

## Transforming a Sales Culture

The transformation of a sales culture is undertaken when a company concludes that its current sales culture is either inhibiting sales by being too aggressive or failing to maximize sales by being too passive. In either scenario the need to change the culture within the organization typically reaching near emergency status, prompting decision makers to undertake the difficult process.

Changing a sales culture is usually viewed as being a difficult process because of the human dynamic – that is that there are people involved who either have interests in the old system and will seek to defend those interests, or there are people who are naturally resistant to change and will therefore seek to slow the process down to the snail's pace with which they are comfortable. Certainly it is true that bringing a business culture through a transformation is an evolutionary and not revolutionary process and the more stakeholders you can get to subscribe to the changes the better off you'll be. Nonetheless, agreement, while preferred, will almost certainly never be universal, leaving you with the task of implementing the transformation under fire.

Have no fear for as is often the case, Tudog is coming to the rescue and presents herein a ten step program that, if implemented correctly, will transform your sales culture from what it currently is to what you have defined will better serve your enterprise.

The Tudog 10 step program includes:

### 1. Make Your Case

There are always going to be people who do not buy into your vision of the sales culture. You are going to have to win over enough people to make the implementation of your vision viable. You should, of course, target stakeholders within the sales division, but you should also target key management. Make certain your analysis of the current sales culture – particularly its deficits, is honest and balanced. Don't give your opponents fuel to discredit everything you are saying by including some facts that are subjective and biased. Also important is making sure that your case demonstrates where you can generate growth and revenues, including a cost/benefit analysis. By arguing your case honestly and sticking to business considerations only, you should be able to garner sufficient support within management and the sales division to get the go-ahead.

### 2. Develop Your Team

Just as it is with any major task, you cannot accomplish a culture transformation on your own. There are four primary tasks you will need to fulfill and you have to make sure that the people you select are both extremely qualified for the role they are assuming and completely in agreement with the execution plan and the cultural fundamentals behind it. The four roles you need to fill are:

- Scout – people who will be the first in the field and willing to go behind the opposing side's lines in order to shake things up a bit and lead the way for the transformation to begin.
- Sponsor – people willing to publicly state their support for the program and act in a manner that is consistent with the new culture. This

allows the new culture to begin manifesting itself very early on the process, allowing opponents to see the new culture in action.

- Advocate – people in management who support the transition and are willing to push for change both by way of persuasion and, if necessary, command.
- Agents – people who will implement the changes by creating the channels through which the new policies (that reflect the new culture) and the new process (that enable the new culture) are able to trickle down into the opinions, attitudes, actions and responses of the company's sales force.

### 3. Diagnose Your Ills

Knowing that something needs fixing and knowing exactly what it is are sometimes two different things. Chances are by the time you get to this step, having gone through convincing management and recruiting your transformation team, you have a pretty good idea of what you want to accomplish. This does not mean you have a pretty good idea what you need to eradicate. Your new culture is doomed if it is build on the ruins of a poorer culture. You need first to diagnose what ails your enterprise's sales culture so that you can be certain you don't construct your new vision on top of an ill vision that will fail to sustain your changes.

### 4. Develop Your Processes

At some point you have to match your vision to the operational practices of the enterprise. This is typically achieved through the institutionalization of certain practices and the requirement of certain procedures. By developing and introducing these new practices you will be compelling certain new behaviors that reflect your new culture, leading to the gradual implementation of the culture itself.

### 5. Improve Sales Competencies

One certain aspect of your new culture will be an upgrade in sales skills. This is not necessarily a reflection of previous sales skill levels, but if you are already going through the painful process of transformation, you might as well include additional sales skills. Make certain you go through a process that allows you to assess the skills of each individual sales person so that you are able to bring everyone up to almost the same level. This will prevent any perception later on that the new culture benefits certain sales styles or certain people more than others.

### 6. Develop Best Practices

Once you have determined what set of sales skills is most suited to the culture you are going to construct, you can develop your set of best practices that will define the behavior and actions of your sales force. This will go a long way in helping salespeople understand the parameters within which they can operate and what actions the company feels are most likely to not only land sales, but land sales in a way that reflects the values and culture of the company.

### 7. Set Your Compensation Model

The way you compensate your salespeople reveals a lot about the sales culture you are trying to encourage and will also determine how dedicated to the culture your salespeople will be. In developing your compensation model you need to make certain that it is consistent with the culture you are establishing and that it encourages and motivates the salespeople to engage in the behavior you want to reinforce.

#### 8. Set Your Policies

The sales policies you set will determine the pace and tone of your sales division. These policies and procedures will serve to institutionalize the new culture and bring it to the outside world (your customers and prospects). Therefore your policies need to be consistent with your culture and serve as an outward reflection of the values and principles you, as a company, embrace internally.

#### 9. Recruit New Salespeople

It is most likely inevitable that you will lose some of your sales force as you go through your transition. Some will leave because they are unable to cope with change and others because they do not agree with the new culture and values you are introducing. Some too may not like the new compensation models you created. Also, some of your sales force will be let go because the skills analysis phase will reveal their abilities to be below the standard you have set within the new culture. When hiring new people look toward bringing in people who are compatible with your new culture and have the skill level you seek.

#### 10. Reinforce Your New Culture

Once your new culture is integrated and the sales force is operative and under the new guidelines, it is important to reinforce your culture with a number of collateral sales activities including sales meetings, team communications, sales literature (for customers and prospects), and customer relationship management procedures. If each of these should reflect the new culture. By using them daily they will also reinforce them

The transformation of a sales culture is not an easy undertaking. Sales, however, because of the central role it serves in the company and compensation models, is prone to corruption and can, at times, cease to reflect a company's core values. The transformation of the culture, therefore, becomes a necessity at some point. This article provides the ten steps to successful culture transformation. Now the only thing left to do is reflect upon your core values and define the culture you will be most proud to have represent your company.