

Motivating the salespeople

Motivation is goal-directed behaviour, underlying the certain needs or desires. In business, motivation is used as a synonym for productivity. Specifically, as applied to sales personnel, motivation is the amount of effort the salesperson desires to expend on the activities associated with the sales job, such as calling on potential accounts, planning sales presentations, and filling out reports. Expending effort on each activity making up the sales job leads to some level of achievement on one or more dimensions of job performance, which includes total sales volume, profitability, sales to new accounts, quota attainment, and the like. A sales person is motivated if job performance exceeds the level expected by the firm.

Who wants what from motivation?

The person

- Health and well-being
- Safety/order
- Social affiliation/acceptance
- Recognition and rewards (extrinsic/intrinsic, stimulus and incentive)
- Feelings of self-worth/value
- Realisation of personal aspirations/expectations
- Equity
- Power
- Affiliation

The employer

- Economic efficiency
- Better performance
- Retention
- Loyalty and commitment
- Formation of membership culture
- Empowerment
- Instilling the sense of obligation to duty, participation and contribution
- Better work and team design

Motivation is a term originally derived from the Latin word *mover* which means to 'move', but has been expanded to include the various factors by which human behaviour is activated. In any discussion about the motivation of salespeople, the following questions need to be answered:

1. What affects salesperson's behaviour?
2. What influences the intensity of behaviour?
3. What directs the person's behaviour?
4. How is the behaviour maintained over time?

A sales manager seeks to influence salespeople to do certain activities, to work hard to reach activity goals and to do so over the long haul and not occasionally.

Why salespeople need motivation?

Most sales personnel require motivation to reach and maintain acceptable performance levels. They require motivation as individuals and as group members. As individuals, they are targets for personalized motivational efforts by their superiors. As members of the sales force they are targets for sales management efforts aimed toward welding them into an effective selling team. Four

aspects of the salesperson's job affect the quality of its performance. The following points illustrate why sales personnel require additional motivation.

i) Inherent nature of the sales job

- Salesman meets many prospects some of whom are difficult to deal with
- Competition is high because many compete for the same business and they meet numerous turndowns
- Targets are set high by superiors
- Sales people spend considerable time away from home

These conditions cause salespersons to become discouraged, to achieve low performance levels, or even to seek non-selling positions. The inherent nature of the sales job, then, is the first reason that additional motivation is required.

ii) Salesperson's role conflicts

The salesperson must try to satisfy the expectations of people both within the company in the sales department and elsewhere and also in customer organisations. There is linkage with four groups:

- (1) Sales management
- (2) The company organisation that handles order fulfilment
- (3) The customers, and
- (4) Other company sales personnel

Each of the above groups imposes certain behavioural expectations on the salesperson, but while playing these different roles, the salesperson faces role conflicts. But experienced sales personnel perceive significantly less role conflict compared to less or inexperienced ones. This suggests that a salesperson's perceptions of and ability to cope with, role conflict are influenced not only by experienced but by the effectiveness, of sales training. It also suggests that those who become experienced sales personnel may cope better with role conflict than those leaving the sales

organisation earlier. So improving sales training effectiveness and revising selection criteria are two roads to reducing, the impact of role conflict on sales force morale.

iii) Tendency toward apathy

Those who, year after year, cover the same territory and virtually the same customers, lose interest and enthusiasm. Gradually their sales calls degenerate into routine order taking. Because they know the customers so well, they believe that good salesmanship is no longer necessary. They fail to recognise that friendship in no way obviates the necessity for creative selling and that most customers do not sell themselves on new products and applications. Many salespeople require additional motivation to maintain continuing enthusiasm to generate renewed interest in their work.

iv) Maintaining a feeling of group identity

The salesperson, working alone, finds it difficult to develop and maintain a feeling of group identity with other company salespeople. Thus, the contagious enthusiasm conducive to improving the entire group's performance does not develop. If sales management, through providing added motivation, succeeds in developing and maintaining team spirit, individual sales personnel strive to meet group performance standards. Few people who consider themselves members of the sales team want to appear as poor performers in the eyes of their colleagues. Providing the kind of working atmosphere in which all members of the sales force feel they are participating in a cooperative endeavour is not easy-nevertheless, effective sales management works continuously to achieve and maintain it.

How salespeople can be motivated?

Three elements affecting motivation can be found within the organisational environment, which are:

- i) The individual salesperson
- ii) The sales job

iii) The organisation environment

i) Individual salesperson: The unique needs of each individual salesperson are:

- Positive reinforcement
- Once financial security is met, appeal to other needs
- If time restraints make it impossible for the sales manager to learn and respond to the needs of each salesperson, then segment the sales force in clusters
- Once the desired level of income has been reached, salespeople typically strive to satisfy such needs as status, prestige, recognition, the need to win, and opportunity to serve, and the respect and affection of management and peers

In order to motivate individual salesperson, the management needs to:

- Train the salespeople to be professionals
- Provide the incentives necessary for salespeople to want to do their best
- Sales management should be cognizant of the motivational value of personal visits, personal phone calls and letter, and small, intimate sales meetings
- Sales management should provide rewards that are:
 - Simple
 - Immediate
 - Frequent
 - Related to the special act

ii) The sales job: The sales job itself should satisfy the following:

- Explanation of the job requirements and expectations
- Sufficient product information

- Communication
- Helping each salesperson set reasonable goals and design plans to attain those goals, and provide feedback
- Positions should be challenging, have some authority, and provide some freedom
- Recognition of the frequent adversities faced by the salesperson
- Prevention of job dissatisfaction by providing a fair basic compensation plan, helpful and constructive supervision, acceptable fringe benefits, and job security

iii) The organisation environment: The organisational environment and working atmosphere should conform to the following:

- Interpersonal relations
- Company policies and administration
- Type of supervision
- Salary and other monetary benefits
- Job security
- Responsibility
- Opportunities for advancement and growth
- Generation of a participative environment
- Maintenance of an open, constructive, and relaxed environment where trust, faith, and fairness are openly practiced
- Clear communication regarding the relationship between performance and recognition
- Facilitating personal development by instilling the virtues of successful salespeople, which are:
 - Positive attitude
 - Personal goals

- Time organisation
- Enthusiasm

In addition to the above-mentioned factors, the management should also think of implementing 3 non- monetary motivation tools, which are:

- Recognition: It includes the praise or acknowledgement that a salesperson should receive for his or her job. It can involve the following:
 - Recognition in public by everyone
 - Documentation of the recognition
 - Involvement of top management
 - Personification
 - No use of negative recognition
 - Putting the winner in the centre
- Awards: These are the physical evidences that the receiver can take home and show friends, family, and peers, which could be as below:
 - Personal gift
 - Suitable for the occasion
 - Distinctive
 - Honorary job titles
 - Attractive holiday package or consumer durable goods
- Special communications: These may include the following:
 - Individual letters
 - Special telephone calls

- Newsletters
 - ✓ Pictures of the top salespeople
 - ✓ Spot for award recognition
 - ✓ Articles or news features about special efforts made



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