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THE BUSINESS NEWSLETTER FROM AUSWILD & CO
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FIVE QUESTIONS EVERY SALES MANAGER SHOULD ANSWER

Every sales manager knows the basics about their sales team and their organisation's selling process. They know which salespeople are their top, mid and bottom performers; they know how long a deal takes, the length of the sales cycle, the dollar value of the average deal, and so on.

But successful sales management demands a much broader understanding of what's going on in the organisation and in the markets where their sales teams operate.

For instance, they should know the common stalling points in the sales process, or which competitors they lose the most business to, and why.

According to marketing and sales strategist, **Peter Finklestein**, here are five key questions that effective sales managers should have the answers to:

Which sources of leads and prospects result in the highest percentage of closed deals?

Sales managers should be asking themselves where their best leads come from and what those leads look like. When they do, they can focus their sales efforts and marketing support, and boost conversion rates and reduce the time it takes to close a deal.

Are we selling the most profitable products and services?

Salespeople often sell the products that are easiest rather than those that produce the highest margin for the company. Let's face it, salespeople are going to look at how to achieve their sales targets the easiest way possible. If that means selling lower margin products, they're going to do it. Managers should know which products are the most profitable and encourage performance and behaviour towards selling them. That can typically be accomplished by implementing the right incentive program and encouraging salespeople to discuss their territory plans and strategies. Sales managers who encourage territory planning are more likely to be successful at selling higher margin lines than those who don't bother with planning.

How effectively is the sales process being followed?

Assuming there is a sales process, how well does the sales team adhere to it? Many sales executives lament there are sometimes as many processes as there are salespeople. If sales results are in need of correction, the challenge may be as simple as getting the sales team to stick to an established process.

Where does the sales process stall?

Effective sales leaders know exactly how deals move through the pipeline and where each salesperson stumbles (if they do) in the process. When sales leaders understand where individual salespeople get stuck, they are able to use their experience and insight to help them get deals moving again.

Which competitors are hurting you the most, and why?

Sales managers generally know who their biggest competitors are. But do they know how much business they lose to each? More importantly, do they know why they are losing the business – without resorting to the default “price” argument?

Do your sales managers have the answers to these five questions? **Finklestein** says that when managers understand the answers to these questions they can position the company and maximise its strengths to compete more effectively.

The answers allow managers to craft sales strategies that hit these issues head-on. By fully understanding losses, managers put themselves in a better position to secure more wins and support their salespeople in the field, by giving them better focus and direction.

Answering these five questions changes the entire sales operation. Instead of being intrinsically focused and looking for reasons why successes that are deserved aren't realised, these answers help managers change the focus to an external, proactive sales organisation, with a sales team geared to win more than to lose; geared to succeed rather than to lose; geared to succeed rather than to make excuses.

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Our Condolences go to Mark Palmer and family on the sudden loss of Mark's mother.....Congratulations to Peter Kittle and his team at Peter Kittle Toyota Adelaide for winning Toyota Financial Services' National Dealer of the Year award.....Birthday Greetings go to Richard Harden, Len Lanzafame, Barbara Oakman, Peter Taylor, Orlaith Turner and Rob Wellard, all of whom celebrate special birthdays this month.