1. **Define Your Purpose**
    Do you know WHY you are a sales leader? Have you defined what your purpose is in that role? Is it to help your firm meet its goals? Is it to fulfill the potential of your sales people? Whatever it is, define it. Once you clearly define this and commit to it, you now have a rudder that will help guide you in all that you do each and every day.

2. **Incorporate a Culture of Accountability**
    From the top down, establish unquestionable clarity as to the priority – meeting the number. While "the number" should always be a challenge, it also needs to be achievable. So it is important that all constituents are involved in the process of establishing the number and that you have a strong discipline to track and project the numbers.

    Most importantly, you cannot accept multiple years of shortfalls without addressing it head on, reinforcing the message that this IS the priority.

    The other key here as it relates directly to your sales people is to ensure that the salesperson – NOT THE SALES MANAGER – owns responsibility for their skill and performance development. This calls for establishing total clarity as to what you expect (both in the numbers as well as the skills to get there). Too many sales managers feel accountable for helping their sales people get better and, therefore, spend far too much time trying to motivate, inspire, and cajole their sales people to get better. The sales leader's job is to clarify what you expect and provide the tools and resources to help them get there. But it is THEIR job is to leverage those tools and whatever else they need that will help them meet your standards.

3. **Empower your Sales Leaders to Spend Time Coaching**
    You saw the numbers from the blog. If your sales leaders are spending less than three hours per month with each sales person (in sales meetings, pipeline meetings, joint calls/observations, etc.), it is probable you will fall short of the goal.

4. **Effective Hiring and Courage to Address Poor Performance**
    If you are hiring and have to fill open seats to meet your number, it must be a focus and priority. This calls for a robust interview process to ensure that your candidate can deliver on the competencies you have defined for success (see #4 below, "Define What Good Looks Like").

    Regarding addressing poor performance, notice I did not title this point as "poor firing." As we hear every day from our clients, HR rules and processes make firing a major, time-inefficient challenge. Yet great coaching can overcome this challenge and lead to the right turnover (through resignations) rather than through the formal discipline and performance management process. But a focus on this is

well worth it. But most importantly, it takes *managerial courage* and a sincere and committed interest in truly doing what is right for your poor performer. You are not doing him or her any favors by allowing them to languish in a role in which they are not succeeding! Considering the time you are compelled or forced to spend with poor performers, and the sales opportunities missed that otherwise would have been capitalized on by a stronger performer, the impact of carrying poor performers is huge.

5. **Define What "Good" Looks Like.** How can one effectively coach if "good" has not been defined in terms of the competencies needed to succeed in the sales role? Very few firms have *clearly and concretely* defined this, leaving sales leaders to either determine on their own what "good" looks like (beyond just meeting the numbers), or simply leveraging how THEY used to do it when they were selling.

6. **Make On-Boarding YOUR Priority.** New hire training is certainly needed. But have you, as the sales leader, closely looked at the training to ensure that your new sales people are being on-boarded in a fashion that will get them to productivity most efficiently and effectively? Do you have a goal for time-to-productivity? Are the topics on which you are training focused on what it will take to meet that goal? Stay tuned for a future blog on this topic, but suffice it to say that this is certainly an area of weakness, largely because sales managers leave new hire training to HR. You own the number. Quicker time-to-productivity has an immense impact on your ability to meet that number. And you know what it takes to be most effective in front of your prospects and clients.

7. **When Coaching, Focus More on the Skill Than the Deal.** To build a truly sustainable sales machine, coaches need to ensure that their sales people have the competencies and skills to sell most effectively with clients and to *ensure they are selling the way buyers want to buy*. However, we see most coaches spending their time on specific prospects and how to best move the *deal* through the pipeline, often overlooking the skills that will help them do so more effectively. Remember – teach a man to fish …

8. **Tighten Your Approach to Pipeline Management.** A critical aspect of the sales leader's job is to build a pipeline *from which they can accurately forecast results and adjust as needed based on that projection*. However, too few people truly drive a pipeline process that will leave management confident that the forecasted results will be achieved. One of the most tense times for sales managers is when their boss calls asking for the next quarterly projection. It is tense because we are about as confident in it as our sales people are when they try to load up a pipeline of prospects to keep you happy.

    Most pipelines in our business are segmented by general sales process stages such as lead, prospect, proposal, negotiate, and close. The problem with this is you know where your sales person is (or thinks he is), but you have no idea where the client is! The answer is to drive your pipeline based on the buyer's perspective with the expectations that your sales people know exactly where they are in the buyer's journey. (See *"What's Missing from Your Sales Process"* blog by David Greene). Accomplishing this will give you much greater confidence when the boss asks for your next projection.

9. **Skill Development Should Be the Core of Your Sales Training.** Too many sales leaders maintain the view that if their sales people know their products, they will sell more. This is completely false, particularly given that clients are telling us that the primary reason they do NOT choose a particular firm or advisor is because "you don't understand me," not because they do not understand your recommendation. While product training is important insofar as you can offer the right solutions based on client need, your sales training MUST incorporate the buyer's point of view and the competencies needed to best sell how the buyer wants to buy.

    And with that, be sure your skill development is around defined competencies with measurable standards. Too often, sales training is merely "sales theory," leaving the sales person with some good ideas that he or she might incorporate to improve. But what is missing is clarity around the specific skills and standards that YOU know will best resonate with your clients and prospects (i.e., knowing what "good" looks like).