

Morale – What Is It?

- Is morale important?
- What can be done about it?

As a sales manager or general agent or (whatever your title) you know that having motivated sales people is critical to your organization's success. The critical question is: *What can you do to improve morale?*

First let's define morale. According to the Gallup Organization, it is: "...the emotional attachment or sense of engagement a sales person has for his or her job." We know that engagement has a direct and meaningful relationship to the results every sales manager gets paid to deliver. Sales teams with high engagement levels are more productive, more profitable and develop far more sustainable customer relationships.

Obviously *engagement* is a critical factor in your team's morale. Yet studies by the Gallup Organization reveal that as many as 66²/₃% to 75% of individuals in the sales force are operating at engagement levels that substantially inhibit the agency's performance. I believe you'll agree with me on these figures.

But knowing about the level of engagement of your sales force, and doing something about it are two different things. My guess is that there's not one sales manager who doesn't know that this is a reality.

The big question, as always, is what to do about improving and maintaining good morale?

First let's talk about what doesn't work to improve morale:

1. Sales contests don't work for the majority of the sales team. (*Only about 30% of your field force respond well to contests*)
2. Increased bonuses and increased commissions don't work (unless commissions were too low to start with).
3. Gifts, prizes and other giveaways don't work. (*Except for the same 30%. Have you noticed that it's always the same 30% who win?*)

The reason that these techniques don't work well is that they don't deal with what your sales force really wants. And interestingly enough, money is never the number one concern.

So, you ask, what do sales people want? They want:

- *Being given clear expectations.* Are sales goals well understood, and do you measure sales performance on a regular basis? (Weekly or monthly)

- ***Providing needed resources.*** Top-notch producers should be given what they need to do well: computers, secretarial help, presentation support, etc.
- ***Helping sales representatives capitalize on what they do best,*** and letting other staff do the rest. (But you have to have some way of knowing what they do best)
- ***Showing regular appreciation for their good results.*** This means affirming positive results on a regular basis.
- ***Finally, it means establishing and nurturing a culture that encourages growth and learning.*** Coaching and regular affirmations are especially helpful.

We know that having well-trained employees is based on having well-trained managers. Similarly, having an effective sales force can only occur when the sales manager emphasizes the skills and creates an environment that builds and encourages successful sales people. Now, more than ever, we need to really listen to our key sales people – they will tell us what they need. By learning from them, we can create an environment that fosters sustained success and a positive work environment.

*Nick Ray is a personal and business coach.
He can be reached at nick@coachnickray.com or at 510-898-3245.
A complimentary coaching session is available.
www.coachnickray.com*

Nicholas R. Ray
CLU, RHU, ChFC
Personal & Business Coach