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# theSales Performance Journal

VOLUME 5 - ISSUE 2

**The Future of  
Sales Management**



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The Sales Performance Company

# the Sales Performance Journal

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**The Miller Heiman Sales Performance Journal, Volume 5, Issue 2**

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Miller Heiman, Inc.  
10509 Professional Circle, Suite 100  
Reno, NV 89521  
(800) 526-6400  
[www.millerheiman.com](http://www.millerheiman.com)

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President & CEO, Miller Heiman: Sam Reese  
Chief Marketing Officer: Elizabeth Vanneste  
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When I was a runner, the tougher my competition was, the more my coach pushed me to perform better. He knew that getting me to buckle down and focus on building muscle memory and endurance was the best way to secure a win.

In the sales arena, that coaching task falls to sales managers who need their salespeople to step up and perform under serious pressure. This issue of the *Sales Performance Journal* explores how this pivotal role has evolved, requiring new tactics and a paradigm shift to enable salespeople to win.

In “*Be the Change You Wish to See*”, catch three can’t-miss lessons that play a big part in enabling sales leaders to successfully implement change in their organization. You’ll find critical areas where sales managers can maximize their limited coaching time to have the greatest impact on sales results in “*The New Guard: Tomorrow’s Sales Manager*.” This edition also includes, “*In Sync with Customers: The People, not the Data*,” which details how managers can use specific communication styles to better connect with their reps and help salespeople build stronger customer relationships.

Sales managers have always had a tough job, but it just got tougher.

Regards,



Sam Reese  
President & CEO, Miller Heiman, Inc.

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## The Future of Sales Management

### **2** **The New Guard: Developing Tomorrow’s Sales Manager**

With the stakes higher than ever, sales managers are pondering how to maximize their already limited time to impact results where it counts. It’s time for a new style of management - and a new mantra – to move the results needle.

### **8** **Be the Change You Wish to See: The Role of Senior Leadership in Making Change Stick**

Today’s companies only get one shot when implementing change that will affect results. Mitigate risk and improve adoption with three critical leadership lessons that will ensure behavioral change “sticks” within the organization.

### **11** **In Sync with Customers: The People, Not the Data**

What if you could enable salespeople to better influence the outcome of a sale? Tap into communication styles that help salespeople better connect with customers and provide sales managers with the skills to coach with greater efficiency.



# The New Guard: Tomorrow's Sales Manager

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All individuals within a sales organization work to achieve the company's big-ticket goals. They all have a significant stake in the outcome. But overseeing the day-to-day execution falls to sales managers, who are finding they need to evolve their strategies to pull the figurative rabbit of results out of their hats.

Andrew Hepburn, vice president of business development and diligent services at international healthcare solutions provider ArjoHuntleigh, Inc., recognizes that managers have to be more than just managers today. "They need to have a greater stake in their team's sales success," says Hepburn. "The management mentality of 'let's just put [sales reps] in the field and see how they do' – a wait and see sort of approach – is no longer acceptable," he says.

Sales managers, he comments, must be more than just metrics keepers. They must stay closer to the team's

execution of sales processes to make an impact on results. This line of thinking reigned during the company's recent effort to transform its own sales process. ArjoHuntleigh recognized the increasing pivotal role sales managers play in process adoption and subsequent sales growth and therefore focused their transformation effort first on educating their management team on the new initiative.

"The management team needs to spend some time thinking about the type of coaching their salespeople will respond to," says Hepburn. "All their actions need to enable the sales force to obtain goals, whether they be financial or personal."

Hepburn attributes much of the organization's recent success, despite the challenges of last year's economy, to the sales management team. But as celebrated and recognized for their contributions as they are, Hepburn



notes his company still expects more from its managers. The pressure hasn't lifted, despite pinched resources. "Sales managers can't let up on the type of activities he or she has performed up until this point," says Hepburn. "There's a higher expectation of sales performance handed down from senior leadership."

Sales leaders are in equally uncomfortable positions. They're watching business dynamics change and are questioning whether their sales force is properly equipped to adapt:

- Are salespeople equipped to sell more complex products?
- Are they poised to transition from a transactional sale to a complex sale?
- Are they recognizing when to position comprehensive solutions, instead of settling with single transactions?
- Are sales managers instigating and enabling behavioral change?

A fast pace that doesn't produce results is a sales manager's cue to reassess current sales activities. But the prospect of applying the brakes can be daunting. Executive vice president of sales operations for Miller Heiman, Leigh Hooker, admits that while it's difficult for a sales manager to ignore the urgent fires at their doorstep, they've got to think critically about where to invest their limited time.

"If record-breaking speed isn't delivering proper results, you've got to take a step back and think through where to make an impact," says Hooker.

More important than frequent coaching is the right coaching – meaning to focus coaching on areas where a specific rep is having challenges as opposed to what a manager assumes the challenges to be. This requires dialog that gets very specific. To prioritize who to connect with, Hooker advises investing coaching time in top performers first as they have a greater ability to quickly turn coaching into results. Recognize the topics that will help those individuals improve and engage in constructive dialog.

**"If record-breaking speed isn't delivering proper results, you've got to take a step back and think through where to make an impact."**

It's up to the management team to answer these questions via results, making their ability to influence even more crucial. Their guidance enables sales teams to recognize shifts in customer concepts, which opportunities to pursue, and the full solution that should be presented to a client.

### **The New Cue to Reassess Activities**

Many companies are working at break-neck speed to produce sales, but while operating at a hundred miles an hour may generate a few quick returns, it isn't sustainable, nor is it efficient. Today's sales managers need to determine the pace at which their company is operating.

"The most unproductive coaching conversations are ones that lack specificity," she says. "[Those conversations] will never change behavior. If you don't think a salesperson's close ratio is good enough, questions like 'why aren't you closing more business,' or 'what do you think happened,' won't do anything. Managers need to use one-on-one sessions to really drill down on the specifics of a real deal and review the salesperson's actions, their customers' actions, and the results [salespeople] are seeing."

Hooker remarks that managers need to find the coaching opportunities that will advance changes in behavior.

Derogatory comments that blatantly point out a rep's shortcomings don't help. "Talk tracks should be aligned more on detailed steps they took, like 'Tell me what activities you did. What letter or communications did you send, what was your business reason for connecting with a customer, who did you speak to, what outcome did your actions have?'"

Answers to these questions shed light on specific areas the manager can work with the rep on to change behavior and positively affect results.

### The New Skill to Coach For

"Everyone's working with reduced resources," says Hooker. She points out that one of the most critical areas managers need to coach on is the idea that reps must be working on the right deals and explore the full potential of the opportunity. Is the team both well-equipped to qualify opportunities and assess the full breadth of possible solutions?

Says Hepburn, "Business is out there, but it's profitable business you need." Two significant coaching opportunities exist for optimizing qualification and deal scope:

**1. Coaching for Qualification:** Sales managers need to learn to be alright with the notion of losing deals fast, and relay the same notion to their teams. "You've got to feel comfortable walking away from opportunities that aren't a fit for the organization, or those that aren't likely to close," says Hooker. This type of judgment call is difficult for salespeople to make, but also difficult for the manager to advocate, as quotas hang above both parties' heads.

**2. Coaching for Deal Profitability:** It's tempting for reps to quickly size up a customer's need and determine the solution that will be a good fit. But is it comprehensive? Managers need to coach salespeople to fight the urge to figuratively ring a customer up before taking time to

explore their whole concept. Reps who look at all the client's challenges and goals can offer a more robust solution that provides better results to the customer and contributes more to the top-line.

Hepburn notes that setting time aside to coach salespeople, constructively, instead of reporting numbers on a weekly conference call, contributes to better development of these capabilities. "Sales managers need to direct [salespeople's] focus. Sit down with them and be their success planner. Show them how they're going to make the money. If you're not helping them manage their plan, they could get lost."

While it's unrealistic for managers to guide reps through every sale and every activity, too much distance is detrimental. As Hepburn notes, salespeople might choose the easier path and cut corners when managers play too little of a role. It's a balance the new sales manager has to achieve quickly, but there are several things managers can leverage:

- **The Sales Funnel.** The sales funnel has more than one function. It provides clarity into revenue predictability for executives and clarity on where managers can begin one-on-one discussions. "From looking at the funnel, sales managers can identify where there might be problems in achieving results," says Hooker. They can identify what areas of the funnel could be atrophied and what areas might be clogged to hone in on what is causing those issues.
- **Top Performers.** "Who are you investing your time with?" asks Hooker, mentioning that managers often get caught up in coaching bottom performers and miss the opportunity to better leverage top performers. Focusing coaching time on this group and securing resources for them enables them to have a greater effect on sales growth. In addition,



top performers can lift the burden off managers by leading other sales reps by example, percolating best practices throughout the sales team.

- **Deal Reviews.** Managers can use opportunity reviews to proactively nip negative or non-relevant activities in the bud. Hooker recommends looking at a salesperson's most critical opportunity (another way to prioritize where to spend effort) to learn details such as the rep's strategy, and what proof they have from customers that the sale is progressing.
- **Loss Reviews.** Today's companies can't seem to move away from lost sales fast enough, but even though revenue wasn't won, there is still value in the opportunity. "Uncovering where salespeople are and are not being successful helps identify where they are struggling," says Hooker. It highlights patterns in performance managers can specifically coach their reps on.

### The New Sales Manager's Mantra

This new breed of sales managers must focus on ensuring they're engaging in coaching that makes a direct impact on results.

They must ditch the idea that they're just an extension of their team. As Hooker says, it's important to recognize that the qualities and capabilities that make a successful salesperson are not the same as those that make a successful sales manager. While the salespeople need to be the feet on the street, managers need to be their team's financial planner, pacer, and mentor.

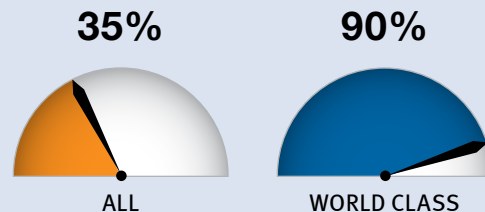
"The managers have to want it." Hooker says, referring to the desire they should have to propel their team to a win. Managers that will thrive and survive today are the ones that get a level of satisfaction from mentoring instead of riding in to save the sale at the last second. Says Hooker: "Their new mantra needs to be: 'I want to help salespeople do better.'" ■

## Coaching and Quota Achievement

World-Class Sales Organizations are 46 percent more likely to report growth in sales force quota achievement.

One of the activities influencing this performance metric is coaching. Most World-Class Sales Organizations (90%) reported that their performance reviews consistently include a coaching element. This compares to 35 percent agreement among other sales organizations.

Our performance reviews consistently include a coaching element.



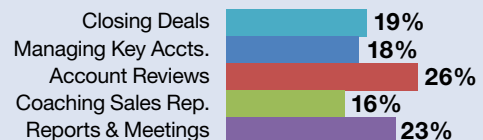
Compared to sales managers overall, managers at World-Class Sales Organizations spend about 20 percent less time in meetings. This translated into more time for coaching - about 31 percent more time is spent coaching sales reps compared the amount of time reported for sales organizations in general.

In an average month, our sales managers typically spend this much of their time on the following activities:

#### All Sales Organizations



#### World Class Sales Organizations



Source: 2010 Miller Heiman Sales Best Practices Study

### About the Contributors:

#### **Andrew Hepburn**

#### **Vice President of Business Development and Diligent Services, ArjoHuntleigh**

As vice president of business development and Diligent Services, Hepburn is responsible for the analysis of new business opportunities and contracting with complementary suppliers. Diligent is a 40-member clinical consulting team that implements the Diligent program (Safe Patient Handling) within Healthcare.

Hepburn joined ArjoHuntleigh, Inc. in 1992 and has held a number of roles within the organization starting as an account executive moving into the marketing department and then taking over as vice president of corporate accounts in 1996. He developed Diligent for Healthcare in 2000, incorporating Safe Patient Handling equipment and consulting to guarantee reductions in worker injuries and associated costs.. Diligent has experienced 10 years of solid growth within that division.

#### **Leigh Hooker**

#### **Executive Vice President of Sales Operations, Miller Heiman**

As executive vice president of sales operations, Hooker is responsible for the overall direction, planning and leadership for global sales operations. She also heads the recruitment and education for all new and existing Miller Heiman sales consultants and distribution partners.

Hooker joined Miller Heiman in 2003 from Shell Oil Company. During her tenure with Shell, she held roles of increasing responsibility including territory sales, sales management, strategic planning and head of business development. She holds a bachelor of science in political science from Texas A&M University.





# Be the Change You Wish to See

## The Role of Senior Leadership in Making Change Stick

by Rich Blakeman

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There's a particularly uncomfortable chair these days at the senior leadership table.

I know. I've sat in it, and I've watched others sit in it and squirm as the CEO moves around the table asking each attendant a single query:

“Take a few minutes and bring us up to speed on what you've done to reduce variation and increase the predictability of the results in your area of the business.”

Some executives don't squirm at all. The CFO quickly describes the status of business process re-engineering projects and how much each has taken out of the business and dropped to the bottom line. The head of manufacturing brings out a stark chart of Six Sigma metrics showing the

Z-scores, defect reduction, and subsequent gross profit and customer satisfaction impact. Likewise, the head of supply chain comfortably relays the net results of supplier consolidation and optimization. But with each confident and robust report delivered, one chair gets more and more uncomfortable: The sales chair.

Reducing variation and increasing the predictability of results pivot around the execution of one common element: making effective change and making that change stick.

Many of today's senior sales leaders are challenged to show proof of progress in these critical areas. What have we done to reduce variation and increase the predictability of top line revenue, margin contribution, SG&A expense, sales forecasts, or any other key metric under our

responsibility? How have we made change among our team, and made it stick?

Malcolm Gladwell, author of “The Tipping Point,”<sup>1</sup> popularized the notion of change that is “sticky” when talking about ideas or behaviors that start deliberately and spread positive epidemics – change that sticks. “The lesson of stickiness...there is a simple way to package information that, under the right circumstances, can make it irresistible,” says Gladwell. “All you have to do is find it.”

It’s the task that makes sales executives squirm: finding the simple way to make change irresistible. What makes senior leaders successful, or unsuccessful, in making change stick?

### Lesson One:

#### Give everyone a helmet and a playbook and get them on the field

In more elegant terms, the first lesson is about role-specific involvement in the change. Let’s assume that you’ve recognized that conditions in the market and within your company require operational change in the first place. As you begin to implement the strategies and tactics that will accomplish that, understand that any peer and key stakeholder around the leadership table who second-guesses you from the stands will quickly quash any forward momentum the new initiative has.

Scott Triou, CFO of Torani (the global beverage flavor company that taught people to love flavored lattes) puts it this way: “I don’t sit on the sidelines. I care, I’m involved, and I show it.” Each executive needs to be on the field (and in the case of sales change, in the field) with a playbook that is specific to his or her role in the company. Miller Heiman’s president and CEO, Sam Reese, regularly tells a story of a CFO who began quoting customers, relating that he had “talked to customers and here’s what they say.” Sam’s quick and pointed question was, “which customers have you spoken to?” The CFO couldn’t name them. Imagine how much more effective the

executives in your organization could be if they had their own role-specific playbook.

In order to make change stick, members of the senior leadership team need to be on the field, in position, and know what their specific involvement is in the change. That includes the CEO.

Melanie Dulbecco, CEO of Torani confessed: “I used to think that I could take it on myself. That if I did it, everyone would come along. Instead I’ve learned that I have to have a strong voice and strong opinion, complimenting the team members who are advancing and showing early results, and recognizing desired future behaviors in advance. I’ve got to participate, not just observe, being visible and taking an appropriate role.”

### Lesson Two:

#### Model what has worked in the past

In the *2010 Miller Heiman Sales Best Practices Study*, this lesson could not be clearer: 93 percent of research respondents in World-Class Sales Organizations reported they “know why our top performers are successful.” Among respondents in all other companies, this was reported to be true only 36 percent of the time

#### World Class Sales Organizations

Miller Heiman defines *World-Class Sales Organizations* as those companies who were more likely to report growth in key metrics such as customer retention and sales force quota attainment.

Download the executive summary, *Driving Sales Results in Any Economy*, to model additional best practices World-Class Sales Organizations perform to produce results.



This portrays the important role senior leadership can have in making things stick: first understanding what has caused effective change to occur in the past, and leveraging the information across the organization to become a lasting, sustaining force in the business. At URS, an industry-leading engineering services company, the executives leveraged this lesson by modeling a sales process change initiative after a successful safety initiative. They proved that the how of change is equally as important as the what and why.

What's worked in your company in the past? Why did it work? More importantly, what didn't work and why? Using this line of questioning, some sales leaders may discover why they switched to a third customer relationship management (CRM) or sales automation system after 10 years: it wasn't about the software, it was how the software reinforced processes to make the desired change stick. An honest diagnosis of what has worked and not worked in the past leads to credible prescriptions that will make the next change more effective.

Harvard's John Kotter outlines an eight-step process for successful change management in his book "Leading Change."<sup>2</sup> Chip Heath from Stanford, along with his brother Dan, wrote why some ideas survive and others die in their book "Made to Stick."<sup>3</sup> These and dozens of change management books help senior leaders understand the basic tenets of successful change, but amongst the simplest of the lessons is this: understand what has been successful in your company and repeat it, frequently.

### **Lesson Three:**

#### **Make reinforcement a part of your culture**

Many change initiatives are guided by the common principle of "inspect what you expect." Set clear objectives, identify a small number of critical leading metrics, and inspect them with diligence. While this is critical and may be common sense, it may not be commonly practiced, nor is it the

sole differentiator you need to make your next change initiative successful. Setting key performance indicators (KPIs) and reviewing them will support and measure the desired change, but doesn't speak specifically enough to a key responsibility held solely by the most senior members of your leadership team: the stewardship and leverage of the culture.

Family-owned companies are often the poster children for stewardship of culture, providing lessons in the sustainment and maintenance of cultural themes going back to the founders. At Torani, it is the shared responsibility of board and family members Lisa and Paul Lucheta along with CEO Melanie Dulbecco. Amongst their keys to successful change management: patience with discipline in reinforcing the change. How do we help our team members succeed? How does the board support the process, reinforce success and challenge the team to move faster?

Melanie recalls that "Lisa and Paul wanted to know everything about what was going on. They brought our CFO and sales vice president to board meetings to brief them on the overall health of our sales funnel and the KPIs we have developed to track it – a first for our company. They have stayed disciplined in their interest and actively involved, but showed patience with results so that we could get through this change with all of our team members intact and encouraged."

Torani's culture is steeped in deep care for its people and, from the top down, follows the senior leadership lesson of making reinforcement a part of their culture. Your change initiative needs to fit into and leverage the culture to have the ultimate level of success, and it is the senior leader's responsibility to ensure that it does.

#### **The Intersection of Kotter and Gandhi**

Lobbing a change initiative into the organization with a "do as I say, not as I do" mentality doesn't work. Whether or not it

worked in the past, today's companies only get one shot when implementing change that will affect results. When executives fail to lead the change by example, they are prone to find their chair at the leadership table more and more uncomfortable as the CEO makes his rounds.

If it's important for senior leaders to model the way, repeat lessons learned, and reinforce and encourage others along the path. Nothing could be more critical than consistency of leadership in these change endeavors. John Kotter provides the challenge in direct terms:

“Nothing undermines change more than behavior by important individuals that is inconsistent with their words.”

More simply put, by Gandhi: “Be the change you wish to see...” ■

### About Rich Blakeman

Rich Blakeman, sales vice president at Miller Heiman, has a unique business background combining sales and marketing executive leadership with consulting assignments at senior levels of global industry-leading firms. He has proven himself successful at creating organic growth and differentiation for companies through their sales strategy and its execution.

Rich's track record includes leading teams of cross company sales leaders in developing and implementing enterprise models for strategic account management and sales effectiveness. He has advised on and personally led the deployment of sales processes and practices including compensation and incentives, benchmarking, global sales automation, value proposition development, account planning, executive sponsorship and training.

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1. Gladwell, M. (January 2002). The Tipping Point. Back Bay Books.  
2. Kotter, J. (1996). Leading Change.  
3. Chip Heath, D. H. (2007). Made to Stick. Random House.



# In Sync with Customers: The People, Not the Data

by Deb Mielke

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Companies currently spend more than \$10 billion per year on CRM (Customer Relationship Management) software and services to centralize client information into an organized database for easy retrieval. This is according to Infonetics Research, a market research and consulting firm. The technology is designed to help sales organizations achieve goals such as:

- Building and maintaining strong customer relationships
- Increasing sales with existing clients
- Managing opportunities through the sales funnel
- Recognizing potential needs of customers and incorporating those needs into ongoing product development or service strategies

That's \$10 billion spent on consolidating data to enhance a sales force's ability to achieve these goals - a hefty price tag. What's more is that it's just one component of what's required to complete the network. Billions more are spent on unified communications solutions, software and systems to synchronize mobile devices with corporate data, messaging systems, and the networks that connect the pieces of the puzzle. Infonetics also found that investment in unified communications solutions reached \$501 million with 100 percent growth expected by 2013. But does all the effort spent collecting this data construct a complete and clear picture of current and prospective customers?

In my experience, I've learned that buyers make decisions to purchase based on the trust they have with individuals

in the selling organization. Building strong customer relationships is just not feasible from behind a computer monitor. Yet company dollars are spent plugging information into their database. And while that intelligence plays an integral role in helping a company progress through the sales cycle, it shouldn't be the end of the line when it comes to aligning with customers to better understand their concepts and needs; nor is it enough to understand how people prefer to be sold to.

So how can companies better access prospects and customers? Managers need to enable their sales teams to sync up with the people behind the data.

### Synching Up With Customers

Solutions should be tied to the company's organizational goals. But they're not sold to the company, they're sold to individuals within the company. There are nuances of the personal interactions salespeople have with contacts that have a great impact on building the trust that affects the outcome of opportunities.

Walter L. Leite, Marilla Svinicki, and Yuhing Shi, co-authors of "Attempted Validation of the Scores of the VARK: Learning Styles Inventory With Multitrait-Multimethod Confirmatory Factor Analysis Models," and Thomas F. Hawk and Amit J. Shah, co-authors of "Using Learning Style Instruments to Enhance Student Learning," wrote that everybody has a learning style they prefer over another – salespeople, managers, and customers alike. We communicate in our own unique way, conveying messages using pictures, words (either spoken or written), and expressions and gestures. But those styles are often disconnected; when they don't sync up with customers' communication preferences misalignments can occur:

- Mis-trust
- Mis-communication
- Mistakes
- Misconceptions
- Missed sales opportunities

For the most part, this is because most salespeople don't understand their own communication style, let alone that of the customers they interact with on a daily basis. Because salespeople sell solutions to individuals, not companies themselves, paying attention to the cues and signals contacts exhibit goes a long way in winning sales. I've learned that providing salespeople with the tools to effectively communicate with each current or prospective client has a tremendous impact on building the rapport and trust that leads to productive, long-term relationships and accelerated sales cycle.

A promotional marketing firm I worked with taught its sales personnel to recognize, adapt to and sync up with each individual customer's unique style. Their efforts resulted in measurable revenue growth (about three to five percent) and sales cycles across the board were shortened by 10 percent or more over six months.

### Leveraging Communication Styles to Influence Outcomes

Given the crucial need to encourage sales forces (that have most likely been reduced in size) to produce more, sales managers must explore ways to coax those results. Each salesperson's conversation with current or prospective clients must move opportunities forward. Sales managers who relay to their teams the importance of communicating in the way clients prefer to communicate will be able to reduce wasted resources.

Consider the members of your sales force. Managers can recognize communication styles based on three major components:

- The preferred mode for receiving ideas or thoughts
  - Do your salespeople learn better when they see pictures or images? Or do they absorb information better after a verbal explanation? Perhaps the message hits home when they see facial expressions or gestures.



- The side of the brain favored for daily functions
  - Right brain - This side of the brain drives non-verbal, creative thinking functions.
  - Left brain – This side of the brain controls verbal, logical thinking functions.
  
- The words used to influence others
  - Directive - Fortright and powerful language that conveys in no uncertain terms that a customer or prospect should see a specific result. For example: “You will like this product.”
  - Permissive – Indirect language that emphasizes the customer or prospect’s potential thought process. For example: “You might be willing to test our product and see the benefits for yourself.”

Managers who tap into the way their salespeople learn not only encourage their teams to adopt sales processes or other change initiatives and coach with greater efficacy, but also enable salespeople to leverage the same tools to build customer relationships and elicit positive outcomes. Now consider how your sales force reacted to prior initiatives within the organization. What learning methods were more successful? Did the initiative succeed when communicated via pictures, videos or PowerPoint presentations or were verbal explanations enough for the reps to adopt the proper course of action? Did it come down to a more hands-on approach, where management may have found it necessary to walk individuals through new processes?

When communicating the initiative, did the sales force focus on the big picture or the details? Did they latch on to processes, or seem to find them time consuming and stifling?

After collecting a baseline for how the sales force communicates, consider your customers. Does your team know how clients prefer to communicate?

Salespeople in sync with customers understand their own communication style and those of their respective customers. They are then able to adapt their style (when necessary) to match that of the customer. For example, a salesperson with one communication style must learn to adapt the way he presents new ideas to a customer with a different communication style. He must have the capability to recognize a communication style and adapt how he presents new information that will resonate with clients. Fortunately, it is a capability that can be learned.

Adapting to a customer’s communication style is a five-step process.

1. Listen: To the customer and the words they use. Do they use words that describe pictures, sounds or feelings? Those words construct one of three styles: visual, audio and kinesthetic. These indicate how each customer prefers to be communicated with.

Fig. 1

Customer Says	Salesperson Says	Customer’s Response
“I heard your product won industry awards last year.”	“Yes, we’ve shown our superiority in laboratory tests.”	“Huh?” Customer used a word that described sound, the salesperson responded using a visual word.
“I heard your product won industry awards last year.”	“Yes, I’m glad you’ve got a sense for how well our product performed in laboratory tests.”	“Huh?” Customer used words that described sound, the salesperson responded using “feeling” words.
“I heard your product won industry awards last year.”	“Yes, it sounds like you’ve heard about our success in laboratory tests.”	“I understand and agree.” Customer used words that described sound, salesperson responded using words in sync with the client’s communication style.

2. Respond: Using words similar to the customer's communication style. For example: *(see Fig. 1)*
  - a. People with visual communication styles respond to picture words: focus, see, visualize, appear, show
  - b. People with audio communication styles respond to sound words: hear, in tune with, listen, speak, tell
  - c. People with kinesthetic communication styles respond to feeling words: touch, feel, explore, grasp, sense
3. Watch: For non-verbal agreement such as nods and relaxed body posture when face to face with customers.
4. Think: About how to best incorporate language to elicit a specific action.
  - a. "Perhaps you might like to see a brief video that shows how our product helped another company achieve their profitability goals."
  - b. "Perhaps you'd like to hear more about how our product helped another company achieve their profitability goals."
  - c. "Perhaps you can now get a sense for how our product helped another company achieve their profitability goals."
5. Focus: On how to achieve a meaningful response and remain in sync with the customer.
  - a. Listen
  - b. Respond
  - c. Watch
  - d. Think

Managers who sync up with their salespeople are better able to ensure their interactions improve process adoption and change behavior. Salespeople who sync up with customers are better able to establish the rapport that accelerates sales cycles and cultivates loyal customers who actively promote your products and services. In addition, enabling

this activity can also enhance the value of the information entered into CRM systems to maximize the return on the multi-million dollar investments sales organizations make.

Can your organization afford not to sync up with the people beyond the data? ■

### About Deb Mielke

Managing director of Words Are Capital, a subsidiary of Treillage Network Strategies, Inc., Deb Mielke has more than 25 years experience in sales and marketing. As a consultant and analyst, Deb has worked with a variety of companies including Cisco Systems, AT&T and Verizon developing unique market and product strategies.

Mielke is the founder of Words Are Capital and co-developer of *The Open Channel Communications System™* a sales success system that elaborates on how mental coaching accelerates behavioral change.

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1. Leite, Walter L.; Svinicki, Marilla; and Shi, Yuying (2009) "Attempted Validation of the Scores of the VARK: Learning Styles Inventory With Multitrait-Multimethod Confirmatory Factor Analysis Models." pg. 2. SAGE Publications.

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