

Can A Tactical Salesperson Become Strategic?

By Barrett Riddleberger

When you assess the make-up of your sales team, what do you see? Are they consistently going after the easy, low hanging fruit? Do they stop their follow-up and follow-through after only one or two calls? Or do you have salespeople who take their time in selecting the right prospects and then do their homework and prepare?

There are two types of salespeople that I will cover in this article: tactical and strategic. Tactical salespeople go after the quick sale - usually low volume, low margin sales... the easy ones. Strategic salespeople go after the more complex sales - the ones that can take longer, are more difficult to navigate through, but yield much greater results.

Tactical salespeople will typically rely on external factors for success, such as appearance, personality, favorite sales technique, etc.

Strategic salespeople bring much more to the process like: emotional maturity, patience, analytical problem solving skills, asking great questions, etc.

Bottom line: Strategic salespeople are different than tactical salespeople because they view their roles from different vantage points. As a result, strategic salespeople have a better chance of achieving great sales volume, higher levels of credibility and better quality clients with long-term customer-loyalty.

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Salespeople who rely mostly on their personality typically can gain quick favor with a prospect. However, they can easily falter later in the sales process when faced with complex issues from the prospect. Many times they lack the ability to think strategically about the prospects issues because their natural charm and persuasion is no match for sophisticated solutions.

Personality-driven salespeople can sometimes get into the door quicker... and get an invitation to leave just as fast if they lack the wherewithal to demonstrate competence and effectiveness for the prospect.

Professional selling requires that your salespeople put themselves into the shoes of the prospect or customer. If they view their sales tactics from the perspective of, "They're going to love me," or "I hope they love me," it can be quite limiting to their success.

Mentoring salespeople who rely solely on their great personalities for success enables you to elevate their portfolio of experiences. Watching you navigate through a complex sale is invaluable. Watching you do it 8, 10 or 15 times, is career changing. Once they accumulate more and more "team sales" experiences with you, then you can wean them off and allow them to take a larger role in the "team selling" sales process... and eventually have them take complete control over larger sales opportunities.

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How Do You Mentor a Tactical Salesperson?

How you mentor a tactical salesperson, and the nature of your relationship with them, really makes the difference. Here are a few tips on mentoring your personality-driven salespeople into Sales Champions:

1. *Help them to think strategically* - Don't allow them to only go for a quick tactical sale. Demonstrate that there is more credibility when you continually probe and listen to the needs of the prospect. From a senior decision-maker's perspective, all aspects of his/her business are connected. Your salespeople need to know this so they don't get too focused on product features and benefits alone. Instead, they must take a consultative approach - but you need to show them how to do this. They need to watch you and learn that company executives want an advisor who listens, understands and then makes appropriate recommendations - not a charming salesperson with hopes of making a quick sale.
2. *Encourage patience* - The bigger the deal, typically the longer the process. Even though it may take longer, senior executives also have the means to pool resources and acquire money much easier than a lower level manager. When your salesperson finally gets to a top level decision-maker, don't let them blow it by attempting to put together a low-level, tactical deal. Help them to expand their sights, raise their expectations, meet the executive where they are and then focus on bigger and better opportunities. Eventually they'll get it. Remember, senior-level executives aren't just product/service buyers - they're strategic solution buyers.
3. *Define their role* - Your salesperson needs to know the value of the education they will receive by watching you. Help them to understand the importance of these team experiences with you, and how it will help them in the future when they go it alone. Since you are the one driving the sales process during these mentoring experiences, and not them, they need to understand that their secondary role is still important to the process, but their education and experience will be their greatest reward.
4. *Debrief often* - Ask pointed question about each sales call: What did you learn today? How did you feel when the prospect said or did this? What did you see me do? Why do you think I handled it that way? What would you have done previously in the same situation? What will you do differently when faced with the same situation in the future? Why? How can you prepare for that situation again? How do you think making that one change will impact your sales career?

Personality-driven salespeople need to experience a complex sales process done correctly. They need to observe you doing it step-by-step. I recommend that you do it as early in their career with you as possible. The quicker you set a high watermark, establish a mentor relationship, provide real-world experiences, and then debrief and coach throughout the process, the quicker they will rise to the occasion and meet those strategic sales opportunities head on.

About the Author

Barrett Riddleberger is an internationally recognized leader in the fields of customized [sales consulting](#), research-based sales assessments and sales force recruitment. He also is founder of Resolution Systems Inc., a strategic sales consulting firm. His book, "Blueprint of a Sales Champion," details how organizations can find, train and retain top performing salespeople... even in a highly competitive market.

An accomplished author and sales consultant, Riddleberger is also highly in demand as a business development and motivational speaker for organizations seeking to drive their sales force to greater levels of performance. For more info visit [ResolutionSystemsInc.com](#) or call 866.880.5175

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