

# BUILDING REMOTE SALES TEAMS

By Linda Richardson

Sales team members typically rate telephone conference calls as being almost as effective as face-to-face sales team meetings—but much more convenient. Granted, conference calls can't replace face-to-face contact, but they are a convenient and practical way to connect with team members individually and to connect remote sales teams. They can not only help you disseminate information to your sales team, they can also be used to coach and develop team members and serve as a “virtual water cooler” for building the team vs. training a group of remote individuals.

If you use telephone conference calls to share information, develop skills and strategies, and build your team, here are some tips for maximizing them:

- Be a role model. Be prepared, do not cancel, start and end on time, use every minute to help your people succeed, and ask for feedback on how to make the conference call team meetings even better.
- Set a consistent and agreed-upon time.
- Use an agenda. Ask team members for their ideas before the meeting regarding topics to include on the agenda.

As seen in the June 21, 2006 edition of:

## Best Practices in Sales Training

from the editors of

**training**

*A semimonthly newsletter featuring sales training best practices.*

- Don't over-pack the agenda. Assign a time to each item and use the established agenda to move things along.
- Begin by quickly reviewing the agenda and checking for agreement.
- Distribute any materials to all participants before the call.
- In advance of the call, assign topics to team members. Better yet, ask for volunteers.
- Rotate responsibility for five-minute presentations among team members as a way to create peer coaching and recognize achievement.
- Include best practices as an agenda item of every conference call meeting and use them to spotlight exceptional performance and share ideas.
- Make the conference call interactive. Ask vs. tell. Ask how others feel about what a team member volunteers before giving your view, adding value or tying it all together.
- Make sure there is an action step with clear accountability and a timeframe for every agenda item so that meetings are not viewed as a waste of time.
- Ask one team member to take notes on the decisions, action steps, accountability and time frame for every agenda item, and read those notes at the meeting's end.
- Keep your name off the list. Your job is to follow up.
- From call to call, rotate responsibility for taking decision minutes among team members.
- At the end of the meeting ...
  1. Ask for ideas for topics to include in the next agenda.
  2. Ask for feedback from the team on strengths and areas for improvement for future conference call meetings.
  3. Follow up on decision minutes.

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