

WHAT'S  
WORKING  
IN

# Sales Management™

The leading single source on what top sales executives are doing, in a fast-read format, twice a month

October 27, 2006

ROUTING

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## We doubled sales revenue, boosted closing rates 67%

### ■ One company's remarkable story of sales success

Companies change personnel every day. The higher up the change, the stronger the ripple effect throughout the company.

When a new CEO came aboard he challenged us: Double sales revenues in three years without increasing the number of salespeople.

Here's how we made it happen:

#### The obstacles

It was put-up or shut-up time and we knew it. So instead of complaining about the reasons we *couldn't* achieve the goal, we started by pinpointing the areas that might need improvement.

That meant answering some tough questions about our performance:

- Were revenues based on our reputation, or our salespeople's ability to sell?
- Did we have the best possible processes in place for salespeople to succeed?
- Were we using the best possible system to sell?

#### BOOST REVENUE

##### 5 areas to consider

1. Coaching
2. Motivation
3. Recruiting
4. Development
5. Accountability

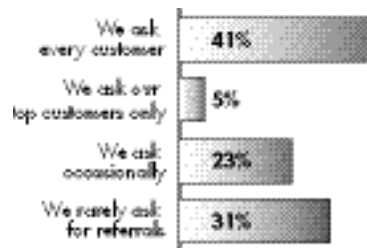
#### The plan

Key metrics and past selling history revealed two things:

- There were a handful of salespeople who weren't capable of doing the job. Keeping them aboard was sending a message that

(Please see Revenues ... on p. 2)

## HOW OFTEN DO YOU ASK FOR REFERRALS?



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### Are you squandering an opportunity?

With almost a third of sales managers claiming they rarely ask for referrals, this may be a good time to consider making them a part of your regular sales process.

# Revenues ...

(Continued from p. 1)

closing wasn't an essential part of the job.

- We had several individuals who were capable closers. But each was selling their own way. There was no unified sales structure.

So the management team chose five key areas where we'd impact results by reworking our battle plan:

1. **Coaching:** We initiated a pre-call strategy where salespeople would go through a specific process before presentations. We also met after the call, to provide coaching tips for continuous improvement.
2. **Motivation:** We reset goals and followed up with every salesperson, regardless of how long they'd been with us. We focused on getting every salesperson primed and ready to sell at the start of each day.
3. **Recruiting:** We assessed what made salespeople successful in our organization and used that criteria to hire stronger salespeople, as opposed to hiring based on salespeople's past experience.
4. **Development:** We got back to a regular cycle of joining salespeople when they went out on sales calls. We'd follow up with a critique of positives and areas for opportunity and then write up an action plan to move forward with.
5. **Accountability:** No more excuses

from top to bottom. Both management and salespeople were responsible for their own results. If we were falling short, we had to identify why and improve or face the consequences.

Change is never easy. And there's always an adjustment period. But we stuck to the plan and followed through on each action step.

We established timelines and deadlines. We managed expectations and got everyone on the same page.

We held regular training sessions. Veterans were encouraged to join in as a reminder of things they once learned, but may have forgotten.

People at all levels in the company were evolving. It was a tremendous sight to behold.

### The outcome

With help from our new approach, and a boost in results, we doubled our lead pipeline within six months.

Closing rates increased 20 percentage points (or 67%) because we identified strong probability leads and worked to identify how to close our low probability leads.

Finally, we increased revenues by 106%, and we did it in two years, as opposed to three.

*(This case study was offered by Objective Management Group founder Dave Kurlan, [www.objectivemanagement.com](http://www.objectivemanagement.com). Mr. Kurlan is the author of "Baseline Selling," [www.baselineselling.com](http://www.baselineselling.com))*

## ■ Google's new e-mail policy could be food for thought

The Google Gods have spoken: No use of G-mail addresses for any unauthorized commercial purposes.

The lesson for sales managers isn't in what Google has prohibited, but where the opportunity lies outside Google's parameters.

How often do your salespeople receive e-mails from industry people selling their own wares?

Chances are it happens a lot. Potentially, each of those addresses is an opportunity in waiting.

### Making the most of it

Your salespeople may want to consider responding to these e-mails and establishing a point of contact.

You can then filter each of those addresses into your permanent mailing lists for e-zines, company updates or limited-time offers.

If you set up a system where salespeople can simply filter every e-mail address into the system automatically, your group lists will double or even triple in size within a short amount of time. Imagine what that could mean for online revenues.

**Info:** [http://news.com.com/Google+bans+Gmail+swaps+and+sales/2100-1038\\_3-5254366.html](http://news.com.com/Google+bans+Gmail+swaps+and+sales/2100-1038_3-5254366.html)



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## The Purpose of *What's Working in Sales Management*

*What's Working in Sales Management* is the fast-read source of actionable information to help sales executives and their staffs grow sales and increase profitability of their companies.

Twice monthly, *What's Working in Sales Management* delivers real-world examples of how other sales executives are meeting the pressures of today's businesses.

In addition, it reviews the best ideas from top sales authorities. Instead of theories, we provide information you can use – every day.

## 3 ways to overcome prospects who stall and close the deal now

### ■ Tips for getting past the excuses that keep deals from getting done

How many times has it happened? You're prepared to close a deal and the prospect says something like this: "Everything sounds great. Just give me a few days to think it over."

Then they quietly disappear, never to return your voice mails again. In many cases, the deal could've gotten done, if only there was a little more urgency to do so.

Here are three ways to kick things into high gear and close the sale before a prospect closes the door:

#### 1. Get beyond a simple 'yes'

When a contract's involved, just getting a verbal commitment isn't enough. Second thoughts, counteroffers from competitors or shifts in the marketplace can sink you.

It's best to have the contract on hand or arrange to have it signed within 24 hours.

#### 2. Provide do-it-now incentive

Incentives are one way to a prospect's heart. You can expedite the process by mentioning that getting the deal done today will still make them eligible for a limited time discount or one free service call.

#### 3. Relay 'late breaking news'

When you have a prospect who's on the fence, it may help to give them a call and mention new information you have about the product or a testimonial from one of their competitors that explains why your product has been such a tremendous plus.

Nothing spurs a prospect to action faster than hearing that a competitor has the upper hand.

*Source: "5 Tips for Closing a Deal," by the Sloan Brothers, <http://snipurl.com/yqda>*

## Listening: Separate the what from the why

### ■ Actively listening to increase closing rates

There's a big difference between hearing someone and listening to them.

In sales, active listening is the name of the game. That means taking your listening skills to another level.

It doesn't mean much if you're not asking the right questions, or probing deeper to uncover what the prospect's true needs are.

#### Taking it up a notch

It's a good idea to get in the habit of asking questions that start with "Can you tell me why ..."

In a presentation where the prospect does 80% of the talking, it's

easy to pick up on *what* his or her problems are.

But in order to close the deal, it's imperative that you understand *why* the prospect is having problems. If they're unhappy with their current supplier, you need to understand why if you plan on doing a better job.

If they're having shipping problems, understanding why shows you where the opportunity lies.

The *what* is your starting point, but great listeners know it's the *why* that closes deals.

*Info: "Listening More to Sell More," by Brent Patmos, <http://snipurl.com/ymz9>*

### ■ The effect of home equity loans on business

Let's say that tomorrow everyone in the U. S. stopped taking out home-equity loans.

Or maybe we shouldn't even be saying it, since if home equity loans dried up, we'd be in big trouble.

Let's look at some recent history on equity loans and their effect on business and the economy in general:

- In the boom year of 2000, homeowners tapped their equity lines for \$26 billion – which at the time was a hefty sum.
- Then in 2001, the economy got a little tighter and the recession hit, but home prices continued to rise. That combination led homeowners to up their equity loans to \$82 billion. What people lost in personal revenue, they made up in home equity loans.
- Jump to 2005 – tough economy but still-rising home prices. In that year, homeowners really took the plunge on their equity loans: \$250 billion.

#### What's it mean?

So, what's all this mean?

For one thing, the amount of home equity money people have spent in the last five years has propped up our GDP and gone a long way toward keeping the economy humming.

But guess what?

Home prices are flattening or even dropping in some instances. That means there will be less home equity money available, less home equity money spent and ...

Well, you probably don't need an economist to tell you that it's not good news if you're marketing and selling in the U.S.

*(By Michael Donnelly, Chief Economist for What's Working in Sales Management)*

### ■ Mix up seating to boost group results

People are a product of their environment. When you look around your sales department, you may see some interesting dynamics.

Usually, the low performers sit in clumps around the room. All it takes is one ring leader to bring the rest down. High performers raise the game of others around them.

So shake things up by reworking your seating chart. High performers will get good results regardless. But low performers will pick it up once they start to see others around them rising to the occasion.

### ■ Create an in-house list of selling tips every week

Who has their ear to the ground more than your very own salesforce? When it comes to knowing your industry (and selling to your prospects), no one does.

Take advantage of that knowledge by sending out a weekly e-mail in which each salesperson is asked to add one sales tip or unique piece of industry knowledge they learned that week.

Then compile a list and distribute it to your entire salesforce. This way you're guaranteed they're all sharing the best of what they learn. It's like having your very own *Quick Ideas Salespeople Can Use* page.

### ■ Smoother presentations with the art of visualization

Sales presentations aren't always easy, says business expert Roger Seip. There are so many selling points, we're always afraid we might miss one of the biggest ones.

Seip suggests using visual triggers to remember each point. For example, if you want to make a point about goals, use a set of goalposts as a visual trigger. Whenever you envision the posts, the point comes back to you.

A dollar sign could represent ROI statements.

This way, you can draw a few symbols on an index card and have your entire presentation at-a-glance.

*Source: "4 Tips to Take the Terror Out of Giving Presentations" by Roger Seip, [www.businessknowhow.com/growth/fear-presentation.htm](http://www.businessknowhow.com/growth/fear-presentation.htm)*

### ■ Mastering the four Don'ts of sales presentation success

You've heard it before, selling is all about the prospect's needs, not your ability to talk about how great your product is.

That means asking the right questions and listening carefully to uncover the prospect's problems.

There are four *Don'ts* in presentations, says Sales Manager Len Foley:

- Don't talk about yourself
- Don't talk about your products
- Don't talk about your services, and
- whatever you do, Don't recite your sales pitch.

A bit cynical, but still good advice for people who continually talk themselves right out of sales.

*Source: "The 10 Laws of Sales Success," by Len Foley, [www.entrepreneur.com/sales/tipsfromexperts/article65984.html](http://www.entrepreneur.com/sales/tipsfromexperts/article65984.html)*

### ■ Gitomer's four laws of making connections in sales

You're only as good as your sources, or so they say.

Referrals are a tremendous sales tool that few sales organizations take full advantage of. There are four questions to ask yourself in order to determine whether you're in an effective position to gain referrals, says Jeffrey Gitomer in *The Little Black Book of Connections*:

- Who do you know?
- How well are you connected?
- Do you know how to gain referrals by way of connection?

## Sharpen your JUDGMENT

*This feature provides a framework for decision making that helps keep you and your company out of trouble. It describes a recent legal conflict and lets you judge the outcome.*

### ■ The age old question: Is it discrimination or no?

"I hope you're happy," Salesperson Lester Bangs said. "Looks like you finally turned this place into the First Wives Club."

"If this is about me promoting Suzanne," Sales Manager Marcia Williams said, "I'm not gonna hear it. She earned that position and she deserves it."

"Of course," Lester sneered. "She's a woman and she's younger than all of the men who've been in this office for 10 years or more. What other qualifications does she need?"

### Battle of the sexes

"She has a higher closing rate than any of you and she's a leader in this office. That's enough," Marcia said.

"I know you never expected to promote any of the men, despite the fact that several of us have more experience and better qualifications."

"That's not true and you know it. But I will tell you that I'd never put someone in a position of responsibility who has a bad attitude and holds other people here in such contempt."

"I put in a lot of years working for that promotion. I'll see you in court," Lester said.

Lester sued Marcia's company for age and sex discrimination. Did the company win?

■ *Make your decision, then please turn to page 6 for the court's ruling.*

Our readers include sales management professionals in all types of industries, from companies both large and small. Twice a month, three of them share their sales management problems they successfully resolved.

### 1 When prospect dodged the deal, persistence paid off

We had a tremendous meeting with a lucrative prospect who had initially contacted us.

The prospect liked us and our offer. But when it came time to sign on the dotted line, he told us he wasn't ready to make a deal.

The oddest part was that he wouldn't give us a straight answer as to why he wasn't going with us.

We found it even more puzzling that he hadn't contracted with one of

our competitors.

But we continued to contact the prospect, periodically passing on industry info or telling him about new products we offered.

#### The tables start to turn

Then one day he became interested in our offer again. This time he said, "Let me talk to the committee."

We had no idea there was a committee. He'd never mentioned

them in the past and they were never involved in the selling process.

It turned out the company worked on a very fixed budget.

We retailored our proposal so the committee could see how much ROI we provided and they awarded us a contract. They're a continuous source of revenue to this day.

*(Scott Abbott, Divisional Sales Manger, Ford Audio Video Systems, Oklahoma City, OK)*

### 2 When prospects were too busy, we let copy do the talking

There are times when you don't have more than a few minutes to speak with prospects.

That usually meant we had to get a lot of information out in a short amount of time, and we really had no idea how much prospects were retaining.

So sometimes we'd miss an opportunity because a key selling point never got mentioned or because prospects were simply too busy when we stopped by to really give us their

full attention.

We needed a way to establish rapport that would allow us to follow up a couple of weeks later.

#### All the news that's fit to print

So we created a glossy, full-color brochure that explained not only what we offered, but more importantly, how we could produce revenue for our customers.

We took it a step further, providing

typical ROI numbers along with a breakdown of cost and profit based on purchase.

The brochure was so effective we also used it as a mailing piece. Now we have a great reason to follow-up with prospects. When we do, the brochure has already done the work for us. We even won a *best of the best* award in our industry for the idea.

*(Jeff Paino, Sales and Marketing Coordinator, Observer Dispatch, Utica, NY)*

### 3 When recruiting was down, profiling became the name of the game

It was a tale of two salesforces – our salespeople were either really good or really bad.

Our recruiting efforts weren't bringing enough of the good ones in, so we looked to improve our hiring process.

We interviewed each of our top salespeople, asking them questions about their work ethic, motivation, selling process and will to succeed.

Then we took the results and

tallied them and created a hiring profile based on the shared qualities of our best salespeople.

#### Play the match game

Our focus changed from simply hiring people for their experience to pursuing people whose skill set and personal qualities matched those of our top producers.

We didn't automatically rule out those who didn't match the profile. In

fact we ended up hiring several of those people.

But the results tell the story:

- People who scored high on the profile test met or exceeded quota for more than 80% of pay periods.
- People who scored poorly only met or exceeded quota 33% of the time.

*(James Smith, Omnia Sales Group, Tampa, FL. For more information on Omnia, visit <http://omniagroup.com>)*

## When egos attack: Dealing with the many moods of salespeople

■ *The bigger they are, the harsher their reaction*

Whether you're talking about sports, film or the arts, the same holds true – the ego grows in direct proportion to success.

Ego-driven salespeople sometimes make you wonder if they're worth all the trouble.

Well, they probably are. But as a manager, there are steps you can take to keep salespeople concentrated on selling, while keeping their personal issues at bay.

Here are three big ones:

### 1. Set behavioral expectations.

Whenever sales managers hear the phrase “expectations versus reality” they immediately begin to conjure numbers in their head.

The same way it's important to have salespeople understand what's expected of them on a performance level, it's also a good idea to discuss what type of behavior is acceptable (and what type of behavior will not be tolerated). Every employee has his/her own

issues, but salespeople can't turn your department into a place for them to air out their dirty laundry.

2. **Follow through.** There's no change without consequence. Once you've laid down strict behavioral ground rules in a group setting, it's important to enforce them at all times.

No one's above the law. Following through sends a message to everyone that the policy isn't just talk.

3. **Be consistent.** As basic as it may sound, you can't play favorites. Stellar performance isn't an excuse for breaking the rules. Letting the big dogs get away with bad behavior not only causes others to question your authority, it sends a message that policy means nothing, so long as you produce good numbers.

*Source: “Managing Frustrating Salespeople,” by Robert J. Zipse, <http://snipurl.com/y716>*

## LIGHTER SIDE

### ■ Breach of contract: Price doesn't always win

A salesperson ends up in court charged with breach after one of his prospects is unhappy with the goods he received.

The judge calls both parties into his chambers.

“The reason I called both of you in here is that this is the first case I've ever been involved in where both parties have tried to bribe me.

“On the one hand, Mr. Brewer, the salesperson who is accused of breach, offered me \$10,000 to rule in his favor.

“On the other hand, Mr. Simms, the plaintiff in this case, has offered me \$15,000 to rule in his favor.”

The judge then reaches in his pocket and hands Mr. Simms a check for \$5,000.

“I've decided to call it even and decide this case based solely on the merit of each party's argument,” he says.

**Info:** [www.workjoke.com/projoke41.htm](http://www.workjoke.com/projoke41.htm)

*Sharpen your judgment...*

## THE DECISION

*(please see case on page 4)*

Yes, the company won.

The case boiled down to whether Lester could present sufficient evidence that Marcia's decision to promote Suzanne was predestined and that it was clearly based on her age and sex.

Marcia's company used Suzanne's closing rate and evidence that reinforced her role as a leader in the office to back up its claim that she was the strongest candidate for the position, regardless of age or sex.

Lester failed to make a case of reverse sex discrimination because he could not provide a shred of evidence from this or any past instance which proved a consistent pattern of

preference toward hiring or promoting women before men.

In order to prove a case of reverse discrimination, a plaintiff has to establish that the employer consistently treated similarly situated employees of a protected group differently than others. There was simply no evidence to back that up.

### **Analysis: Have clear criteria and document**

To avoid the same situation from occurring in your department, write out the qualifications necessary to apply for or be promoted into any significant position. It not only provides clear direction for you, it prevents other employees from claiming discrimination when they aren't chosen.

In addition, document any instances where jaded employees lash out. It can come in handy if the employee cries foul further down the road.

*(This case was fictionalized for dramatic effect.)*

**Reference:** *Briggs v. Potter*, U.S. Court of Appeals, Sixth Circuit, No. 05-1381, 09/15/06.

# Create self-managers: 4 ways to get the most out of every salesperson

■ Make your job easier and boost results by putting salespeople in charge

Like every great coach, you're there to help your players succeed.

Wouldn't it be great if you could train salespeople to enjoy selling more by learning how to coach themselves?

It's not as hard as it sounds. There are several opportunities in every sales cycle to allow salespeople to do the coaching for you.

Here are four of them:

## 1. Field visits

For some salespeople, having a manager along on a sales call is like having root canal work done.

But field visits are a necessary evil. They keep salespeople on their toes, and they keep you on top of where they can improve.

Here's an idea: Let the salesperson make some of the key decisions before the next field visit.

Let them decide what day you'll be accompanying them and what prospects you'll be meeting with. The salesperson can even choose someplace the two of you can have lunch afterward.

Lunch is the perfect time to go over some of the key points you want to discuss from the presentation.

## 2. The salesperson checklist

Reviews can feel like a trip to the principal's office if salespeople feel like it's an opportunity to be told what they're *not* doing right.

There's an easy fix.

Hand out a checklist two weeks before planned reviews, asking salespeople to categorically check off the areas they'd like to discuss during the review.

On your end choose three areas

where each salesperson excels. That way you can start off on a positive note, allow the salesperson to set the agenda, and cover some of your own points at the same time.

The difference is salespeople welcome the opportunity because they're pointing out their own weaknesses.

## 3. Self-assessments

Your schedule doesn't permit you to be out in the field with salespeople all the time, and it would be counterproductive to do so.

But when you see a salesperson's numbers slipping, choose a sales call and run through how

the salesperson plans on handling it beforehand.

Run through the presentation and the key points, mentioning to the salesperson you'd like them to grade their own performance after the sales call is over.

This way salespeople are conscious of the key points you want them to concentrate on, and they can work on them while feeling like you trust them to do so without you watching every step of the way.

## 4. Self-rewards

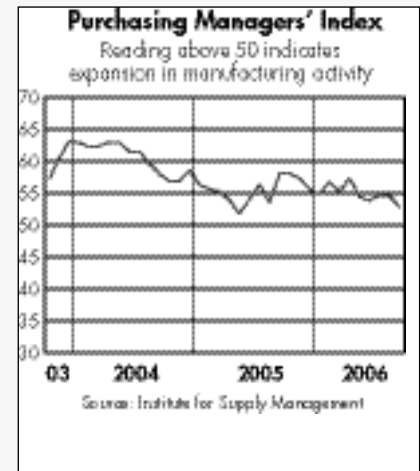
No doubt you have certain benchmarks in the office. Make it a point to let salespeople decide where you'll all go out to eat or what the reward will be if they achieve the benchmark. Doing so increases their motivation to hit the goal.

When salespeople are sufficiently motivated, numbers have a way of shooting straight up.

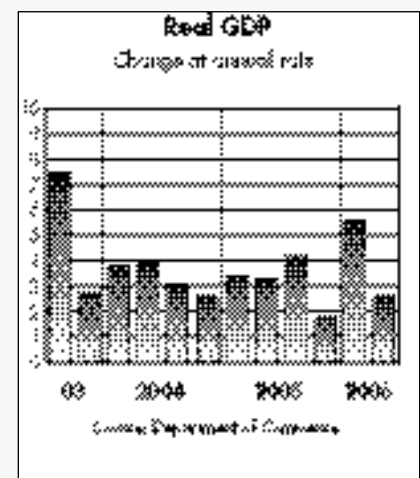
("Coaching Salespeople in the Field," [www.btsolutions.ie/Tips.asp](http://www.btsolutions.ie/Tips.asp))

MOTIVATE  
FOR  
SUCCESS

## ECONOMIC TRENDS



|                                     | % change from previous month / year ago |        |
|-------------------------------------|---|--------|
| <b>GENERAL</b>                      |   |        |
| Industrial Production               | -0.1%                                   | +4.7%  |
| Producer Price Index                |   |        |
| capital equipment                   | -0.3%                                   | +1.0%  |
| all finished goods                  | +0.1%                                   | +3.6%  |
| Durable Goods Orders                | 0.0%                                    | +4.2%  |
| Mfg. Inventories                    | +0.4%                                   | +6.5%  |
| <b>IMPORT/EXPORT</b>                |   |        |
| Import Price Index                  | -2.1%                                   | +2.0%  |
| Export Price Index                  | -0.5%                                   | +3.7%  |
| <b>PRODUCTIVITY INDEX</b> quarterly |   |        |
| Business                            | +1.5%                                   | +2.8%  |
| Manufacturing                       | +2.6%                                   | +3.7%  |
| <b>CONSTRUCTION</b>                 |   |        |
| Housing Starts                      | -6.0%                                   | -19.8% |
| <b>CONSUMER</b>                     |   |        |
| Consumer Price Index                | +0.2%                                   | +3.8%  |
| Consumer Confidence                 | +4.3%                                   | +19.4% |
| (all numbers as of 10/13/06)        |   |        |



Sales managers often find themselves in situations requiring exceptional people and management skills. In each issue, we present a challenging scenario and ask three WWSM readers how they'd handle it.

# Top two closers leave the nest: How do you compensate for the loss?

## The Management Scenario

Sales Manager Jack Hayes was doing projections for the upcoming quarter when CFO Nate Fisher showed up at his door.

"Nate, great to see you," Jack said. "What brings you over to our neck of the woods?"

"To be honest it's the same thing that brings me to any neck of the woods around here," Nate said. "We have to talk about last month's numbers, Jack."

"I figured we might be having this conversation," Jack said. "Not to make excuses, but I lost my two best closers in the course of three weeks. Their reasons for leaving were completely unrelated, but it left me with a huge gaping hole to fill.

"Not only that, but I've found that without my anchors leading the pack, the rest have dropped off a little bit too. It's just an

adjustment period."

"I'm sure it is," Nate said. "But it needs to be managed and I know you have the ability to get the job done."

"Absolutely. There are two places for me to attack, recruiting good talent and developing some of my core salespeople."

## Time to put up or shut up

"That sounds like a good place to start," Nate said. "But I'd like to see these numbers back up where they belong by next month's report."

"Agreed. I'm on it. I realize this department shouldn't rise and fall because of two people and I need to pick up the pieces and move forward. By next month, everything will be back on course."

If you were Jack, what strategies would you use to get the results back on track?

belong in the next month. Then I'd concentrate on where our best opportunities are and go after them.

**Reason:** When things are going well, you tend to just let things move on uninterrupted. When things get tough, you have to circle the wagons and consider how you get back to where you were.

## 3 Chris Huff, Sales Implementation Manager, Lexis Nexis, King of Prussia, PA

**What Chris would do:** Establish new goals and benchmarks with the sales staff, and motivate some of my better people by telling them that they're expected to be leaders out there now.

**Reason:** Turnover is inevitable. When you lose two great people at once it's bound to take a toll. But all it really means is that you need to raise the bar for everyone else and respond accordingly. It's a transition period, and it's up to you to manage it.

## INSPIRING QUOTES

Nearly all men can stand adversity, but if you want to test a man's character, give him power.

Abraham Lincoln

Keep your broken Karm inside your sleeve.

Chinese Proverb

Many people think that if they were only in some other place, or had some other job, they would be happy. Well, that is doubtful. So get as much happiness out of what you are doing as you can and don't put off being happy until some future date.

Dale Carnegie

The ones who want to achieve and win championships motivate themselves.

Mike Ditka

Things don't go wrong and break your heart so you can become bitter and give up. They happen to break you down and build you up so you can be all that you were intended to be.

Charles Jones

## Reader Responses

### 1 Nicholas Greto, Regional Sales Manager, Oakwood Worldwide, Stamford, CT

**What Nicholas would do:** You've lost two good people. The first thing you need to do is some decent recruiting. The second thing is to work with your strongest salespeople to see if they can step into the role the others played.

**Reason:** Veteran leadership is important. So is a fully-staffed sales department. You plug those two holes with good people and the rest should take care of itself. If you're a strong recruiter, you could bring in two equally strong salespeople.

### 2 Francis Brockway, Sales Manager, Indoor Galore, Blackwood, NJ

**What Francis would do:** I'd immediately do some projections to see how much more we'd need to get the numbers up where they