact their client relationships. This is often the result of not knowing enough about the product or understanding how it creates value for the customer.

In all cases, if any gaps exist between these five areas, it will create inner conflict, self-doubt, disengagement and resistance. If Jody's confidence in her abilities is low, for example, then she'll be less committed to doing the activities it takes to be successful. In other words, if she doesn't feel confident in her ability to call on prospects, then she'll avoid doing it.

If any of these dimensions are out of sync, it will have a ripple effect on the person's success. If Jody's *confidence in her abilities* is low, for example, then she'll be less *committed to doing the activities* it takes to be successful. In other words, if she doesn't feel confident in her ability to call on prospects, then she'll avoid doing it.

Now you can see why organizations that are relentlessly focused on activities and numbers continue to struggle: When people aren't committed to doing the activities necessary to be successful, this is a clear sign that there's another problem. Is it their confidence in their ability that keeps them from doing the work? Do they view selling as bothering someone or pushing products on them instead of helping and creating value? Is there a values mismatch with what the organization advocates? Until you uncover the gaps, it's going to be difficult to improve performance in any kind of sustainable way.

And it's up to the sales coach to uncover those gaps.

It's not uncommon to find misalignment in one (or even more) of these areas, and not just among new salespeople or lagging performers. And in fact very few salespeople are strong across all five areas. Misalignment (or 'incongruence') can also be part of the reason why a high performer hits a plateau.

The different "profiles" of misalignment often manifest themselves in specific ways, giving you clues about where there might be gaps that are holding back someone's full potential.

Do You Recognize These Profiles in Your Organization?

Where does your salesforce fall among these four common profiles - each of which is challenged with a critical disconnect affecting sales performance.

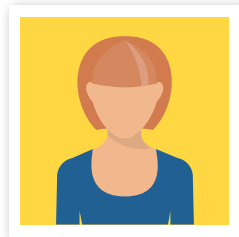
How do you know if your salesforce has a congruence gap to overcome? Here are a few common profiles we see in sales organizations:

Suzie the Servant

Gap: Low View of Selling, High Values

What it Looks Like/ How

it Manifests: This 'non-salesperson' has low commitment to activities due to a perception that selling is somehow manipulative or dishonest and focuses on getting people to buy things they don't need



To Close the Gap, Focus On:

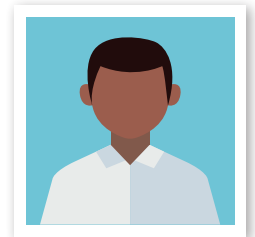
- Reinforcing that serving and selling are really one in the same - identifying and filling needs people have and creating value
- The end benefits your customers receive from using your products or services
- Reminding them that strong values and good intentions give them a much needed ingredient for establishing healthy client relationships

Johnny Quicksale

Gap: High view of abilities, Low Values

What it Looks Like/How

it Manifests: Potentially aggressive, ethically-compromised approach that will take shortcuts, bend truths and ultimately damage personal and company brand

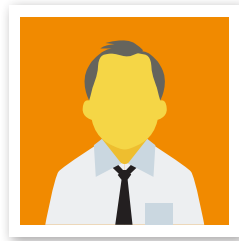


To Close the Gap, Focus On:

- Holding them accountable to positive, customer-centric behaviors
- Helping them understand how their actions may be perceived by others
- Modeling the values and behaviors you expect

Gil Gunderson

Named for the recurring character on the TV series *The Simpsons*, “Ol’ Gil” is a well-intentioned, consistently unlucky salesperson who wants the best for his customers but lacks confidence and belief in his own abilities.



Gap: High Belief in Product, Low View of Selling/Abilities

What it Looks Like/How it Manifests: Lots of product demos, fewer consultative calls to really uncover customer needs

To Close the Gap, Focus On:

- Developing better needs-assessment skills, asking better questions to help uncover true customer wants and needs
- Leveraging their strong belief in product and value, to help set goals outside comfort zone
- Communicating your belief in their abilities to perform at higher levels

The Tortured Soul

Gap: High Values, Low Belief in Product

What it Looks Like/How it Manifests:

Questioning whether customers will receive good value for the cost, lack of confidence in the product, leading to low commitment to activities

To Close the Gap, Focus On:

- Helping them see the extra value they create, beyond the product
- Stressing the benefits of representing an organization with strong corporate values
- Reiterating the true need your products fill, client success stories and other validation



Head vs Heart



When rolling out a sales culture strategy, organizations will often implement training as part of the initiative. Typically, this kind of sales training will focus primarily on the intellectual side of sales—things like product and process knowledge, CRM mastery, and selling techniques. In and of itself, that’s not a bad thing. These are all important. But they’re not what ultimately drives performance.

You Got It or You Don’t....

Many sales leaders question whether achievement drive is something that actually can be developed. The perception seems to be that you’re either born with it or you’re not. So, the expectation is, people will come to the job with it, or just struggle along without it.

But the truth is we’re all born with achievement drive. You just have to know how to release and expand it, whether in yourself or in those you lead, develop and coach. This is readily apparent in professional and major college sports and Olympic athletes where quality coaching makes a critical difference in unleashing the potential of otherwise very similarly talented athletes.

That doesn’t mean it’s easy to do. Too many other things can and will get in the way. It’s human nature. We intellectually know what needs to be done, but when our emotions are in conflict with intellect, the emotions win every time. And excuses can begin to pile up. You know you should eat the salad when you’re trying to lose weight, but you really feel like having that cheeseburger.

Those Voices in My Head...



But there's another, even more powerful force at work here, too, and that's what you say to yourself about yourself. This self-talk fuels what you believe you can and can't do—and can hold back your achievement drive even further.

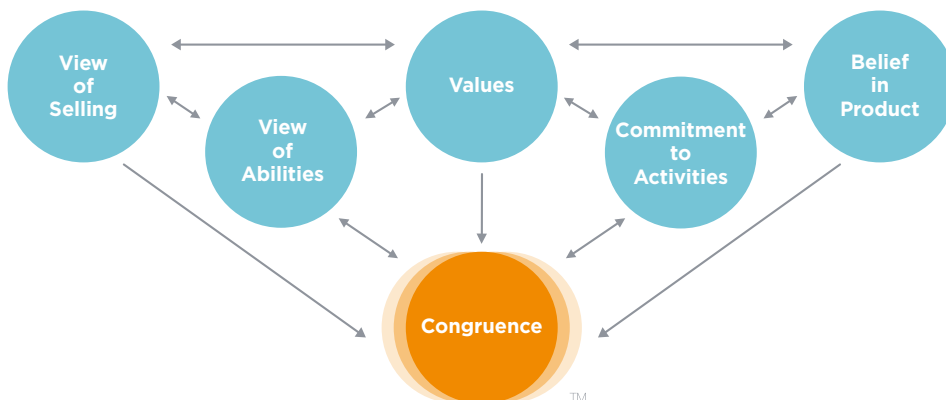
“Whether you think you can or you think you can't, you're right.”

— Henry Ford

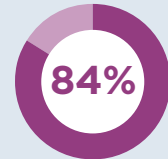
These are what we call resistance or avoidance behaviors. We know what we should do, and we know that doing those things will deliver the results we want, but all these internal forces keep pulling us in the other direction. We know that we should go to the gym or run in the morning to hit our goal, but when the alarm goes off, the “resistance” voice gives us a hundred reasons why we can't go today.

It's the same with selling. New business drives goal achievement, but we'll experience less rejection if we go see an existing client or fill out an expense report. So even though the salesperson knows he should call his prospects—that's how he'll land more business, which is what he really wants—it's a lot easier and a lot more comfortable to update the CRM or check in with his some of his favorite clients. That resistance voice is even louder if he lacks confidence in his abilities or in the product or has a negative view of selling.

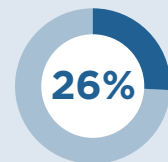
It's about getting these five dimensions in sync. This is what really fuels achievement drive, which is released from within. And none of this is about skillset. It's about mindset and will, the core drivers of sales performance.



FAST FACTS



84% of sales leaders believe that **Achievement Drive matters** as much or more to sales success vs. selling skills or product knowledge.



Just 26% consider themselves **very effective** at developing Achievement Drive in their people.



Organizations see a **20% increase in sales** get when they effectively focus on developing Achievement Drive.

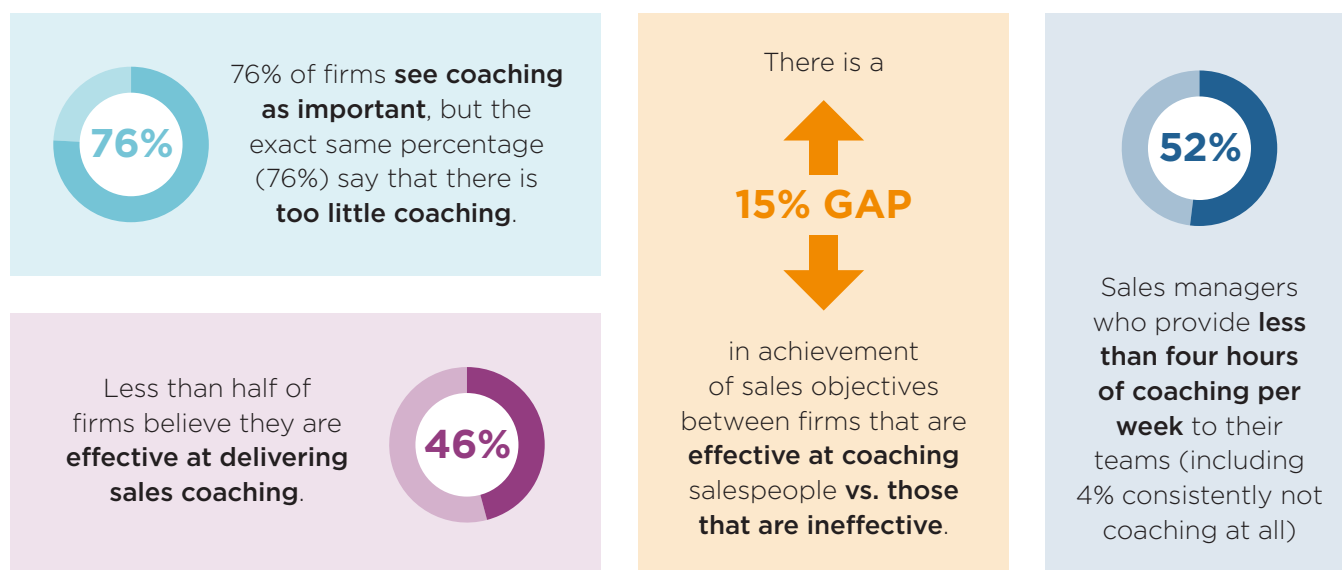
Source: *Turbo-Charging Passion to Drive Sales Performance*; [Research from The Sales Management Association and Integrity Solutions](#)

What To Do When Conflicting Beliefs Create a Sales Roadblock



Sales managers have a secret weapon with which they can help salespeople when their conflicting beliefs create a sales roadblock: *coaching*. Top performers already know this. In fact, in 2018, we surveyed sales leaders from roughly 200 companies in conjunction with the Sales Management Association. Our goal was to learn more about sales coaching, and specifically, how top performing companies approach sales coaching differently than lower performing companies.

As we dive into this research and how it could impact your coaching, let's first cover a few basic stats:



To begin seeing benefits, one way to improve sales performance is to quite simply coach more often.

In top performing companies, sales managers are simply coaching more hours per week. Just moving the needle a bit on time allocated to coaching can have a profound impact.¹ There is practically no such thing as too much sales coaching – it really can only help your sales objective attainment.²

¹ When we looked at 'sales coaching sufficiency' and 'firm performance,' those who provided 'too little' sales coaching performed 9% below the mean sales objective performance, while those who provided 'too much' sales coaching performed 9% *above* mean sales objective performance. Those who provided "the right amount" performed 6% above mean.

² Firms in which managers spent less than 2.5 hours/week coaching saw 5.4% lower attainment of firm sales objective achievement. Firms that coached 2.5 to 9 hours saw 1.1% lower attainment of firm sales objective achievement against the mean. However, firms in which managers coached more than 9 hours saw a whopping 7.2% gain in firm sales objective achievement against the mean.

So, how does this coaching research relate to the roadblocks caused by a lack of motivation due to conflicting beliefs?

We asked our survey respondents what their coaching sessions typically focused on. For example, review of activity and current performance, improving motivation and skill development, developing skills, reviews of the pipeline and product / service knowledge, or company information and administrative requirements.

Our research found that sales managers view improving motivation be the least effective aspect of coaching. ***This could not be further from the truth!***

Organizations with sales managers who focus coaching efforts on spurring ambition, enthusiasm, drive, and determination are 15% more likely to achieve their sales objectives versus those who do not.

This is really interesting. Coaching sessions should not just look at activity (e.g. number of calls) and tell salespeople to boost activity. This doesn't work, and it's also managing, not coaching. Remember, activity – or lack thereof – is just a symptom. Coaches need to address the root causes of the symptoms. The key to helping salespeople break through their roadblocks and sell more is to move coaching sessions away from activity reviews – and even beyond skill development – to motivation. This doesn't mean giving a pep talk. Ambition, drive and enthusiasm are all unleashed when salespeople get in sync across the five dimensions of sales success – both from within and coupled with the help of a good coach.

For example, if a salesperson has a belief about selling that conflicts with their values (e.g. that “selling is slimy or manipulative”), the coach can focus on that resolving that conflict by:

- Reinforcing that selling is identifying and filling needs and creating value
- Modeling positive, customer-focused sales behaviors
- Reinforcing the value the organization's products create for customers

As stated earlier, when salespeople aren't committed to doing the activities necessary to be successful, this is a clear sign that there's another problem.



What about Jody and Todd?



With coaching and development, both were able to overcome self-imposed barriers identified in the congruence model, and in doing so gained clarity and purpose. By defining and embracing what selling really is (identifying and understanding needs people have and creating value), they became committed to helping people—and excelling in the sales aspect of their respective roles.

ABOUT INTEGRITY SOLUTIONS

Integrity Solutions, the performance experts, equips sales teams to rise up and lead by building trusted customer relationships with integrity at their core. As the partner of choice for values-driven organizations, the firm specializes in innovative sales, service and coaching training solutions that fuel performance, grow talent, lift up customers and elevate leaders. With experience that spans over 50 years, 130 countries and industries including healthcare, financial services, manufacturing, energy and utilities, and more, Integrity was most recently recognized with multiple Stevie Awards for sales training excellence in 2020 and 2019 and as a 2019 Top 20 Sales Training Company by Selling Power and Training Industry.

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