

# Four Key Attributes of a Sales Manager



Improve Performance.  
Drive Revenue.

## About The Naro Group

The Naro Group specializes in helping technology companies capitalize on their investment in sales process and sales training. Contact Jim Naro, President, by email at: [jnaro@TheNaroGroup.com](mailto:jnaro@TheNaroGroup.com).

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*By Jim Naro, President of The Naro Group (Originally published in Mass High Tech)*

Considering the multiplying effect of sales managers on an organization's performance, I am amazed at how little attention the capabilities required for this position gets.

Can you recall any "A" players that you have encountered in this position? What kind of person he or she was, what behaviors they exhibited, and how they inspired their staff? Or do you only remember the revenue they did — or did not — generate?

When you dig in, there is a laundry list of competencies, personal characteristics and critical success factors that are common to the "A" players. Here is a handful that I find are "must haves" for impacting performance.

### **#1 - Ability to befriend change (and resistance).**

The only constant in high tech is change. New products are introduced, markets shift, revenue goals are adjusted, and territories reassigned while buyers become more sophisticated. Sales organizations must adapt, re-evaluating and adjusting processes, tools, people and selling behaviors in order to realign with change and be effective. One of the most challenging areas of change is the resistance to change that comes from sales people. Sales managers must be able to embrace and articulate changes in the vision of your company to their team — all while generating excitement, enthusiasm and commitment to the vision. When a sales manager is able to skillfully gain the support of their team to make the organizational vision a reality, they will be successful.

### **#2 - Master objection and problem resolution.**

A sales manager needs to be a master of systemic problem solving. This involves providing creative thinking at various opportunity levels while, at the same time, creating a platform so that his or her sales team can capture and share what is repeatable from deal to deal.

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Successful managers adopt a natural “coach-like approach” in their communication style as they actively listen and ask thoughtful questions to help facilitate the discussion around objection resolution and problem solving. This often involves being the voice of realism, asking questions to test the viability of an idea, such as “How is that going to work? What plans do you have in place to make that happen?”

The ability to foster a common language to facilitate collaborative team communication to solve objections and problems that come up throughout the sales cycle is key to moving deals through your pipeline.

### **#3: Know what the numbers really mean.**

While leading people through change and solving problems, sales managers need to keep their eye on bottom line results that are driven by their team’s performance. This capability is much like a professional football coach who breaks down and analyzes games. A manager must be able to analyze the sales pipeline at both an individual sales person’s level and at an aggregate level to determine whether the numbers for this quarter, the next, and the year will be achieved. A manager needs to be able to effectively assess the risk in opportunities that are moved from the pipeline to the forecast. They need to know what the numbers really mean and be able to objectively assess when sales people are struggling and what kind of help they need.

### **#4: Mentor to success.**

After identifying the areas where sales people struggle, sales managers need to quickly guide each individual sales person with specific, constructive feedback on how performance can be improved. This provides clarification and enables individuals to compare themselves to an objective benchmark that focuses on behaviors versus subjective opinion, which focuses on the person. This enables sales people to identify their own skill deficiencies and take ownership for their own development. Sales managers must also provide skill development opportunities and encourage sales people to attend relevant training and workshops. The sales managers that provide support and encouragement during the learning process are the ones that are rewarded with improved performance down the road.



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