

The FIVE Power Moves

How Struggling *Sales* Managers Become
Transformational *Sales* LEADERS

Kelly S. Riggs

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For more information, contact:

Business LockerRoom, Inc.
104 N. 67th Street
Broken Arrow, OK 74014

www.kellyriggs.com

TESTIMONIALS

"*The Five Power Moves* is not just a book; it's a playbook for elevating sales leadership to its highest level! What I appreciate most is Kelly's insistence on clarity. In every business I've led, the absence of clarity created drag, confusion, and missed opportunities. The presence of clarity created alignment, confidence, and momentum. Kelly doesn't just talk about clarity; he operationalizes it with tools leaders can use immediately.

Any sales leader - new or seasoned - will find tools here that sharpen their effectiveness and strengthen their team's performance. It's a must-read for anyone serious about leading sales organizations with excellence."

Azam Owaisi, President & CEO
Air Distribution Technologies

"I have worked with sales leaders for just about 20 years. While reading *The Five Power Moves*, the number of times I have highlighted portions, circled wisdom bombs and said out loud, 'Wow, he gets me...!!' is amazing.

It is rare that an author so clearly understands the reader's life. You are going to appreciate the combination of storytelling and business wisdom, and the coaching conversations in each chapter that demonstrates mentorship conversation mastery.

Anyone who works in a sales leadership role will be highlighting this book and taking notes as they transform their own sales leadership skills. Well done, Kelly! This book is timely, helpful and so darned applicable today."

Chris Cummins, Founder of Cummins Media, consultant,
and 7-time TEDx speaker

"I loved *The Five Power Moves*! It's a parable about a sales manager (Larry), and a company President (Amy) who decides to invest in a mentor/coach (Big Dave) to transform her struggling sales manager into a team-building sales LEADER. It's about the all-too-familiar journey of a successful salesperson who struggles to make the leap to sales management. I highly recommend you read it and learn right along with them as they implement the Power Moves for sales leadership success."

Dave Kurlan, CEO, Kurlan & Associates
Best-selling author of *Baseline Selling*, and the
award-winning blog, *Understanding the Sales Force*

"*The Five Power Moves* was a pleasure to read! I loved the way the book alternated between the narrative and the explanations; like pausing a movie to have discussions about the scenes.

This is a handbook for Sales Managers that clarifies the importance of accountability, training, and preparation as it outlines the journey that transforms a great salesperson into a great sales LEADER.

I certainly recommend it to both new and experienced sales managers!"

Antonio Castilhos, President
NETZSCH Premier Technologies LLC

"The biggest investment any organization makes is in its people, yet few companies have a repeatable system for developing them. *The Five Power Moves* provides that system. The book's practical approach to one-on-one coaching, accountability, onboarding, and leadership development is already influencing how we develop our Project Managers and Estimators, and we plan to expand those principles throughout our company. This isn't theory; it's a framework that leaders can implement immediately!"

Dino Vito, CEO, M.A.Sc., P.Eng.
EBS Geostuctural

"Most sales management books either sell you inspiration or the tricks of the trade. *The Five Power Moves* is different! It dives into the work itself, the messy stuff that's critical in maximizing the performance of your people.

Kelly outlines five Power Moves that separate managers who report on performance from leaders that create it. While these are deceptively simple principles, they are genuinely hard work. But they are exactly what the job of a high performing leader requires. This is a must-read for every aspiring leader."

Dave Brock, author of *The Sales Manager Survival Guide*, *Is Good Enough Good Enough*, and *The DNA of Sales Excellence*

"Anyone who has ever been successful in sales, sales management, sales leadership or ownership in business will relate to this powerful story as Amy, Larry and Dave take the reader through the reality of selling highs and lows. You feel as if you are in the room for their every experience and conversation, and the realities start stacking up in your mind.

As you are exposed to the Radical Results Model and the Five Power Moves Model, you become educated, empowered and enabled to write your story of greatness. A fun, fast-paced, and compelling read."

Dr. Jeffrey Magee, CMC/CBE/CSP/PDM
4x Best-Selling Author

"*The Five Power Moves* is not just for sales managers! Kelly takes you on a compelling journey and illustrates how important strong leadership is for successful execution. I was captivated by the story of Larry, David, and Amy, and I know these 'Power Moves' will work in your industry too! This is the perfect playbook for creating a high-performance team of any kind!"

Kenneth Statton, CEO
MST Manufacturing

"As CSO, I've seen how even strong sales teams can struggle with consistency when leaders are promoted without the right tools. *The Five Power Moves* cuts through the noise with a practical, story-driven framework that shows exactly how to build predictable performance.

Through five clear leadership disciplines, Riggs demonstrates how to move from reactive management to true transformational leadership. The principles are simple, actionable, and backed by real data. If you lead salespeople or are building a high-performance sales culture, this book is worth your time. Highly recommended."

Lucas Watson, Chief Sales Officer
Körber Supply Chain

"After 25 years in the sales management trenches, I've read many books on strategy and tactics, but *The Five Power Moves* is a rare find. Most books tell you what to do; this book shows you how to transform from a doer who spends their time fighting fires into a true leader who builds a high-performance system and team.

The distinction between managing and leading is often blurred in sales, but this book provides an actionable framework for closing that gap. If you are tired of inconsistent results and are ready to stop being the bottleneck in your team's success, this is the blueprint you need. It's a must-read for any sales leader who is serious about moving from mediocre to excellent."

Rich Gaffney, VP Commercial Operations
Sentry Equipment Corp

"An engaging story format. Well researched. People-focused. Systems thinking. Five Power Moves. Kelly built an entire, practical system around powerful ideas that will move the needle. Buy, read, absorb, and apply this book. You'll thank me later."

Mike Kunkle, Founder of Transforming Sales Results and author of *The Building Blocks of Sales Enablement*

"Kelly has written a book for sales managers who know they and their team are capable of better, but they don't know where to begin. He, like you, has sat in those coffee shops, conference rooms, and window seats on the airplane, often with a furrowed brow.

The Five Power Moves isn't just a framework for sales managers; it's a guidebook for implementing these principles written by someone who has succeeded by using them personally. And, while just one of the Power Moves would make an impact on your team, leveraging all five in concert will deliver radically better results.

As fun to read as it is informative, you'll find yourself turning more pages than you anticipate once you sit down with it."

Jeff Bajorek, Sales Leader & Consultant, 6X President's Club,
Rethink the Way You Sell

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FOREWORD

My first real job in sales paid me almost nothing, and it was the best education I ever received.

I was nineteen years old. My father ran a consulting business, and the summer after my freshman year of college, I sold his services. I didn't have a product I fully understood, a reputation, or any reason for a busy executive to take my call. What I had was a full tank of gas, a phone, a list, and a leader who, at the end of every single day, sat down with me to go through what had happened.

Not a pep talk. Not "you'll get 'em tomorrow." A true debrief. What did you say? What did they say back? Why did that work? Why did that fall apart? What are you going to do differently on the next call? Every day, the outcomes of that day became the curriculum for the next one.

Here's what I didn't realize at the time: that was the whole playbook. He was coaching me through the Five Power Moves twenty years before he wrote them down. Clear expectations, the consistent, structured conversation, real-time coaching on the actual work instead of vague encouragement after the fact. A plan instead of a hope, with a deliberate skill-building process instead of "go figure it out." I just thought it was my dad being my dad, the former football coach putting me through more drills.

The truth is the lessons started earlier than that. From fifteen to nineteen, I waited tables. The entire time, my father was working with me – how to read a table, how to manage the experience, how to turn a transaction into a relationship, how to sell without ever making someone feel like they were being sold to.

People think waiting tables is about carrying plates. It's not. It's sales, service, and emotional intelligence under pressure, and it

gave me the foundation and the confidence to walk into any room as a professional later in life. I didn't even know I was being trained. I thought I was just earning gas money.

That's the thing about a great coach. You often don't notice the coaching. You just notice, years later, that you can do things other people can't, and that you have no memory of a time before you could do them.

My father (the man I've called "The Pops" for a dozen years, along with a few less printable things) has spent his career on a single, stubborn idea: that selling is a discipline, not a personality trait. That high performance is built, not born. That the difference between a struggling team and a transformational one is rarely talent; it's the system the leader puts around the talent. A hundred years ago, he was a great salesperson – National Salesperson of the Year, twice – and then did the harder thing: he figured out how to make other people good, then great, and then he figured out how to teach leaders to do it at scale. There are people who can sell. There are fewer who can teach selling. And there are vanishingly few who can teach the leadership of selling. He's in that last group.

A few years ago, the two of us wrote a book together, *Counter Mentor Leadership*. A Boomer and a Millennial arguing, on the record, about how to lead across generations. It won some awards, and it still gets quoted back to me, most of the time to win an argument. And, in the interest of historical accuracy, I want to set the record straight here, in print, where he can't edit it out: I did all the work, and The Pops took all the credit. He insists this isn't stealing – it's delegation – and that delegation is secretly the sixth Power Move. (It isn't. There are five. I counted. I deserve a trophy.) He will tell you it was the other way around. He is, of course, wrong, but he has been selling longer than I've been alive, so he'll probably convince you anyway. Consider this your warning.

Writing that book with him taught me something the daily debriefs never could: my father doesn't just have good instincts; he has a method. Watch him long enough, and the apparent magic resolves into a repeatable process – observable behaviors, in a deliberate sequence, that anyone willing to do the work can learn. And that's one thing The Pops has modeled from day one: he does the work.

Which brings me to the most important thing I can tell you before you start.

This book has the word “sales” in the title, and most people will file it under “sales.” That's a mistake. Strip the word “sales” out of these pages and read it again, and you'll find you're holding one of the clearest leadership books I know, one that I try to live every single day.

Every leader, in every function, is trying to solve the same problem The Pops solves here: How do you take a group of capable people and turn their potential into high performance – consistently, predictably, without relying on heroics or your own personal involvement in every decision? How do you set expectations people can be held to? How do you have the hard conversation in real time instead of saving it for the performance review? How do you build a team that can operate without you in the room?

Those aren't sales questions. Those are leadership questions. The sales team just happens to be where the scoreboard is most public, the feedback loop is fastest, and bad leadership has nowhere to hide.

Sales is the most brutal laboratory, and the principles are universal.

I run a white-collar operating engine for a living. I think about pipeline, conversion, capacity, deals, and accountability all day.

And I will tell you plainly, the moves in this book are the moves: clarity, consistent communication, coaching on the real work, planning instead of hoping, and deliberate, disciplined development. Whether you lead salespeople, engineers, operators, or an entire firm of investment bankers, the job is the same – and so is the answer.

So read it as a sales leader if that's what you are. But don't stop there. Read it as a leader of people, and you will find exponential impact.

That's what you're holding – the tactical guide to get there. Not the memoir of a great salesman. A method with real, actionable tactics; not just some great academic ideas. Something to take away and start doing today to be better.

But let me be direct: change is freaking hard. I spent the first fifteen years of my career driving transformation inside organizations, and it was never the technology, the systems, or the bad coffee in day-long workshops that made it hard. It was the people. Getting humans to change their habits is the hardest work there is.

Here's the edge in that: most people won't do it. They'll read this, nod, and change nothing. So the few who actually do the work don't just improve, they pull away from the pack. The difficulty isn't the obstacle. It's the advantage. You're holding the playbook most people never get. Go do the work!

And as for the man who wrote it – the one who taught a five-year-old to throw a football, a fifteen-year-old to turn waiting tables into a master class in human behavior, a nineteen-year-old to recover from a brutal cold call, and a thirty-something to be an engaged, loving father – I've had the unfair advantage of learning from him my entire life. This book is your turn.

Now, get after it.

Robby Riggs

Robby Riggs is co-author of the award-winning *Counter Mentor Leadership: How to Unlock the Potential of the 4-Generation Workplace*, and the Chief Transformation & Operations Officer at Equiteq, a global investment bank serving technology services and specialty consulting firms.

A former founder who built and sold his own consulting business, he learned the principles in this book the way the author intended – on the job, from the author himself.

INTRODUCTION

There are two things that every sales leader, business owner, and corporate executive craves when it comes to business – **consistency and predictability**.

Few things create more challenges for a [sales] team or the company's leadership than unpredictable and inconsistent sales performance.

This book was written to share five specific concepts, what I have labeled as Power Moves, that enable [sales] managers to build predictability and consistency into training and development, coaching and communication, and the achievement of annual revenue projections.

While the book is primarily focused on *sales* managers, the principles apply to managers in every department.

Note that I use the terms "sales manager" and "sales leader" interchangeably throughout. "Sales manager" is the common title for the individual who is responsible for a team of salespeople; however, in my mind, "sales leader" is the better label because the leadership aspect of the sales management role is *the* difference between mediocrity and consistent success.

Why? In simple terms, a sales leader's objective is to transform potential into performance, to develop and improve the capabilities of individual salespeople. This is a very different objective than the management side of the role, which is typically focused on meetings, budgets, reports, CRM maintenance, policies and procedures, workflows, and more.

In previous books, I've defined leadership as "the art and science of getting things done through other people." It is the "other people" part of that definition that distinguishes the sales *leader* from the individual contributor, the *salesperson*.

In my own experience, I was a very successful salesperson, twice recognized as the National Salesperson-of-the-Year. As a salesperson, I was only concerned about my own sales performance, with no concerns beyond my own efforts.

Once I was promoted to Regional Sales Manager, that should have changed. I should have shifted my focus to developing a team of salespeople, training and coaching each individual to develop their own skills and business acumen.

Unfortunately, I struggled to make that transition.

This very common mistake is entirely avoidable. This book offers the story of one struggling sales manager that illustrates how the **Five Power Moves** work in real life. Again, although this story is about a sales manager, the principles can easily be used by *any* leader.

If you're asking questions like:

- How do I reduce turnover?
- How do I consistently improve individual performance?
- How do I get new team members up to speed as quickly and effectively as possible?
- How do I create a culture of accountability?

This book is for you.

CHAPTER ONE

Thursday, 3:44 p.m.

Larry pulled off his reading glasses and gazed out the aircraft window. The glasses were a recent phenomenon, made necessary, he was sure, by the amount of time he spent in front of his laptop.

He was headed back home from a critical trip to the west coast. Looking out the window, he could see they were flying east over the boundary between the skyscrapers of Chicago and the dark waters of Lake Michigan. Soon the plane would turn back west for the final approach to Chicago O'Hare.

It was late September, a beautiful fall afternoon, with only a few wispy clouds dotting the sky. It was, Larry thought, the perfect time of year.

Slightly under six feet tall with just a touch of gray beginning to appear in his full head of hair, Larry had recently turned 35-years old. Despite the challenges of extensive travel, he had managed to stay in decent physical shape. Most weekends, and occasionally during the week with a client, you would likely find him on a golf course. Unfortunately, he wasn't as optimistic about his emotional health.

Just fifteen months ago, he had been named the National Sales Manager at Barton Manufacturing. The promotion had followed a six-year stint as a salesperson with Barton, including two years as the top rep in the company.

Despite the spectacular day outside, his mood was decidedly overcast. Forty-eight hours ago, he had been convinced his sales team was back on track. He knew there was little hope of

making up the year's entire revenue deficit, but the third quarter had given him hope they might substantially close the gap.

That was right before his Southwest sales rep had dropped a bomb on his rosy outlook. "I'm sorry, Larry," she had explained, giving him the bad news. "I got an offer I just couldn't turn down." A promotion. A considerable raise. Despite Larry's best efforts, there was no talking her out of it. At least she had told him in person instead of sending a text message like the last rep.

So the trip had been nothing short of a disaster. Now, yet again, he would need to find and hire another new salesperson, his third in the past ten months.

He took a deep breath, wondering if he was in over his head. He peered down at Lake Michigan, searching for answers the cold waters couldn't possibly provide. One thing was for sure – Amy, the President of Barton, was not going to respond well to this latest bit of news. Their last meeting had been testy, as Amy was clearly feeling the heat from her boss. Eventually, he had managed to convince her that things were turning around. He had described the sales team as stable with revenues improving in the third quarter. Plus, he was spending a lot of time on the road with the salespeople.

But now? Any real chance he had to dramatically improve the results of the fourth quarter bordered on slim and none. He suspected that finding another good salesperson would be a huge challenge, and, in addition, he would need to spend a lot of time minimizing the damage caused by losing his SoCal-based sales rep for the second time in less than a year.

The afternoon sun crashed through the plane window, signaling the plane's turn back to the west. He closed his eyes

and rubbed the bridge of his nose. His tension headache had certainly not improved despite the two aspirin and two cups of very bad airline coffee. Thinking about things he needed to get done, he realized the weekend was probably shot. When he left Chicago, golf on Saturday had been a firm possibility, but that chance was fading quickly.

Colder temperatures would arrive very soon, and with them his opportunities to be on the course would quickly disappear.

Much like his opportunity to turn the sales team around.

CHAPTER TWO

Leading a sales team might be **the hardest job in the company.**

Yes, that may seem over-the-top to some people. What about the CEO, or the Director of Operations, or even the daily grind of the HR Director? Still, I'm certain the sales leaders reading this book have a pretty good idea why I would make that assertion.

Consider what sales managers are asked to do:

- Transition from salesperson (individual contributor) to sales leader (responsible for many), a completely different role requiring a completely different set of skills.
- Identify, interview, and hire salespeople with the expectation to fill open positions quickly.
- Onboard new salespeople to be effective in the field in a minimal amount of time.
- Train and coach salespeople of wildly different capabilities to reach the company's revenue objectives in the face of enormous obstacles and persistent competition.
- Deal with poor performance, demanding bosses, and constant demands from other departments while achieving an ever-increasing revenue objective.

As an added bonus, sales managers must do all of this while leading the most visible team in the company. Revenue numbers are posted. Quota percentages are well-known. And, of course, everyone thinks selling is the easiest, highest paid,

and most glamorous position in the company. After all, salespeople “get to” travel, entertain customers, attend trade shows, and otherwise enjoy the easy life.

Right.

To complicate matters further, the sales manager might also be asked to continue managing a sales territory or a number of key accounts, with the assumption they will have plenty of time to both grow their business and herd...uhhh, *manage*...several other salespeople.

The savage truth is that’s not even the worst part of the story. Complicating the sales management role is the fact that the company will assign the sales manager the five responsibilities above AND require the following tasks as well:

1. Prepare quarterly and annual forecasts and develop sales budgets
2. Attend a rash of meetings each week
3. Train or develop customer service and support
4. Manage trade shows
5. Interact with major clients
6. Travel extensively

I could go on, but if you’re a sales manager, you already know.

What could possibly go wrong?

CHAPTER THREE

Friday, Barton office. 5:50 p.m.

Amy closed the office door, dropped her iPad and a stack of reports on her desk, and collapsed into her office chair. A quick glance at her computer confirmed her meeting with Larry had gone far beyond the one-hour time allotted on the calendar.

This is a disaster, she thought, and the week wasn't even over. She still had to plow through emails and voice mails. And prepare for her Monday meeting with the CEO.

She groaned. Her CEO was expecting a full update on the sales team, and what she had expected today – really needed – was some good news from sales. Revenue was still far behind expectations and she needed answers.

Details. Positive updates. Reasons for optimism.

That hadn't happened.

Amy was tall and lean like a 20-mile-per-week runner, though she didn't run. Her secret was hot yoga twice a week, religiously. It was time she used to clear her mind.

She had been the President of Barton Manufacturing for nearly two years now. It was a \$50 million custom-engineering and manufacturing company based in Chicago, one of several divisions of Fischer MetalWerks, headquartered in Germany.

Her CV was impressive: She had logged twenty years in operations at Clifton, Inc. There, as a natural planner with a

penchant for details and process management, she had progressed rapidly from team lead to Department Head to Operations Manager. Then, four years ago, she had joined the executive team as COO.

Then, she found herself being recruited to become both the youngest and first female President at Barton. According to the CEO, she was exactly what the company needed, someone who could lead the efforts to streamline and modernize operations with the objective to double annual revenues to \$100 million over the next seven years.

It was the kind of challenge she craved. She dug in hard, routinely logging 60-hour work weeks. More often than not, she was the first to arrive and the last to leave, and her reward had been a first-year performance that had gone almost exactly according to plan.

However, right away in her second year, cracks had begun to appear in the sales team. A salesperson quit. The first quarter started surprisingly slow. At first, it had seemed to be an anomaly, but Q2 sales results fared even worse.

For the first time, Amy began to worry.

Things soon turned critical. A second salesperson left the company. Several late-stage deals fell through. The company's backlog began to weaken.

Thankfully, however, her concerns had appeared, briefly, to be an overreaction. Q3 revenues improved, Larry filled the open sales positions, and their largest customer placed a sizable order. With sales seemingly moving in the right direction, Larry and Amy scheduled a meeting to discuss the fourth quarter, and to get a sense of how the year would end.

To prepare for the meeting, Amy had taken a deep dive into the sales team's Q4 forecast and their opportunity pipeline. What she discovered left her deflated. The fourth quarter projections did not look as promising as she had hoped, and, of much greater concern, the sales team appeared to be doing very little prospecting.

This afternoon's meeting with Larry had not gone well at all. Larry had been edgy from the start. The surprising revelation that another salesperson had quit really soured his attitude, and she had apparently added fuel to the fire by asking some tough questions.

The meeting left her with strong emotions. Disappointment. Concern. Anger.

She replayed the discussion in her mind. Together, they had been looking at the sales pipeline report when she wondered aloud why the salespeople weren't doing more to develop new opportunities. At first, Larry played it off as mostly the result of losing two salespeople, but when she pointed out that the team had produced a meager six new opportunities in the past two quarters, he shifted gears.

His reasoning shocked her. "Amy, the team just doesn't have time to prospect," he had said almost defiantly.

At which point, she had failed (rather dramatically, she thought) to control her reaction to his answer. "Are you serious?" she barked.

Larry bristled. "Look, with all the stuff we do, when can we prospect? Every day it's a barrage of customer requests and complaints that absolutely have to be dealt with. I've been crushed trying to replace these open sales positions, and then there are all of these marketing meetings and operations

meetings. On top of all that, you want projections and quarterly budgets and weekly summaries..."

He paused, but before she could respond he jumped back in.

"Listen, to be clear, I keep telling the team we have to prospect. We do have our Tier 1 Target lists we work with. But between taking care of our customers and doing all of this 'busy work,'" – he had raised his fingers to create air quotes – "it's tough to find the time to make prospecting calls."

It had shocked her into silence, and her frustration was quite visible. In offering what she could only consider a feeble excuse for a lack of performance, Larry had just crossed an important line in the sand, the failure to hold his team, and himself, accountable.

She glanced at her watch again, wishing she could call it a day. It had been a long week, and she was mentally drained.

She thought about the upcoming meeting with the CEO. He had been fully supportive of Larry, but she felt like his patience was beginning to wane. With a new product launch late last year and a strong market to work with, they had projected a healthy 18 percent increase in revenue for the year. Now, at their current pace, they would be lucky to produce a meager 2 percent sales increase.

Her thoughts returned again to the meeting with Larry. Maybe he just wasn't the right person for the job, she thought. The problem was that every time she ventured down that alley in her mind, she couldn't imagine cutting him loose. He knew the product line and industry applications better than anyone in the company, maybe anyone in the entire industry. His success as a salesperson had been nothing short of spectacular.

Today, however, it had become crystal clear that the company's current opportunity pipeline was more optimism than reality.

She stood up and walked to her window. Leaves floated gracefully to the sidewalk, the familiar signal that winter was just around the corner. Today's meeting had been a pivot point, she thought. Decisions would need to be made, and a new direction would need to be determined.

She returned to her desk, dropped back into her chair, and began absentmindedly drumming her fingers on the desktop. After she had become President of Barton, she had never once thought sales would be a problem.

She had been wrong.

Even worse, she had been naive. She had always imagined that improving every aspect of the company's operations would take care of any sales problems that existed. Especially with Larry leading the team.

The question she faced now was simple: should she move to replace Larry?

CHAPTER FOUR

“Companies fail to choose the candidate with the right talent for management positions 82% of the time.”

Gallup

If you are a sales manager, you are acutely aware of the many challenges Larry is facing.

Again, sales management is extremely difficult. In my experience, it can turn an incredibly capable salesperson into a smoldering, self-doubting mess. The typical path to sales management is the promotion of someone who has already proven the ability to succeed in a notoriously difficult profession, but sales managers are quite often dropped into a broken system.

For example, the promotion to sales management almost always happens with little or no preparation or training for the role. Adding insult to injury, companies rarely explain to the newly promoted *salesperson* they are now the *sales leader*, a role with radically different expectations.

So, within months, the excitement of a new adventure wears off and the once confident sales manager, confronted with the reality that most of his or her new reports are not superior performers, begins to press. They review every opportunity, sign off on every proposal, and believe they must step in to close most every deal to hit their revenue target.

In fact, it's not uncommon to hear new sales managers wonder why their salespeople aren't committed. Motivated. Focused. *Accountable*. After all, they were all of those things.

What is wrong with people?

People, however, are not the real problem. **The real problem is the system.** Companies have a flawed methodology for selecting or promoting sales managers. At the same time, the methodology for training salespeople all but ensures they will struggle, further compromising the sales manager's performance.

Yes, you read that right. Companies, perhaps unwittingly, stack the deck against sales managers in ways that make it incredibly difficult to create an effective sales team.

Four Hidden Ways Companies Sabotage Sales Managers

Here are four ways a company stacks the deck against sales managers. Not purposefully, of course, but the results remain.

1. You are responsible for hiring, developing, and leading a group of salespeople, but you're left to decode the black box of "hiring and onboarding" without any training.
2. The typical two-week intensive immersion into the company's products and services **conditions your salespeople** to make sales calls focused on product information instead of customer needs and challenges.
3. Since your own promotion or hiring process didn't include clear expectations for you to **develop** salespeople rather than **manage** salespeople, coaching is often not a priority and may not even be a skill you've been taught.

4. Most of the sales training the company undertakes is one-off, sporadic, unplanned, and reactive. Companies often roll sales training into an annual meeting or sales kick-off event. Without a carefully designed program of follow-up, practice, and reinforcement, the odds of salespeople changing their habits are fairly slim.

Think about the challenges described above. If they hold true for you, and chances are pretty good they do, you weren't effectively prepared for the role.

You're not skilled or experienced in identifying, hiring, and onboarding quality salespeople.

You don't have the patience or skill to coach salespeople effectively.

Your company's sales training is lacking (at best) or counterproductive (at worst).

Sadly, you have been handed enormous responsibility without the training and support to succeed. In the pages that follow, together, you and I will fix that.

CHAPTER FIVE

Monday. Barton office. 7:48 a.m.

Following her usual routine, Amy arrived at work just before 7:00 a.m. and spent the first 45 minutes of her day answering emails and rearranging her schedule.

There was one more thing she needed to do before things got crazy. Friday's meeting with Larry had consumed her thinking over the weekend, and late Sunday she had made a decision. She was going to reach out to an old friend, a former coworker, and ask for help.

Scrolling through her phone contacts, she found what she was looking for: "Big Dave." She couldn't help but smile as she pressed the call button. There was never a dull moment with Dave.

"Big Dave!" she exclaimed when he answered.

"Good morning," he mumbled in return. "Clearly you've had your coffee already."

She laughed. "We're not all retired, you know."

Dave was a big guy, balding, with a thick salt-and-pepper mustache. He was an unabashed Chicago Bears fan and quite proud of his likeness to Coach Ditka. He had an infectious smile that rarely left his face, and to his close friends he was simply "Big Dave."

He had been the sales manager at Clifton when Amy was promoted to COO, and during their time there, they had struck

up a close friendship. Working closely together, they delivered four consecutive years of sales growth. While it hadn't always been easy, the good times had far outweighed the challenges.

Both had eventually moved on, with Dave settling into early retirement and Amy accepting Barton's offer to become their new President.

For the next fifteen minutes they played catch-up, finding out who was doing what and reminiscing about the old days at Clifton. The new product launch that almost wasn't. The annual sales meeting in Cancun after Covid. Dave's retirement party.

"So, how are things at Barton?" Dave asked once the small talk had died down. "Since I haven't heard from you in a while, I am assuming things are going well."

"Well, not exactly," she answered tentatively, not exactly sure how she wanted to open up the conversation.

"OK, I know that tone," Dave said jokingly before she could continue.

She sighed. "It's never easy, Dave."

"That doesn't sound great. What's the problem?"

"Do you remember meeting with Larry?" she asked.

Amy had introduced Dave to Larry after first quarter revenues had fallen short of projections. Thinking Dave might be a valuable resource, she had suggested they meet, which they did.

"Yeah, sure," Dave replied. "We had a pretty good conversation, but we never really got back together."

Larry, Dave remembered, had been mostly positive in that meeting, but had readily shared his frustrations regarding the sales team's performance. His opinion was they seemed to lack motivation and leaned on him too much for technical support and proposals.

Dave, for his part, had listened intently, shared some insights, and eventually offered a helping hand. Though Larry had agreed it was a good idea, he had never followed through.

"Yes, I remember," Amy said. "I was really disappointed when he didn't pursue things with you. At the time, though, I wasn't terribly worried. Q1 just seemed to be an outlier at that point, and Larry was convinced he had things under control. But now..." She trailed off.

"Now?" Dave echoed.

"Well, our first quarter outlier has turned into a bigger problem." A knock on the door interrupted her, and she glanced at her watch. Her Executive Assistant leaned in and reminded her of her 8:15 a.m. meeting.

Asking Dave to hold on, she quickly pushed her meeting back fifteen minutes before resuming her explanation. "Actually, I can see what is happening, but I'm not exactly sure what the real problem is. I just know that we are underperforming and Larry seems to be really struggling."

Without waiting for a response, she rushed ahead: "Is it him? Is it me? Do we even have the right salespeople?" She exhaled forcibly. "I'm frustrated because I don't know what I should do," she said finally.

"Hang on. You're not asking me to take the job, are you?" he

asked with a nervous laugh.

"No, no, no," she said quickly with a chuckle. "Nothing like that. I'm just hoping you would still be up for..."

"Helping Larry?" Dave interjected.

"Yes."

Dave went quiet, but Amy held back. She knew enough about him to let him think.

"Sure," he said finally.

"Really? Just like that?"

"Just like that," he said.

"Dave. Thank you. Truly." She glanced at the clock.

"Listen," she said, pushing away from her desk. "I've got to run to an important meeting. Can I call you back this afternoon?"

CHAPTER SIX

“All organizations are perfectly designed to get the results they get.”

Arthur Jones

The stakes for sales training are high.

American companies reportedly spend **more than \$15 billion each year** on sales training. Despite the investment, many still struggle with inconsistent sales performance. The reality is that companies don't have a sales training *spending* problem. They have a sales development *system* problem.

Let's start with the understanding that it doesn't take dramatic changes in individual sales performance to produce significant improvements to revenue.

Consider an eight-person sales team producing \$20 million annually.

If each of the four weakest performers added just three new customers worth \$133,000 annually — assuming this as the average value of the company's Top 20 percent of customers — revenue would increase roughly \$1.6 million. Depending on margins, that could add anywhere from \$400,000 to \$640,000 in additional profit.

That's not a huge lift.

However, from years of observation, and through the lens of available data, there is a tremendous disconnect between sales training and sales performance.

First, salespeople, as a whole, do not perform well. 57 percent of salespeople are expected to miss quota. Win rates are as low as 13 percent, depending on the industry. Further, there is an enormous disparity between the Top 10 percent of salespeople and the rest of the field.

Second, despite the proliferation of outstanding training material - books, extensive online content, webinars, and professional sales trainers - these numbers have barely changed over time. The fact is, today's salesperson has more tools and more resources than ever, including the emergence of artificial intelligence (AI), but sales performance has not radically improved.

For the past four decades, two things have remained constant: the way salespeople are trained and the way most companies approach the sales function.

The failing strategy looks like this:

1. Promote your best salesperson to sales manager.
2. Hire "great" sales *resumes* (not demonstrated competencies) with a focus on experience in the industry.
3. Make product and technical knowledge the focal point of onboarding and training.
4. Use CRM to monitor and control sales activity.

Your company is likely doing something very close to this.

Some don't, but most do.

The problem is that every single one of these four tactics is fundamentally flawed when it comes to developing effective salespeople.

Four Fundamental Flaws:

1. Without training and preparation, a great salesperson is more than likely an average sales manager, at best. Top salespeople generally struggle to lead a sales team effectively, primarily because they don't actively and consistently **coach** their salespeople. This is probably related to the flawed way in which salespeople are trained (much more on this later).
2. Resumes are rarely an accurate assessment of **sales capability**, and further, not all sales experience is created equal. For example, an individual can be a company's top salesperson because all the best opportunities are funneled to the experienced, technically adept salesperson. If he or she had to produce their own opportunities, their performance might suffer dramatically.
3. Product knowledge and technical knowledge are important, but **selling skills**, a **sales process**, and a detailed **sales plan** are typically far more important in consistently winning high-value deals.
4. **CRM** can be an immensely helpful **tool** but using it simply to develop metrics to monitor and control sales behavior is a critical mistake.

How can companies address the systemic issues of sales "training" that predictably and consistently produce mediocre salespeople?

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Five Power Moves Principles

- Every problem is a leadership problem.
- Effective [sales] leaders build people first. The revenue follows.
- Selling is influence, not information delivery.
- If you want [sales]people who can operate without you, you cannot be the source of every solution and every decision.
- Without clear expectations, accountability is impossible.
- Accountability isn't something you demand. It's a process you create.
- Culture is not what you say it is. It is determined by the behaviors the sales leader accepts and normalizes.
- People get to choose their decisions. They don't get to choose their consequences.
- Predictable sales performance is created intentionally through effective planning.
- Success in selling is never an accident.
- [Sales]people rarely outperform the onboarding process that developed them.
- Rather than general exposure, effective onboarding trains to specific milestones.
- A lack of practice and preparation means your [sales]people are practicing on your customers.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Kelly S. Riggs has spent more than three decades developing salespeople and sales leaders who can perform without him in the room – the exact outcome this book is built to create.

He began his career as an individual sales contributor and became a two-time National Salesperson-of-the-Year before moving into sales management.

In that role, he built two corporate sales training programs across two different industries.

In 2006, he founded what is now **Business LockerRoom, Inc.** (originally Vmax Performance Group), a Tulsa, Oklahoma-based sales and leadership performance company.

Kelly is the author of *1-on-1 Management™: What Every Great Manager Knows That You Don't* and *Quit Whining and Start SELLING! A Step-by-Step Guide to a Hall of Fame Career in Sales*. He is also the co-author, along with his son, Robby Riggs, of the award-winning *Counter Mentor Leadership: How to Unlock the Potential of the 4-Generation Workplace*.

He founded and currently hosts the **Sales [UN]Training podcast**, available on YouTube, iTunes, or Spotify.

To inquire about Kelly's services or available offerings, contact him at kellyriggs.com or www.bizlockerroom.com.

