

Life at the Top

There are usually three reasons for a leading sales manager's success.

By Ron Volper

Top performing general managers, directors of sales, and others who manage the sales function consistently exhibit a number of behaviors that distinguish them from their peers. This is the case regardless of the type of property they manage, or whether they are responsible for a few sales persons at a single property or a large national sales force. These conclusions are based on the Benchmarking Study of Sales Management Practices recently published by the Ron Volper Group.

Top performing corporate heads of sales, general managers, and directors of sales are far more process driven than their peers. This is exhibited in three ways.

- **They have a sales operating system.** An SOS consists of a set of tools and procedures that enable the sales team to manage time and territory in a disciplined and controlled way, to plan territory and account tactics, forecast results, measure progress, and make necessary mid-course corrections.

An SOS can help any hospitality company keep its sales team more focused and productive, and thereby:

- Increase sales revenues.

- Increase average daily rate.
- Increase business from the strongest industries and best market segments.

- Shorten the sales cycle.

- Reduce the cost of sales.

To establish an SOS, senior management focuses on three sales drivers.

- Developing and implementing a big-picture strategy consistent with the organization's vision and goals, as well as a plan for each sales person, based on quantified analysis of his/her territory and past performance.

- Managing sales person's actions to support the sales strategy.

- Training and coaching all sales persons.

observing and coaching sales persons. Unlike their counterparts, they spend a great deal of time with all sales persons, even their star performers. They recognize that they, too, can be even better. Moreover, they diagnose the specific skills which a sales person (even a high performer) needs to improve. They focus their coaching effort on refining only one skill at a time (ie, questioning, objection handling, calling higher in the organization, account planning, time management, etc.) rather than overwhelming the sales person with a flood of suggestions. In most instances, they have written a brief "coaching plan" for every member of their team and have received



- **These leaders motivate.** Top sales managers understand the importance of motivating their team to use the tools in the SOS. They spend significantly more time in the field (50 percent or more)

the sales person's buy-in to make the recommended change. We refer to this approach as "focused coaching."

In addition to coaching each sales person monthly, they are committed to

Picture Perfect