Do you have a cohesive team, focused on results?
If not, it may be time to implement a new game plan.

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Productivity is never an accident. It is always the result of a commitment to excellence, intelligent planning, and focused effort.
~ Paul J. Meyer

Keys to a high performing team:

- *Support your team through experienced leadership and effective systems.*
- *Train for a culture of success.*
- *Use a sales process as a framework for disciplined sales.*
- *Employ realistic, measurable performance standards.*

Last month we talked about getting your team together. How to hire top performers, matching skills to the job at hand, and, noticeably, hiring based on potential for growth rather than experience. While getting the right team members in place is a great start, as we all know, coming together is only a beginning. **It is what comes after that that determines success or failure.**

Most of the US sports world these days is talking about the prospect of basketball superstars LeBron James, Chris Bosh and Dwayne Wade playing on the same team.   Right now the Miami Heat is a **TEAM**, but it is **TEAMWORK**, that will determine whether or not they succeed. Can they work together? Can they engage their cast of supporting players? Will their coaching staff be able to engage strategies to maximize their potential and empower the rest of the team to perform up to expectations?

Good to Great
As coach, Phil Jackson, said, "Good teams become great ones when the members trust each other enough to surrender the Me for the We."

Not only that, outstanding performers must be supported by **experienced leadership and effective systems.**

In business, as in sports, trust starts at the top, and teamwork (which doesn't function well without trust) is essential for success. Companies that "win" create a **culture of success** from the top down. They hire with confidence, expect results and make sure that those expectations are clearly communicated. They recruit top performers, employ realistic and measurable performance standards, and maintain consistent two-way feedback. They provide ongoing training, not only on product/company knowledge, sales strategies, relationship building and the systems required for CRM, but on helping each team member understand more about themselves, their strengths and their weaknesses. In short, they foster an environment where "we" is more important than "me."

Empowerment Through Systems
Top sales organizations also provide their teams with a well communicated sales process to serve as a foundation for enforcing selling discipline.

A sales process is like a game plan – the details might change from week to week, or client to client, but the general objective, and the steps needed to reach that objective remain the same. What respectable coach draws up a game plan without first evaluating both his players and the competition, assessing the match ups, and adjusting his strategy accordingly?

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Before outlining your sales process, you need to know your market and know yourself. Know what you do well. Know where you need help. (This is not always easy. If you are having difficulties; you may need to step back and look into your organization with a more objective eye, or hire an outside expert who already has the systems in place to do it.)

Armed with this knowledge, you will be able to tailor your efforts for optimal results. You will be able to see where your current efforts are falling short. You will be able to outline the variables which you will use to measure activity and productivity. You will have a general idea of how long it takes to move a sale through the pipeline, and any training which may help reduce that time.

A 2006 Harvard Business Review article "The New Science of Sales Force Productivity" notes that the most successful sales managers are those who utilize a method that "puts systems around the art of selling, relying not just on gut feel and native sales talent—the traditional qualities of the rainmaker—but also on data, analysis, processes, and tools to redraw the boundaries of markets and increase a sales force's productivity."[1]

The authors argue that "in today's selling environment, it is not enough to rely on your star reps and hope for the best." They state that any organization looking to boost productivity should employ a systematic approach comprised of **Targeted Offerings**, **Optimized Automation, Tools, Procedures, Performance Management** and **Sales Force Deployment**.[1]

Measuring For Success
A scorecard system is one way to pull this all together – a company scorecard to review the market and the business itself to get a clear picture of the playing field; an individual scorecard to rate the players.

In sales, specifically, an obvious way to measure results is in dollars, yet if you measure through monetary results alone, you don't get the big picture. A critical aspect is being able to measure effort. Sales can often be a numbers game. Rejection is an inherent part of the process. For this reason, the individual scorecard should measure **leading indicators** as well as results. By looking at quantifiable activity metrics to gauge effort and productivity, you and your reps can end each week with a clear vision of what has been accomplished. How many phone calls were made? How many conversations took place? Were all required reports turned in?

Flexibility Through Structure
Adhering to a structured system makes it possible to disseminate information quickly, especially in an ever changing market. A key benefit of a well executed plan is that when it is wrong, the processes are in place to know it is wrong. You can step back, reevaluate and change direction midstream if need be.

As Tom Landry once said, "I don't believe in team motivation. I believe in getting a team prepared so it knows it will have the necessary confidence when it steps on a field and be prepared to play a good game."

Arm your reps with a plan, train to win and set the stage for success.

Partner Effectively
If the science behind sales force productivity is something you don't have time or energy to explore, consider outsourcing your sales effort with an experienced, strategic ally ally who has the leadership, experience and best-in-class systems in place to help take your business to the next level.

[1] Ledingham, Dianne, Mark Kovac, and Heidi Locke Simon. "The New Science of Sales Force Productivity." *The Harvard Business Review*, 1 September 2006 http://hbr.org/2006/09/the-new-science-of-sales-force-productivity/ar/1 (18 August 2010).