



# Why should I coach my sales people?

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On a recent workshop we ran with some very bright sales people one of them said:

**“ My boss would make a great coach. ”**

At which point her colleague asked,

**“ Why do you say that? ”**

To which she responded,

**“ Well, all he would need to do is take his teeth out and put seats in! ”**

Further hilarious discussion revealed that the point she was making was that her boss was good at telling her what to do most of the time. “You need to do this and I think you should be doing this”, She also said that whilst she liked her boss she didn't really learn much from him. She believed that he had her best intentions at heart, she also admired his work ethic and selling skills, however, as a manager he was a little one-dimensional!.

## Sound familiar?

If you're a sales manager reading this and the answer is yes don't worry too much as you're in the majority!

In order to address this let's refer to some research we've been conducting over the last few years. Since 2006 we've trained some 4000 sales people including sales managers. During the workshops we've asked a high % of them the following questions...

**“How many of you are coached on a regular basis by your sales manager?”**

On the average in a workshop of 10 people we'll get 3 hands up so we the ask the next question...

**“Let me define what I mean by coached regularly, your manager accompanies you on sales meetings for the purpose of observing you and offering feedback on your behaviour in the meeting, they do not participate in the selling process”. Now that I've defined it more clearly how many of you are coached?”**

At this stage on the average two hands go down leaving just one, so I ask...

**“Those of you who just put your hands down why have you changed your mind?”**

The rounded responses I get to that question in order of occurrence are:

- 1. What usually happens is my boss says he's going to accompany for the purpose of observation and feedback, however, he always ends up interrupting or quite often taking over the meeting.**

## Why would this be the case?

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- 2. **My boss never accompanies me for the sole purpose of observation feedback.**
- 3. **My boss never accompanies me full stop.**

Naturally these responses are very interesting, particularly the first one which is by far the most common. So I ask...

**“Those of you who find your boss taking over the meeting what actually happens?”**

Again the most common response is...

**“Its quite demotivating, the customer naturally gravitates to my boss and I begin to feel like a spare part... even worse when I go back to see that customer it’s difficult to get things back on an even footing”**

### Why do sales managers do this?

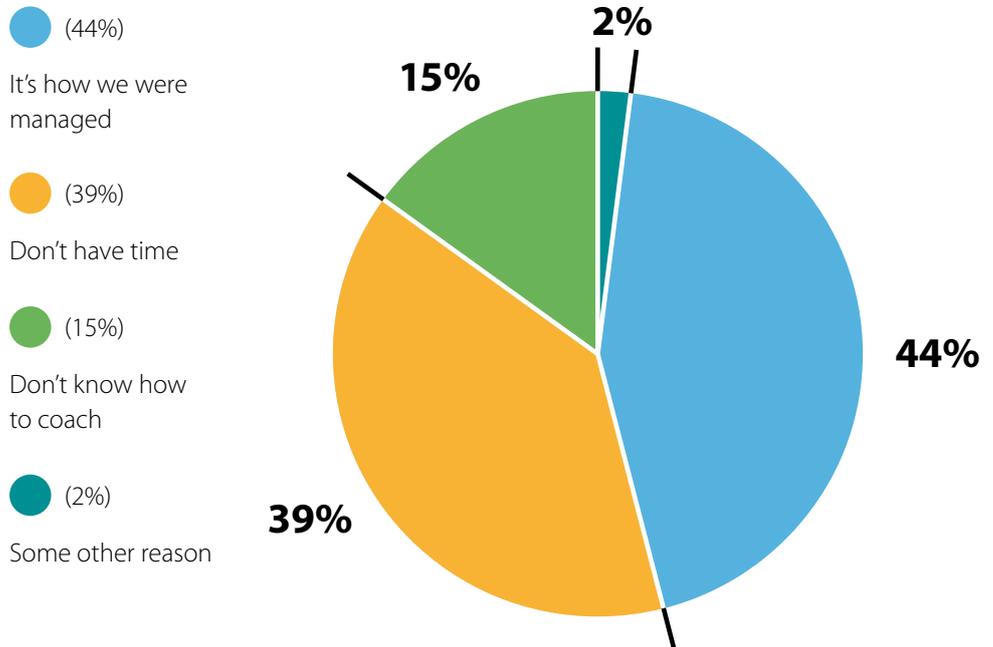
We’ve shared this research with 450 sales managers and asked that question during our sales management workshops, the common answer is...

**“That’s how we were managed, we’ve always done things this way!”**

However, whilst this answer is very interesting, in and of itself, clearly it’s not actually the real reason.

This is very curious to us at Critical Elements and we’ve done some serious research, (interviews with 400 sales managers from 27 different companies on 3 continents), to understand this. Here are the responses we received.

### Why sales managers don't coach their sales people?



**What is very significant is that none of the sales managers we interviewed thought coaching was unnecessary or a waste of time.**

## It's how we were managed.

### Anyway let's look more closely at the responses we had.

44% of sales managers believed they were recycling traditional and suboptimal behaviour without good reason. 100% of the sales managers who gave this reason said that it was something which could and should be changed, not one single sales manager argued that there was no room for change, in this respect, in their organisation.

## I don't have time to coach my sales people

During the workshops we run with sales managers we ask all participants to agree on the definition of "sales management" and here's what we usually get "Being successful, (usually but not limited to growing sales profitably), with and through the team". The team they are referring to are predominantly their direct reports and to a lesser degree also the wider support team they often rely upon for their success.

### With this definition in mind we then ask them a provocative question...

"If your job is to be successful through the human resource, (sales team), for which you are responsible and your organisation has entrusted you with doesn't it make sense to develop the capability of that team so they can be successful?"

Unsurprisingly we get a significantly high response, (100%), in the positive register, more importantly we start to observe a lot of internal reflection and light bulb moments at this time so our next question is as follows...

## "So why don't you prioritise your time accordingly?"

At this time a really interesting thing happens... Most sales managers start to rethink their response to the original question and decide that the real reason they don't coach their sales people is that they don't actually know how to do it so they focus upon the things they do know how to do such as...

- **Forecasting**
- **CRM completion**
- **Joint selling**
- **Blocking and tackling internally**
- **Attending meetings, internal and external**

The list goes on... in fact the average sales manager whom we have worked with spends 6% of their time coaching! CSO Insights a US based sales research firm estimate that the average sales person gets 2 hours per week of coaching.

**These are very concerning data points for the global sales community because; as everyone agrees there isn't a high performing team of any kind on the planet who do not have an effective coach!**

In our experience sales managers are bright motivated people who for the most part got their jobs through proving themselves as competent, reliable sales people. We don't actually know any sales managers who purposefully set out to de-motivate their sales people, yet many of them do this unwittingly on a regular basis.

All research suggests strongly that coaching has a positive impact on sales people. So we have a major disconnect here!

## How sales managers might remedy this...

It's our experience that you don't need to become an accredited coach to add real value as a sales manager; in fact in many respects this can be a disadvantage. You do however need to develop and hone some coaching skills and the good news is that many of these skills are completely transferable in to the world of sales.

### So let's start by defining what coaching is?

Myles Downey, in his excellent book, "Effective Coaching... lessons from the coaches coach" defines coaching as "the art of facilitating the development of another." This definition works for us.

### So now we know what it is let's figure out how to do it?

Lets focus upon field sales coaching – accompanying sales people on sales meetings, observing them and giving feedback. Think of this as a 3-part process:

- **Prepare**
- **Observe**
- **Feedback**

### Prepare:

We invite you to consider that there are only 2 reasons why a sales manager would visit a customer with a sales person.

1. **Get business.** This is the easy one, which all sales managers know and love. The sales manager is there to support the sales person in the meeting with the objective of advancing the sale or retaining the account. In this scenario the most important person in the meeting is the customer... comfortable so far?
2. **Coach and develop the sales person.** This is the one where sales managers get bent out of shape. The sales manager is there with the objective of developing the sales person. In this scenario the most important person in the room is the sales person. If you're a sales manager reading this just ask your self... How does that feel?

In the coaching scenario the success of the meeting will largely be determined by the preparation that's done beforehand so try not to do the prep whilst you're in the customers reception waiting to be received!

### So what do you need to prepare?

Most importantly the sales person should advise the sales manager of the outcome they are planning to achieve from the meeting, why are we here in the first instance? Meeting outcomes fall into to 2 buckets, (please see our paper on meeting outcomes for more information).

1. **Information:** what information the sales person wants to get from the customer.
2. **Decisions:** what decisions/commitments the sales person wants to get from the customer.

This is important as it forms a simple agenda for the feedback session after the meeting.

The next part of the preparation is for the sales person to brief the sales manager on background and current situation, this might sound obvious though you probably wouldn't be surprised to learn that many sales managers have had challenging experiences in joint meetings because they weren't fully briefed by the sales person. It's equally important in the coaching scenario, as the sales manager will be making a minimal contribution to the meeting so if he spends all his time trying to figure out what's going on it renders the meeting useless for the purpose of coaching.

The objective of the coaching meeting is to let the sales manager observe the sales person doing their thing so the preparation phase should provide for this.

We at Critical Elements train and coach sales managers every week and regular feedback we get is that the singularly most difficult thing for them to do is observe a sales person without interrupting, all of the Critical Elements management coaches are highly experienced sales managers in their own right so we understand and empathise with the challenge, we get it, so it's helpful to ensure that your preparation provides for an effective observation. With this in mind we invite you to consider when, if at all, it is necessary to interject in the meeting?

### **We suggest there are only 2 reasons:**

- a) The sales person is about to commit your organisation to something that you cannot possibly deliver upon.
- b) The sales person becomes so uncomfortable that the meeting is heading in a direction that will be irrecoverable.

### **We invite you to agree 3 signals with the sales person before the meeting.**

1. One signal tells the sales person that you the sales manager are about to take over this meeting temporarily and the sales person MUST respect this and allow you to do so.
2. Another advises the sales person that you are handing control of the meeting back to the sales person.
3. A signal for the sales person to invite the sales manager to step in and take temporary control of the meeting, again the sales manager must respect this and allow the sales person to do so.

This may sound complicated, however in practise all of the sales managers we work with are relieved to have a process for managing challenging sales meetings seamlessly.

### **Observation... how does this work?**

I'm going to invite you to consider the following sporting metaphor to try and explain why observing sales people doing their job is absolutely critical.

Imagine that you were a fly on the wall during the half time team talk at a soccer match. Make it as real as you like by imagining this takes place at your favourite team. All the players walk in to the dressing room and sit down to listen to the manager/coach's half time team talk.

#### **At this time the team are losing 2:0 so the manager says to the team:**

“ Well lads you're 2:0 down... you need to get back out there and score at least 3 goals without conceding anymore... This is actually the 3rd time this season that you've been in this position and you've pulled it back so I know you can do it... with the right attitude, some hard work, discipline and a couple of refereeing decisions going your way you'll do

it you... I just don't understand why you let yourselves get in this position in the first place so often... especially against such inferior opposition... pause... What about you guys with recovering injuries anything I need to know about so I can get the bench warmed up? No... OK good stuff... get back out there and make the fans proud! ”

#### **At this point the team Captain says to the manager...**

“ Boss, just before we get back out there, based on what you saw us doing in the first half what should we be doing different in the 2nd half that's going to give us the result we need? ”

#### **The manager replies...**

“ I didn't actually see the 1st half son as I needed to attend an important meeting with the Chairman... just go out there get your heads down and do what we just agreed and you'll be fine! ”

What do you think the impact of this might be on the team as they left the dressing room?

#### **If your answer to this question is any thing other than “demotivation” please call the Critical Elements office immediately!**

We invite you to consider the similarities with your world when a sales manager has a review meeting with a sales person?

#### **Sales people tend to know WHAT to do, it's the HOW to do that they need help with!**

As management professionals we know that behaviour drives results, if you want to change your sales results then you will help yourself by changing the relevant behaviour of your sales team and it's very difficult to change behaviour which you have no knowledge of because you don't watch the first half!

Perhaps the most successful soccer coach in history, Sir Alex Ferguson learned the value of observation early in his career. He delegated managing practices to assistant coaches so he could simply watch and observe what was going on with each individual player on the training ground. He said, “I don't think many people fully understand the value of observing.” *Sir Alex Ferguson's 8 Tenets of Successful Leadership. HBR.*

What I'm going to suggest next will be anathema to many sales managers, however, please stick with it and you will see the relevance. If your sales person makes some mistakes in a meeting that you are observing please resist the temptation to dive in and take over, if they make mistakes whilst you're with them, they'll undoubtedly make the same mistakes when you're not with them, the only difference is that you won't know about it.

The challenge here is to pull the observation off, seamlessly, without the customer being aware that it's an observation. I know that some sales managers like the noble idea that explaining to the customer the reason they're being so quiet is because they are actually coaching the sales person. This is not a view we subscribe to, it might meet the needs of the sales manager but it doesn't meet anyone else's needs and in fact it can result in a false meeting... so let's just figure out how to make it as authentic and real as possible so we can totally optimise the opportunity.

We invite the sales manager to introduce themselves as whoever they are, we do not recommend that you introduce your self as a colleague or some other mythical figure, just

### **OK... enough of the metaphors how do I do it?**

be honest please as there is enough spin and BS in the world without adding to it and your customers will appreciate the honesty.

We understand why introducing your self as a colleague and withholding your own identity has appeal for some managers, however, its our experience that the customer will probably find out at some point that you are in fact a more senior life form so let's just fess up at the beginning instead of leaving the customer wondering why you didn't!

Ok, so now you've revealed your true identity there is of course the risk that the customer will want to address and engage with you in preference to the more junior team member who hitherto has been known as sales person. At the beginning of the meeting it's obviously important to observe social etiquette and the length of time spent on these niceties will largely be affected by the personality types in the room, (see our paper on personality profile for more on this), however, it is the sales persons job to manage this and it's helpful if the sales manager facilitates a smooth transition to the business conversation, this may well involve leaving your sales managers ego at the entrance to the premises.

At this point we invite you to use your interpersonal skills to deflect any question or address which is made to you directly by the customer, for example if the customer asks the sales manager "So I have a question about the recent price increases you advised us of", a simple "I understand completely why that's a priority for you, however, the best person to deal with that is my colleague sales person, (please use your body language to defer to the sales persons authority as you do this), after all they are the person we entrust with your account", this will not come as a surprise to the sales person as you will have discussed it in the Preparation phase discussed earlier. The sales person will then pick it up and run with it.

One of the questions we often get asked by sales managers is... "What happens if we think the sales person is about to lose a deal, should we step in and save the day?" This is where it gets very difficult for sales managers because our recommendation is that you let the sales person continue unsupported, DO NOT step in and try to save the day. There it is... I've said it... please don't stop reading and hope I suffer from some interminable affliction that stops me writing nonsense like this!

**In our experience one of 2 things often happens:**

1. The sales person will end up closing the sale, they will just do it differently to you.
2. The sales person will indeed lose the sale.

**Let's look at these two outcomes:**

**1. The sales person closes the sales doing it differently than you would...**

In this scenario it may well be the case that your experience can be leveraged to coach them and develop skills which gives them different options for handling situations like this.

What would have happened if you had interjected at the time you thought the sales person had blown it?

- a. You may have closed the sale though the sales person probably would not thank you for it.
- b. You may have lost the sale in which case your sales person would never forgive you and they might just tell some of their colleagues about it possibly damaging your brand.

## 2. The sales person loses the sale...

This will be as a result of the sales person either doing something they shouldn't have done or not doing something they should have done in either case you can guarantee they'll be recycling this behaviour regularly and you are not aware of it. So, whilst you may have lost a deal on this occasion you now have something significant to coach them on that will prevent further deals being lost.

At this point I want to make a significant point. Some sales managers find it almost ridiculous that they should let the sales person fail in the meeting just so they can coach them... this is because they are thinking like sales people, when in fact they should be thinking like sales managers!

Referring back to my soccer-coaching example earlier, there are no player managers in any successful sporting leagues... why do you think that is? The answer is it doesn't work! When was the last time you saw a coach run onto the field of play and take the free kick or penalty? We can all learn a lot from the world of sport when it comes to managing sales people.

We've already agreed that the main purpose of sales management is to be successful through the team... its going to be very difficult to do this if the sales manager runs around trying to close everyone's deals.

It is of course important that the sales manager does support the sales person in deal closing or account retention, this, as we stated earlier, is a Scenario 1 accompaniment. We're talking about Scenario 2 here which is all about developing the sales person. Of course it makes no sense for a large deal to be lost because the sales person didn't have the skills to close and the sales manager allowed them to fail for the purpose of coaching, so lets agree that when we arrange joint visits for the purpose of coaching that we focus upon low value/risk opportunities?

Before we move on to the feedback phase I want to address the issue of why some sales managers find it so challenging to simply observe a meeting as opposed to participating. In order to give this issue the respect it deserves I think we need to consider personal paradigms.

## What's a personal paradigm?

**"A set of assumptions, concepts, values, and practices that define who you are"**

Many sales managers have sales behaviour ingrained in their DNA. They became who they are, in the professional sense, through spending years in sales environments with like-minded people. Exposed to sales cultures, training, leadership, language and most importantly good old metrics that reinforce their behaviour. They acquire their personal paradigms through osmosis and the more successful they are as sales people the stronger the paradigm!

**If you want to know how someone will behave... have a look at how they're measured, (please see our article on KPI's for more on this).**

As we said earlier most sales managers win their promotion on the basis of sales prowess because they operate in a meritocracy, (this is of course changing), so from the sales managers perspective it makes sense to recycle the behaviour that they believe made them successful; which is why letting a deal slip, even a small one, is so challenging. The remedy here is to ensure that the sales manager becomes exposed to appropriate concepts, values, practises, coaching culture and measures that reflect his current role and not his previous one. This is known as Sales Leadership, (please see our paper on this).

So the challenge for the sales manager in the coaching context is an emotional one not an intellectual one. The good news here is that these behaviours and skills can be coached into the sales manager.

## Feedback

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OK... we've covered the Preparation and the Observation pieces, now lets look at Feedback. Feedback could be defined as "Information about reactions to a persons performance of a task which is used as a basis for improvement." So the purpose of the feedback is to develop the sales persons capability, everything we've done so far has been so we can offer meaningful feedback. Some coaches would argue that the feedback piece is the most important; to use our earlier sporting metaphors this is where the game is often won... and more often lost. In order to make sure that this really resonates we're going to take a quick look at how behaviour in people is actually changed. Even psychologists agree on this so it must be true! In order for behaviour change to take place in people there needs to be a convergence of 3 things, we call these the critical elements of sales capability.

1. **Knowledge** The sales person needs to know WHAT to change
2. **Skills** The sales person needs to know HOW to change
3. **Motivation** The sales person needs to WANT to change

**Lets go through these in turn.**

## Knowledge

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Knowledge... in our experience most sales people actually know what to do to be effective. When you interview sales people for a position they're usually able to describe the selling process effectively. However, there is a Universe of difference between knowing WHAT to do and knowing HOW to do it so its often skills which are missing and preventing optimum performance. We're going to come back to skills a little later so lets move on to Motivation, (see our article on Motivation). This is a powerful concept. It's much discussed though in our experience not very well understood. Of the 3 elements we describe this has the most significant impact on the amount change which takes place and a sales managers ability and success in motivating their sales people is impacted enormously by how they provide feedback to the sales person during coaching!

**We're going to look at 2 kinds of feedback:**

1. **Directive**
2. **Non Directive**

## Directive

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Directive feedback does what its name suggests so the sales manager who employs a directive style will tell the sales person what they need to start or stop doing. This can be very effective when the sales person doesn't have a clue where they're going wrong or what they need to change, however, as we pointed out earlier most sales people do know where they're going wrong...

**So what is the likely impact on a sales person who does have a strong sense of what they need to be doing differently and they have a boss who just tells them what they think the should be doing differently?**

**There is a risk that the sales manager becomes perceived as the sales manager in our opening paragraph on page 1 and the sales person becomes demotivated and in some circumstances irritated... so clearly the chance of any behaviour change taking place is unlikely because the most important of 3 elements is missing...**

I said earlier that Directive feedback can be very effective, though only when the sales person is genuinely having difficulty understanding where they need to improve, so which sales people fall into this category? Normally its new hires who are new to sales or newly promoted sales people. It can also be sales people who are transitioning into a different market or domain. Please consider the following questions:

- Of the sales people that report to you what % fall into this category?
- What % of your time is spent communicating in a directive style?

The way that this would play out in a coaching scenario is that after the meeting the sales manager would sit down with the sales person and based upon their observation give the sales person their views. The discussion usually starts with:

**Sales manager:** "So how do you think that went"? – (89% of sales managers start a feedback session with this question).

It might continue like this...

**Sales person:** "Yeah I think it went ok... comment... comment... how did you think it went"?

**Sales manager:** "I think you need to..."

For the next 10 days every time you find your self starting a statement with the words, **"You need to"** please make a note and count them up! Also, each time someone who is talking to you starts a statement with these words count them up.

The sales manager has now adopted a Directive style and whilst the sales person may agree with the suggestions the likelihood that they will implement them is less than 50% because they have not been invited into the decision making process!

Does any of this feel familiar? Don't worry if it does... most sales managers use a directive style with most sales people most of the time!

## Why is this relevant?

Several reasons... Firstly, depending upon the personality profile of the sales person, when you start a statement with an instruction, "you need to", the sales person won't hear the rest of the statement. The Dominant personality seeks to control their environment; an instruction can be perceived as an indication that the sales manager wants to be in control, this is often not actually the case however perception is reality. If the sales manager adopts this style regularly when with the sales person it can be quite demotivating for the salesperson and repetitive for the sales manager.

Secondly, when someone is being told what to do the process of stimulating internal reflection is bypassed; there is a risk that the sales person does not "feel" the need to change.

Thirdly and most importantly, we live in the age of the knowledge society, the management styles, (see our paper on management styles), that developed during the industrial revolution are largely redundant today. Bright, smart sales people prefer to be engaged in a process of discussion, consultation and agreement with respect to their own development, this is far more motivational than being told what to do all the time and actually far more interesting for the sales manager after all who wants a team of sales people who need to be told what to do all the time?

## Non-Directive

OK so no prizes for guessing this one. This is where the sales manager will invite the sales person to think through what took place in the meeting and offer their own ideas on WHAT and HOW to change before offering their own guidance.

The following is a transcript from a session one of our clients held with their sales person:



**Sales manager:** "OK, so during the preparation discussion what Outcomes where you planning to achieve from this meeting"? (Note: the sales manager does not start the discussion by asking the sales person how they thought the call went... in fact we recommend that you never start a feedback session with that question).



**Sales person:** "Well since it was the first time I met this lady my plan was to learn how she will be evaluating our product and what her involvement is in the decision making process, (please refer to our paper on Criteria, Process and Team), and start to build her into the Influence Map,"(please refer to our paper on Influence Maps).



**Sales manager:** "They sound like information seeking outcomes, remind me what decision seeking outcomes did you have"?



**Sales person:** "Didn't have any, this meeting was all about discovery."



**Sales manager:** "Fair enough, what did you discover about how she's going to evaluate the product?"



**Sales person:** "I thought that she was very helpful and straightforward, for her its all about functionality and customisation, she's been happy with the incumbent solution she's using though recent upgrades have resulted in some loss of customisation and that's been extending the time to do some of the searches she does."



**Sales manager:** "That's what I heard too, what do you think the impact of these extended searches is on her day to day work flow?"



**Sales person:** "I never got to that."



**Sales manager:** "Why... what happened to prevent you?"



**Sales person:** "She talked a lot about the functionality of the existing system, she clearly knows her stuff on that."



**Sales manager:** "OK... and then what happened?"



**Sales person:** "She got so wrapped up in the functionality it was impossible to get her back on topic... I didn't want to interrupt her, she was on a roll and I was waiting for her to draw breath, so I could interject, I haven't heard a woman talk that long without drawing breath since Margaret Thatcher, ha... ha!"



**Sales manager:** "OK keep going... so then what happened?"



**Sales person:** "I was getting a little anxious as we were running out of time, so that's when I said I was conscious of the fact that we only had an hour and would she mind if we talked about how projects like this get funded, it felt a little awkward and I noticed she seemed a bit put out by that but at least we got the buying process out."



**Sales manager:** "Yes it was quite amusing, I could feel your tension... I thought you did well it was awkward for a moment but I think you pulled it off... so what is the buying process?"



**Sales person:** "They evaluate certain vendors, 5 I think, a beauty parade, for suitability to go forward for an RFP invite. Then the RFP's are considered and a shortlist is drawn up. Shortlisted vendors are then given free rein to talk to users, IT, project managers etc., though actually she did mention a consultant."



**Sales manager:** "What did she say about the consultant?"



**Sales person:** "Not much only that they've decided to retain one this time on this project... I didn't follow up on that thread as she seemed more interested to talk about the amount of people that she felt were involved, she seemed in disagreement about it, she definitely said there is a risk of too many cooks being involved."



**Sales manager:** "OK so then what happened?"



**Sales person:** "We wrapped it up... or I should say she wrapped it, had a 12:00 o'clock to prepare for."



**Sales manager:** "OK so summarise it for me."



**Sales person:** "I think she's an Influencer who wants a new system that gives her more customisation and a more user friendly, quicker interface. She's concerned that the research analysis and reports she does are taking longer, not just her but her colleagues and these are the largest community of users, 21 in total on her side plus 12 in client services. She's unhappy at the level of investment the incumbent have made in product development and she implied they've become complacent. This view has reached critical mass and they are now gearing up for a market review of what's out there. They're considering 5 potential vendors and we know who 2 of them are, the incumbent and us. If we get past RFP we get to meet the key stakeholders for a deep dive."



**Sales manager:** "OK good... what else?"



**Sales person:** "I think we have a ton of work to do."



**Sales manager:** "For example?"



**Sales person:** "We need to get on the shortlist."



**Sales manager:** "How you gonna do that?"



**Sales person:** "I need to find out about the consultant and who else will be involved in that decision."



**Sales manager:** "What else?"



**Sales person:** "Timescales."



**Sales manager:** "What else,"



**Sales person:** "I think that's plenty to be getting on with for now?"



**Sales manager:** "OK, I have some thoughts..."

1. Firstly I think your summary and actions are spot on and necessary. You definitely connected from a rapport perspective with her though I also think you missed an opportunity to get an introduction to some of the key stakeholders now. You're going to have to meet with them to make sure you get past the RFP and she clearly knows her stuff as you say so I think you were light on your objectives, you could have fast tracked it by asking her to introduce you to some of them.

2. We still don't know how they're going to fund it, this question was never asked and will be a key factor in how well you qualify it and track it through the pipe.

3. It's clear she and her colleagues are not happy about the amount of time they're now spending on research as a result of the system upgrades, however, you could have dug a little deeper to quantify how much time and what the value of that time is.

4. Finally, whilst you discovered the decision making process you still don't know who will make the decision which means you have a significant amount of work to do on your influence map.

So I think it was a very worthwhile meeting... a good investment of both our time and thank you for inviting me. 33 users will be a significant deal if you pull it off.

Thoughts?"



**Sales person:** "OK that's fair though I think it might have been a stretch to do it all in the time we had though I accept I could have done better with my questioning and particularly my listening skills... I need to work on them and I've got a tele-coaching session coming up with Don at Critical Elements next week he can help me with that. I'll call her this afternoon saying I had some afterthoughts that I wanted to check/follow up on and see if I can get an intro; worth a shot as I think we did get along well. I'll give it some thought in the next 24 hours then email my plan to you. Are you up for coming along if I can get to see these guys?"



**Sales manager:** "Yes... Sounds good... decide what you want me to do though, am I coaching or co selling? Think about it and let me know. In fact thinking about it my preference at this stage would be to coach again specifically observing your Q&L skills as you say and focusing on Commitment seeking outcomes as well as Information seeking so I can give you some more feedback."

This whole session has a richness to it that's rarely seen when Directive coaching is overused. The sales person is involved the whole way through and doesn't feel threatened or guilty. There is a series of actions agreed which are both skills oriented and customer / opportunity oriented making it much more productive with the sales person motivated to improve.

**This is why you should coach your sales people!**



Steve Gough, Managing Director of Critical Elements Limited a specialist sales capability consultancy, is an acknowledged authority on sales behaviour and regularly consults, trains and coaches FTSE 100 & Fortune 500 Companies.