

Good Coaching

As a mildly avid sports fan, I'm fascinated by what goes into creating a great team. How did coaches like John Wooden, Dean Smith, Phil Jackson and Joe Torre build their winning dynasties? Was it their charisma or did they just get lucky in recruiting top players? Did they work harder than other coaches? Were their players more motivated to win? Were their training camps tougher?

Coach Wooden said that "success is peace of mind which is a direct result of self-satisfaction in knowing you made the effort to become the best of which you are capable of becoming."

As an owner/manager or trainer, are you sure that you're making your best effort to ensure that your team members are becoming the best at what they

Adults, though, learn from experience.

are capable of becoming? Are you the best coach that the team could have? Have you updated your own coaching skills recently or are you still having the same kind of weekly sales meetings that you had five years ago?

Jack Welch defined insanity as doing the same things over and over and expecting different results. The market has changed. The customer's expectation has changed. Our products have changed. And our competition has changed. We need to change our coaching to reflect the evolution around us.

In order to become better trainers, we need to understand adult learning. Kids learn by repetition. They memorize flash cards and for the most part respect the authority of the big person at the front of the room.

Adults, though, learn from experience. From trial and error; success and failure. We learn from each other. Sales associates and installers need to be active participants in their learning and will quickly tune out an expert lecturing them.

Good Coaching, continued

The traditional donuts and coffee Saturday morning meeting isn't good enough to guaranty success in today's highly competitive market. You'll have to be a better coach to win this game.

Offer a healthier training table. Replace those Krispy Kremes with cheese, whole grain bagels, protein bars, and fresh fruit. Add milk and juice to the drink options or offer protein-rich smoothies. Brain food will help participants retain more information than they will on a quick sugar high.

Adults learn best in short, frequent lessons. The most effective dealers are meeting with their teams every day—before each “game.” One dealer meets with the associates scheduled for the early shift from 9:00 to 9:30 each morning; he meets with the late crew from 11:30 ‘til noon each day. The meetings are a combination of product training, skills sessions, advertising alerts and inventory updates to remind associates of what just arrived.

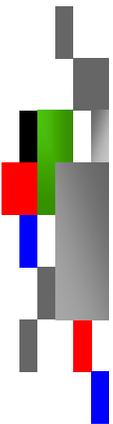
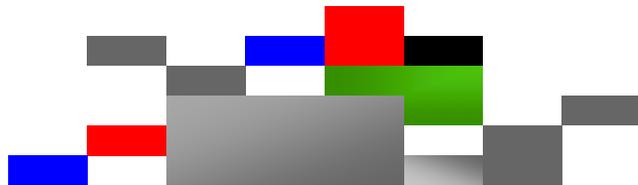
Sales associates need a variety of materials to facilitate their learning and retain the information. Some people are auditory learners and remember what they hear. Others are visual learners and need a handout or video presentation in order to retain what they learn. Still others are kinesthetic learners—they need to do something like take notes or participate in a role playing exercise to gain new skills. Because your team probably has a combination of these, it's important for your educational sessions to be multi-media events.

It's important that your education focus on the needs of your associates, not necessarily on the need of the trainer. Although you may feel that your team should spend time in today's training session on converting more prospects into sales, their concerns may be in knowing more about a new line of products that arrived. Ask for their input when setting meeting agendas.

Change up the trainers. Remember how in middle school you went from having a single homeroom teacher to having a variety of teachers who were each specialists in their areas? Adult learners need to hear from different perspectives. If you conduct all of your meetings, you'll soon find that some team members begin to tune you out. Instead, use your product reps after clearly explaining your goals and objectives for the meeting. Use the expertise among the associates themselves asking those skilled in specific areas to share their knowledge with the group. Be sure to clearly state your expectations and give them time to prepare.

Good Coaching, continued

The best coaches are the ones who recruit the best players and then assume responsibility for making them great. Like Coach Wooden says, as coach of your team, you can create your dynasty by helping your team members become the best that they are capable of becoming.



*Elly Valas is the former President of NARDA and the CEO of Valas Consulting Group, LLC, a retail consultancy. She can be contacted at elly@ellyvalas.com. You can purchase copies of her book **Guerrilla Retailing** at www.ellyvalas.com.*