

HOW TO TAKE CONTROL and
LEAD YOUR SALES TEAM
TO RECORD PROFITS

THE

ACCIDENTAL

SALES MANAGER



CHRIS LYTTLE

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*To Sarah McCann/Zola Gorgon
My two favorite characters in the world*

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Chris Lytle, the best-selling author of *The Accidental Salesperson*, had a lucrative but increasingly frustrating career as a professional speaker. He had an obsession with finding a better way to drive real behavior change.

He understood that adults learn by doing, not by hearing about how someone else did it. He was frustrated with the start-and-stop nature of training seminars and the limited results that an occasional learning event creates.

Unfortunately, that's what his customers thought they wanted.

Undeterred, he set out to reinvent the way he delivered his own training programs. Identifying his biggest competitor as the do-it-yourselfer, he decided to partner with sales managers who train their own people.

His website *Fuel* contains knowledge bites (digestible sales ideas) that can be consumed in five minutes or less and discussed for 25 more minutes in a meeting. Lytle coined the phrase "The Honors Class in Selling Instant Sales Meeting." Sales managers use his content to spark lively conversations about sales issues.

Along the way, he discovered how to add the missing ingredient—accountability—to the mix. Teaching managers how to add accountability to their training translated into

immediate, bottom-line impact for tens of thousands of salespeople at every level of their careers.

Lytle is the president and product developer of Sparque, Inc. the Chicago-based company he runs with his partner/wife Sarah McCann. He still speaks on sales and sales management topics to a select group of clients. Increasingly, he delivers his content on his website and through short Webinars.

You may have had a gut feeling there is a better way to develop the people who develop your profits. Trust your gut.

You can get a free trial of Fuel by going to www.sparquefuel.com. Sales managers who want to see the full capabilities can request a “private tour” with Lytle. You can do that by e-mailing him at chris.lytle@sparque.biz or calling 1-800-255-9853.

INTRODUCTION

Congratulations on Your “Promotion”

If you like to solve complicated puzzles, a career in sales management will keep you perpetually challenged. If you’ve just become a new sales manager, you’re probably excited, a little nervous, and pretty curious about what to expect. Fortunately for you, this book will slash several years off of your learning curve. If, on the other hand, you’ve been at this sales management *thing* for a while, the information here will refocus and reenergize you.

This book will introduce you to some very successful sales managers who have made plenty of mistakes and chosen to share their experiences with you.

Being a sales manager in a time of continuous innovation and destabilizing change is challenging enough, and can even be quite overwhelming for many. But for those professionals who get their kicks from solving problems and furthering the skills and fostering the success of other people, sales management is a gratifying and rewarding job.

I don't know your story, but I clearly remember how—and when—I got my first sales management job. I was just 18 months into my current sales job, minding my own business and selling up a storm, when I got called into the general manager's office one day. Upon my arrival, two of the owners were sitting there.

"We're making you the sales manager," one of them said to me.

I was too young, startled, and flattered to refuse.

I had gotten into sales accidentally three years earlier. Now, I was being promoted. They weren't grooming me to move into management; as of the next Monday, I was *The Accidental Sales Manager*.

Don't worry; despite this fairly personal introduction, this is not an autobiography. Though I will share a variety of the sales management lessons I've encountered throughout my career—many of which I learned the hard way—my experiences and advice aren't the only ones you'll find here. To add depth and perspective, I have interviewed CEOs, VPs of sales, field sales managers, and one college professor. These successful leaders share know-how gained over many years of leading sales forces and meeting quotas. The conversations I've had with these remarkable people, who took the time to share both their joys and frustrations, reminded me of the tremendous responsibilities they agree to shoulder when they accept any kind of promotion. I made it a point to ask every single one of them two questions:

1. What do you wish you had known about sales management before you took on the job?
2. What did you have to learn about sales management the hard way?

You will benefit from their diverse perspectives. Selling is a shared experience that salespeople have all by themselves. Think about that. Your salespeople most likely believe that no one else is enduring the same price resistance, rejection, self-doubt, and fear of failure as they are. They don't realize that most other salespeople are calling on tough customers and having the same experiences all by themselves. Sure, they can discuss these issues over a drink with peers. But many salespeople today work a territory from their home office, and therefore have less interaction than ever with colleagues and people who can empathize with their situations. This feeling of isolation can become a significant problem. Getting a national sales team together for a quarterly sales meeting to share their experiences may be seen as an expensive luxury in today's economy. Indeed, increasingly sales meetings are done via conference call or Webinar. However you do it, getting salespeople to share their experiences and thereby inspire one another takes the pressure off you to train and motivate them. I offer you a pre-planned annual meeting in Chapter 6 that I have used with my clients to get the salespeople talking and make them the stars of the annual meeting.

Now let's get back to you and your job: Sales management is a shared experience you are having all by yourself—and that's exactly where this book comes into play. Your boss can promote you, but he's not always able to tell you how to become a successful sales manager. If you are part of a large company, you may be able to get some mentoring from a successful sales manager. But too many new sales managers find themselves on their own. And your track record of sales success, while admirable, will not translate into sales management success. Even if you were a veteran salesperson, you are a novice the second you become a sales manager. Maybe you've noticed this; I call it . . .

The Forgotten Rookie Syndrome

The new sales manager is almost always the forgotten rookie—forgotten because the person who promoted you considers you to be an experienced hand. And of course, you were an experienced hand—in sales. Now, however, you’re an inexperienced sales manager.

Why does this forgotten rookie syndrome exist—and persist? Well, your boss has a tendency to promote you and then quit worrying about you. There’s a new sales manager in town, so that position is filled and so you’re promptly forgotten.

Unfortunately, most new sales managers don’t know what they don’t know. Why? Here’s a “short list” of the various sales management issues and responsibilities you will encounter as the sales manager:

- Identifying successful sales traits and behaviors so you can hire winners
- Establishing your new operating rhythm
- Setting standards of performance
- Identifying what’s expected of you from your boss
- Making your expectations clear to the sales team
- Discovering the difference between leadership versus management
- Creating or maintaining a high performance culture
- Setting objectives
- Establishing/identifying leading indicators of success
- Interviewing
- Reference checking
- Coaching
- Counseling

- Disciplining
- Firing
- Motivating
- Demanding call reports
- Actually getting call reports on time if at all
- Reading call reports
- Managing expenses
- Compensating employees
- Training
- Giving recognition and praise
- Helping team members set goals
- Making projections
- Reporting up
- Disciplining
- Transitioning
- Balancing communication and personality styles
- Running effective meetings
- Delegating
- Routing
- Motivating
- Discussing pay as it relates to motivation
- Figuring out team dynamics
- Holding people accountable
- Forecasting
- Managing channels, partners, and alliances
- Managing growth and expectations

- Dealing with distance
- Reviewing wins and losses
- Managing people and processes
- Understanding and learning new technology
- Developing product, competitor, and customer knowledge
- Giving recognition in various ways:
 - Having employees in on matters and events
 - Giving them challenging work
 - Granting freedom and authority
- Reviewing performance
- Planning and executing course corrections
- Determining resource requirements and availability
- Evaluating strengths and weaknesses of team members, exploiting strengths, and shoring up weaknesses
- Getting buy in
- Conducting ride-alongs
- Holding office coaching sessions
- Dealing with difficult times
- Defining what *good* looks like
- Leading people through change
- Dealing with competitive pressure and pricing
- Determining market potential
- Managing relationships with accounts
- Dealing with the *prima donna* sales rep
- Developing a leadership style
- Teaching old dogs new tricks
- Creating a vision of a better future
- Getting to know your team

I'm guessing you're not up to speed on each and every one of these topics. Am I right?

According to David Snodgrass, director of sales for Windstream, a telephone and data firm, "That's right on target." Snodgrass admits, "We really don't do a good job of training sales managers." It's an unfortunate but widespread phenomenon: The bulk of small and midsize companies don't have good sales manager training. Most end up saying something like the following to new sales managers: "Go read this book" or "Find out what classes the local university offers." Or, they send these newbies to a traveling seminar when one passes through the area. But this approach leaves a big gap, and a lot of room for things to fall through the cracks.

You feel forgotten and alone, because in most cases you are.

How's that for a reality check?

Here's your next one: Your new title is a misnomer. You aren't really managing sales: You are managing the people who make the sales, or at least the ones who take the orders.

You manage a lot of things, but sales isn't one of them. It might be easier to think in terms of managing the things that lead to sales—things like the number of first meetings your team gets, their ability to manage long sales cycles, and their aptitude for assessing customer problems and proposing customized solutions.

Or it might help to think of it this way: You can't really manage a fish, either. I learned that from my close buddy, Larry Claggett. We have known each other since elementary school; Larry was of the *trout specialist* for the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources until he retired at the end of 2010.

I used to find it funny when I called him at work to set up a tee time for golf, and he answered his phone, "Fish Management, Larry speaking."

"How do you manage a fish?" I would joke.

But fish management is not a joke to Larry. Here's how he described what he does when I asked him for this book:

"Officially, I'm a cold water fisheries ecologist," Larry told me. I knew that once he mentioned *ecology* that we were going to be getting into a discussion of systems.

"So, what's on your radar?"

"I look at what's happening on the landscape, and how it affects trout and their habitat. We can't directly manage farm runoff, but we can participate with groups that do and lobby for changes. While our true authority starts at the stream bank or the lake shore, other events impact what's coming into the waters. To that end, we've shifted our focus to the watershed or large-scale landscape management, rather than just concentrating on what's in an individual stream or lake.

"The major efforts we make for trout are to bring about habitat changes that support the environment in which the fish live. It's more effective to manage the habitat than it is to deal with individual fish or species. Because fish can take care of themselves if we take care and protect the habitat."

In other words: Larry and his team manage the systems that affect the fish, and the fish take care of themselves.

And believe it or not—you are doing the same thing. You are managing the environment, culture, informal and formal systems, people, and processes of sales. Your efforts will have the same effect: The sales will take care of themselves when you take care of the salespeople and exhibit the right kind of leadership skills.

You're the sales manager, but you don't manage sales. Another way to look at it is this: You must coach the players to do what it takes to win instead of trying to coach the score.

Cliff Albert is Berry Plastics' Director of Sales for the Institutional Division. I asked him the same question I asked Larry. "What's on your radar?"

His response confirmed that sales management is really about being aware of all the little things that go into getting the order. In fact, Albert says, “Sales are a lagging indicator. If something is on the books, it has already happened and I can’t influence it.” Nonetheless, Albert looks at the numbers every day. “The first thing in the morning, I look at all year-to-date figures,” he shares. “I look at dollars and I look at units. I look at it from a top line perspective. What are the business units doing? I look at it from a regional perspective. What are the sales guys’ regions doing?”

“Then I look at what our top five Strategic Accounts customers are doing. What are my top 10 gainers doing? What are my top 10 losers doing? That’s my first snapshot. What I’m looking at is the overall. Where are we to budget? Where are we budgetwise to the year? Okay, we’re here. We’re a million dollars off budget. We have four months to make up a million bucks. How do we do that?”

Albert goes on to discuss the proactive stuff.

“I move on to the opportunities. I get into the CRM system and look at the selling stage to see what opportunities exist during the negotiation stage—because that’s the last stage before you start celebrating the win. If you’ve sent pricing out, there’s a greater opportunity there. So I sort my CRM to stages to see where we are and what we can do today to move these things through the pipeline. Then I can start making calls. And I can be a pain in the ass sometimes. I ask the people in the field, ‘Hey what are these prospects thinking—and doing?’”

Cliff Albert continuously instructs his staff to “Respect the expiration date.” In fact, it’s almost a mantra for him: “[Putting] an expiration date on a proposal gives you license to call the customer every day for 30 days and ask what is going on. On day 29, you [let them know that] this proposal is expiring,

and ask if they're going to make a decision. Opportunities are the leading indicator because closing those opportunities is what drives the sales report going forward.

"The third piece for me is how I help my team keep the process moving and make sure they are focusing on the right opportunities and next steps. Otherwise, they can be spinning like a hamster on a wheel. Are they focusing on the business and moving it forward? My time is best spent coaching them through the process.

"So, I'll call the guys and I'll ask for an overview of their territories. I want to know what's happening. You don't have to tell me you talked to Bob and he said this and we're having lunch next week. I don't care. You have to be able to give me a macro view of your region—top line, bottom line. Because if you're articulating all this detail, you're missing a lot of other touch points. You may be telling me about a \$10,000 opportunity when a \$1 million opportunity just went to a competitor.

I focus on pending and hot deals; I want my team to focus on these and know they will be asked about them. At the end of the week, we get on the phone together to share best practices and to try to understand what's happening within the regions."

Even though Albert knows the score, he doesn't manage it, and neither can you. You manage the people and coach them on the activities that put up the sales.

Albert manages a sales force and distributor network that is spread out all over the country. Although you may have a completely different kind of sales management job, his perspective is worth considering. Regardless of your particular situation, you can learn from his tactics and viewpoint. Sales are the lagging indicator; getting salespeople to do things that move sales forward is proactive sales management.

This book will help you develop a sales management philosophy, a set of beliefs about your job and the people you manage. It will also provide you with new skills and tools to bring to the job and help you implement your philosophy. You'll find forms, models, illustrations, and sales meeting exercises throughout. These are immediately applicable ideas that help you put this book into action. All of these tools (and more) are available in PDF format and downloadable at my web site: www.sparque.biz/AccidentalSM.

My ultimate goal is to challenge your thinking and introduce you to a wealth of new ideas to put into action. So, with that in mind, let's get started.

I often remark at the beginning of one of my live presentations, "I hope you like what I have to say, but it's okay if you don't. I'm a seminar leader not a stand up comedian. (I thought about being a stand up comedian, but I didn't want to work nights.) I'm here for your improvement, not for your enjoyment."

You don't know how good a seminar on sales management or a book on sales management is until you put some of the ideas into action.

To know and not to DO is not to know.

So I hope you like the book, but I also want to make you uncomfortable enough to examine your approach to the job and make some changes and refinements in what you're doing.

