

Case Study: Sales Effectiveness & Improvement Analysis that Tripled New Business Loans

By Tony Cole, CEO of Anthony Cole Training Group

The following is a deep dive into the process and results experienced by a client company in recent history. It involves a large financial services company, the CEO of which decided to invest the time, money and resources necessary to uncover a myriad of internal issues that were limiting sales and growth.

Answers to The Nineteen Critical Leadership Questions are detailed below.

The Nineteen Critical Questions

1. *How Does Sales Leadership Impact Our Sales Force?*
2. *What Are Our Current Sales Competencies?*
3. *How Motivated Are Our Salespeople and How Are They Motivated?*
4. *Can We Generate More New Business?*
5. *Can We Be Better at Reaching Actual Decision Makers?*
6. *Can We Shorten Our Sales Cycle?*
7. *Can We Sell More Consultatively?*
8. *Can We More Effectively Sell Value?*
9. *Is Our Value Proposition Consistent?*
10. *Can We Close More Sales?*
11. *Do Our Systems and Processes Support a High-Performance Sales Team?*
12. *Can We Be More Consistent with Our Sales Process?*
13. *How Well Are Our Sales Leadership Strategies Aligned?*
14. *Do We Need to Change Our Selection Criteria?*
15. *Can We Improve Ramp-Up?*
16. *Are Our Sales Funnel Quantities and Forecasts Accurate?*
17. *Can We Improve Our Sales Culture?*
18. *Who Can Become More Effective in Their Roles?*
19. *What Are the Short-term Priorities for Accelerated Growth?*

The following paper includes some of the initial findings and current outcomes (three years later) for a \$1.3B financial institution which hired Anthony Cole Training Group in 2015. The company had multiple distant geographic locations with branches in local markets. A nondominant player in either market, it hoped to capitalize on strong brand recognition in its home town.

Growth was consistent but, as with many organizations, growth came from a few particularly successful producers. After several unsuccessful attempts to incentivize all sales personnel to be more productive by right-sizing, changing compensation, realigning territories and reassigning managers, the CEO committed to investigating the “Why” so that they could understand “What” was making the few superstars successful so that they could duplicate these people in new hires going forward.

The Sales Effectiveness & Impact Analysis (SEIA)

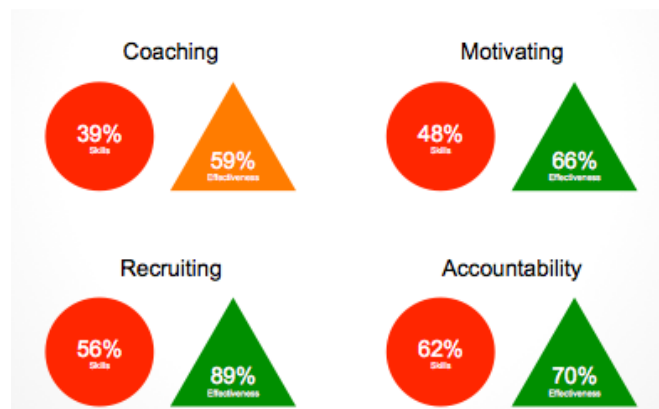
The CEO, Sales Managers and Sales People each completed relevant survey questionnaires of the Sales Effectiveness & Impact Analysis which resulted in a one hundred and twenty-three-page document that provided insight to all sales managers, sales people, systems and processes and management factors that contributed to company outcomes.

The SEIA did not look to analyze market opportunities, competition or how the company was positioned in a given economy. The SEIA provided findings about the company that, as addressed, had the greatest potential to close the sales opportunity gap.

What follows includes a few highlights of the Sales Effectiveness & Impact Analysis (SEIA).

How Effective are Sales Leaders on Sales People?

Sales Managers:



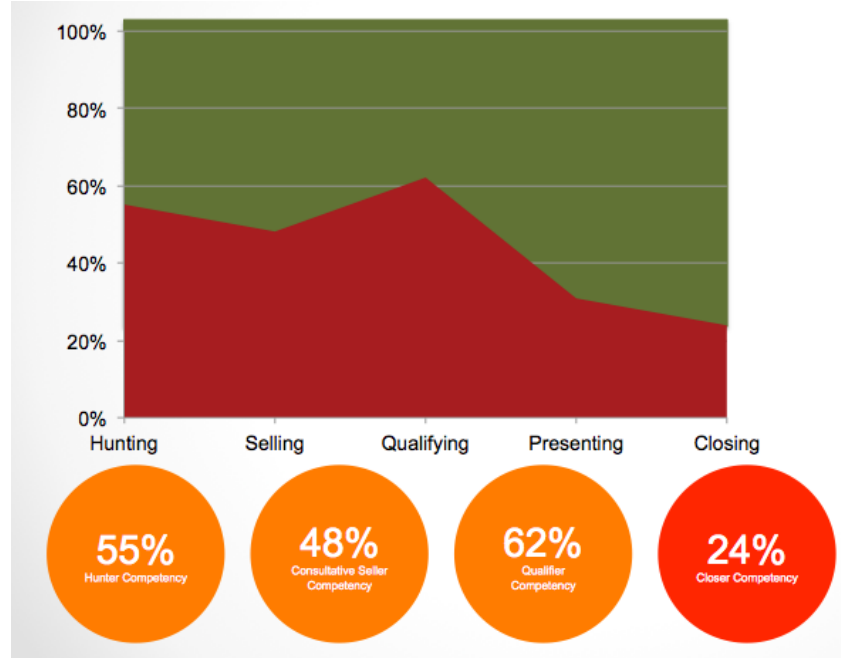
There are 4 primary functions of Sales Managers. They are Coaching, Motivating, Recruiting and Accountability. The circles represent the percentage of appropriate skills each manager has in each function. The triangles represent the effectiveness of each manager in each area.

Overall the team is weak in the defined skills area for all four functions. But their effectiveness is quite good. Contributing factors for this:

- They have strong relationships.
- The people they hired are motivated and are take responsibility (they don't make excuses).
- A positive finding in Recruiting is a result of the actual number of people identified as hitting goal.

What are Current Sales Competencies?

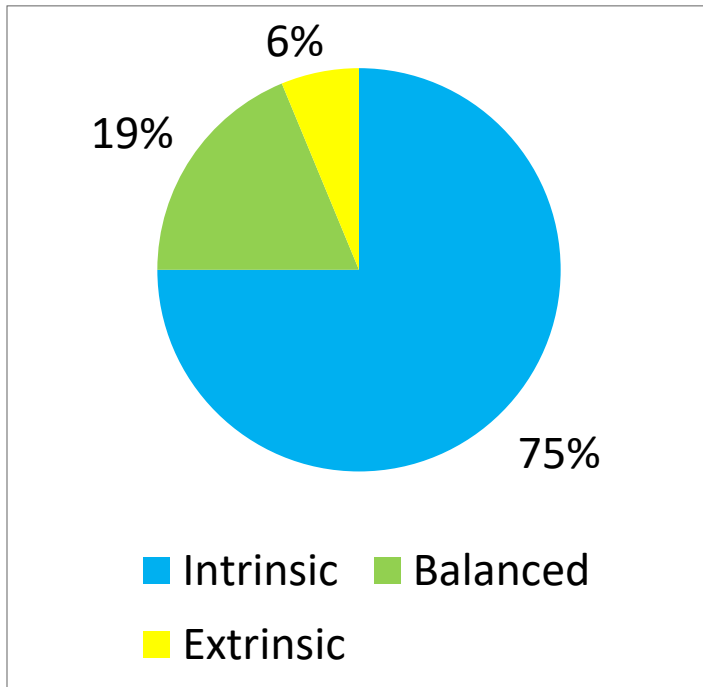
Sales People:



The chart above is a top-level graph of 5 Sales Competencies (Hunting, Consultative Selling, Qualifying, Presenting, Closing) of the sales team. The green space above the red area is the focus because it represents the growth potential for the team.

Said another way, there is plenty of room to grow. Imagine the increase in sales leads (prospects) if your sales team acquired 65% of the necessary skills to be effective. Even if everything else remained the same, this would result in an 18% improvement over 55%. If the team could improve closing skills from 30% to 33% the company would see a 10% percent increase in sales.

Are Sales People Motivated and How Are They Motivated?



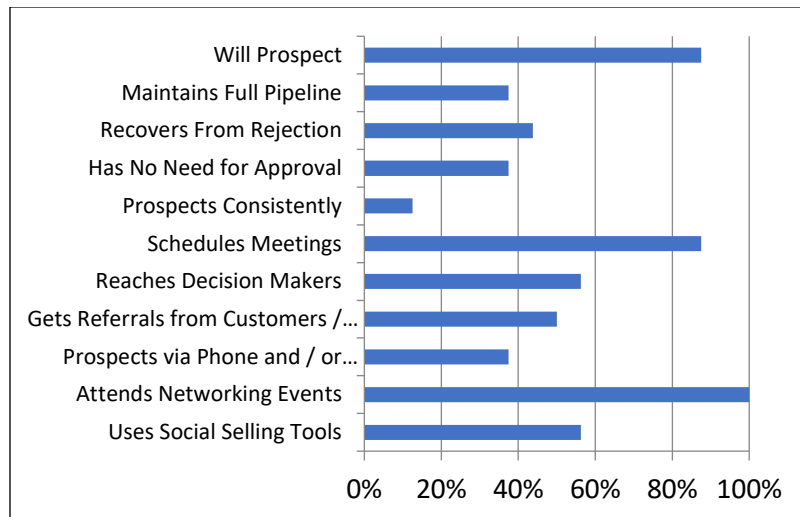
An excellent finding- 94% of this sales team is motivated to be successful in sales.

Also note the finding of intrinsic versus extrinsic motivation. Note that 75% of the team is motivated by internal factors such as:

- Hitting a goal
- Achieving a personal milestone
- Helping people

This comes into play when contemplating incentives to drive sales growth.

Can the Company Generate More New Business?

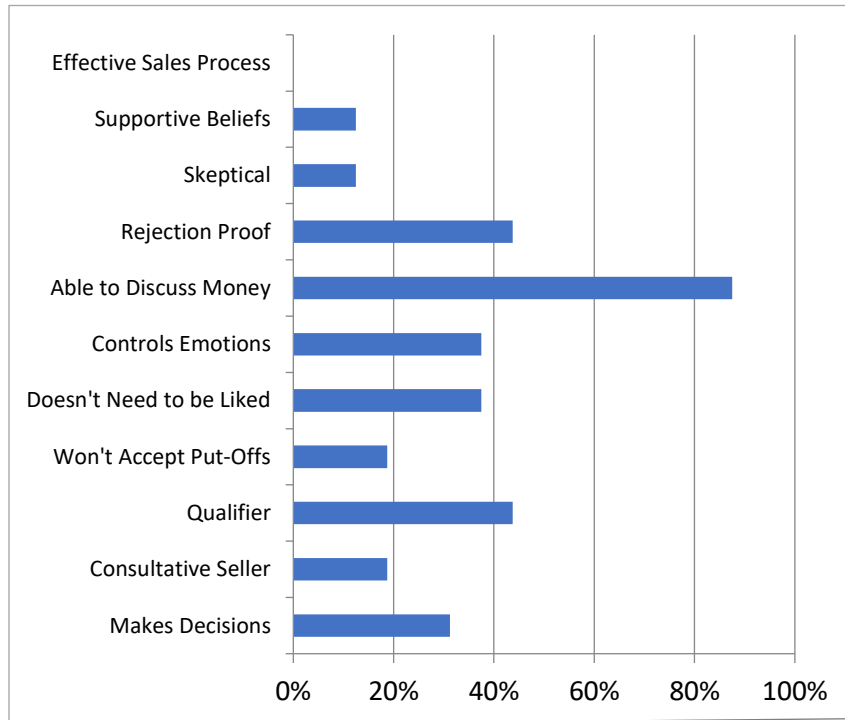


Can the salespeople generate more new business?

It depends--There is some good news and some better news in the graph above. The good news is that 87% of the team has the skills to help grow sales. The better news is that only 17% of the team *won't* prospect and *can't* prospect – this is a “will and a skill” issue.

To take advantage of the good news, generate more new business and help the 87% that can and will sell, the client must have managers who will implement sales activity tracking, sales activity data collection, sales activity business intelligence analysis and performance management discussions with sales people. Proper activity tracking efforts and performance management discussions will keep sales people on track and performing to their ability.

Is it Possible to Shorten the Sales Cycle?



Is it possible to shorten the sales cycle?

The short answer to the question is **NO**. Per the graph above, top line score for Effective Sales Process is 0 and the team currently lacks other necessary skills and beliefs.

The sales team, as it exists today, does not have the right Sales DNA. Each sales person must:

- Consistently execute a sales process
- Have supportive beliefs
- Be rejection-proof
- Not need to be liked

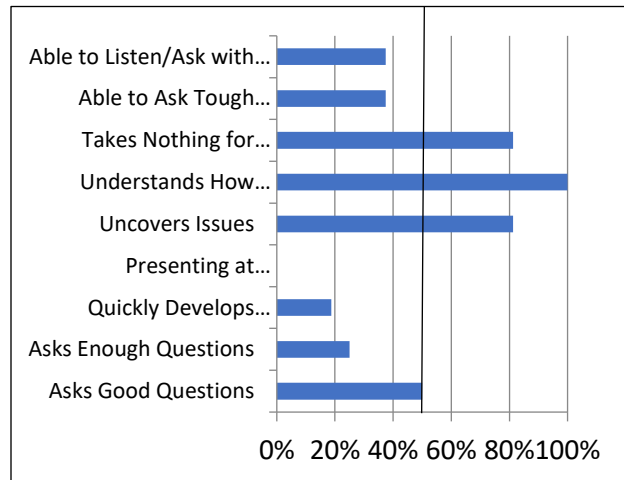
Each has serious deficits in skills:

- Loses control
- Accepts put-offs at time of close
- Is weak at qualifying
- Struggles with decision making

If the data indicates that the sales cycle is too long, the findings above explain why. Teaching a new technique won't help until the root cause is fixed.

Results of the **Sales Effectiveness and Impact Analysis** showed that the sales people in this Case Study group took responsibility and were effective in certain aspects of the sales process even though they and their managers lacked some of the crucial skills. With training and focus on the specific weaknesses, this group had good potential to grow and increase sales. The results demonstrated that the sales people were motivated to sell and that much of their motivation was intrinsic-- not money motivated. With proper tracking and coaching by sales managers, this group (minus the 17% who can't and won't prospect) can sell more. However, currently these producers lack the skills necessary to shorten the sales cycle.

Can this Team Sell More Consultatively?



Look at the vertical black line in the middle of the graph above. There are three attributes to the right of the 50% skill line but six skills to the left of the 50% line. Per the above graph, this group needs to develop skills in most of these crucial areas.

SEIA findings demonstrate that 88% of the sales team is Capable of Building Trust.

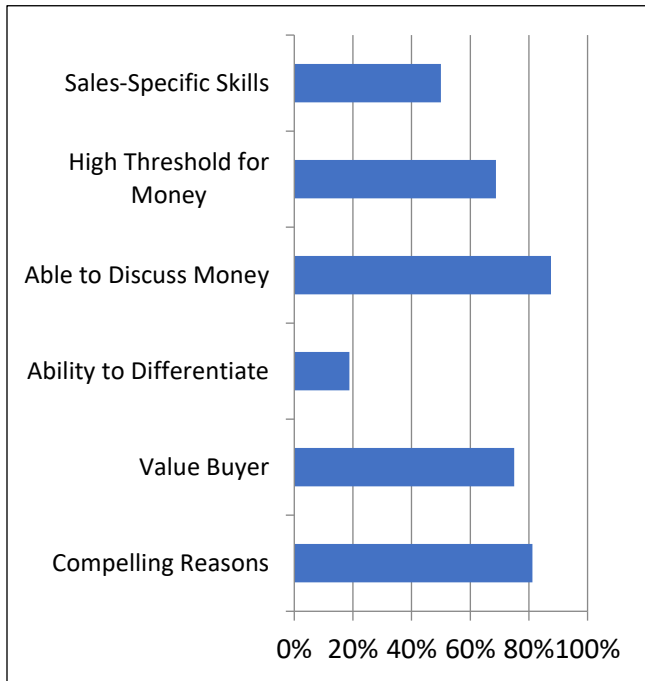


This is an excellent finding. Consultative selling is more than gathering information and more than providing consultant-type feedback. It is the Socratic approach (Customer focus) that makes consultative selling work.

Teaching salespeople the words to say, the questions to ask and the metaphors to use won't help if they:

- Fail to listen and ask appropriate questions with ease
- Fail to ask tough, challenging questions
- Fail to quickly develop relationships

Can This Team More Effectively Sell Value?



This sales team does a pretty good job of selling value. As you can see they:

- Have a high threshold for money
- Are able to discuss money
- Are value buyers
- Uncover compelling reasons to buy
- Possess necessary specific sales skills to position / sell value

The challenge they have in Ability to Differentiate can be fixed with better communication and monitoring internally.

Use of marketing and communicating differentiators is important so that these become well-known and so that they will be used in selling situations.

Is Our Value Proposition Consistent?

Below are some answers of sales people to the following: *"In your words, please describe the Company's Value Proposition."* The variety and content of the responses may be shocking, but results are similar EVERY time and for EVERY company we evaluate.

"Timely decision making, consistent credit standards and friendly service."

"We are a convenient bank with helpful financial solutions and knowledgeable employees."

"Exceptional Bankers. Effective Solutions. Lasting Relationships."

"Bank strives to provide excellent customer service and financing products that will lead to our customer's success."

"Providing banking services with support and solutions to clients in an honest, respectful and caring environment."

"Client Satisfaction is #1. Always greet our clients with a smile and let them know they are the reason we are here."

"Our friendly and solution-based workforce differentiates us."

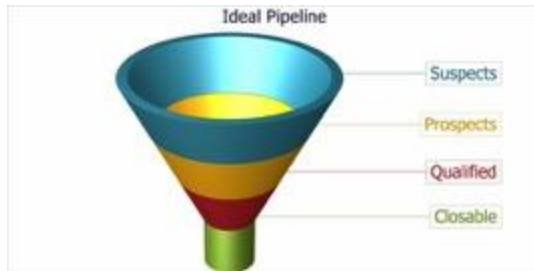
"Meet or exceed client expectations."

"Large bank services, community bank feel, local decision making."

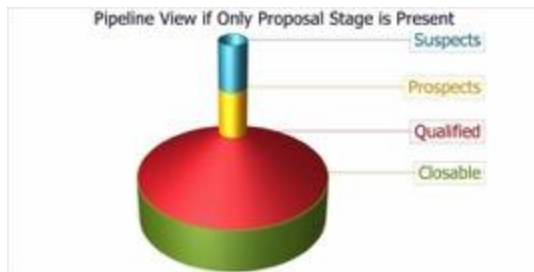
"Create value for both the bank and the client to maximize relationships and provide for future opportunities."

"Bringing timely and right sized solutions and ideas to our customers enabling them to grow their businesses and meet their goals."

Are Forecasts and Sales Funnels Accurate? NO.



This picture represents the typical sales funnel with lots of suspects at the top and as suspects are converted to prospects and then to qualified prospects and then to closable business, the funnel gets smaller at the bottom.



This picture represents a sales funnel with all the opportunities fully qualified and closable. No suspects, prospects or qualified opportunities at the top or middle. All opportunities are close-able and funnel has ballooned at the bottom.



The third picture represents sales funnel of CLOSE-ABLE opportunities. The team was asked to answer a series of qualifying questions (17) about 4 sales opportunities that THEY deemed as closable. If they had answered all the qualifying questions in the affirmative the funnel would look like #2. This finding reveals that the current pipeline is neither accurate or predictable.

The Percentage of Qualifying Questions Answered in the Affirmative for All Close-able Opportunities

	Compelling Reason to Solve Problem	Differentiated From The Competition	Commitment to Buy	Funding Exists	We Have a Solution	Dissatisfied With Incumbent Vendor
Sales Manager 1	96%	59%	70%	63%	100%	15%
Sales Manager 2	68%	71%	75%	93%	93%	18%
Sales Manager 3	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	0%

Pipeline Questions: Above are the percentage of times that each question was answered affirmatively by the sales people – meaning “Yes, I covered that, discussed that, have that answer”. The most obvious problem is that the current sales team is not flushing out **Dissatisfaction with**

Incumbent Vendor. If your salespeople are losing out to the incumbent, this finding will tell you what they must do differently in the qualifying step of the sales process.

What are the Short-Term Priorities for Accelerated Growth?

- Sales Management Competencies
- Shorten sales cycle by focusing on Sales Process, Sales DNA and Sales Skills
- Train on Hunting Skills
- Pipeline Systems, Processes, Implementation and Execution
- Train on Closing Skills
- Replace non-performers with sales people who look, act and sound like the now- identified top performers.
- Change the hiring strategy to eliminate hiring mistakes

When we first engaged in this discussion I asked the CEO about the company's appetite for change. Her response was, "We don't have a choice." From the results of the SEIA, we knew what the sales growth opportunity was, who could help close the gap and how best to approach the process. We reviewed the priorities. We developed the plan, implemented and followed through on the plan and identified all metrics and standards to track progress towards achieving the sales growth opportunity goal. This company implemented the plan and all priorities and is exceeding expectations.

If you need to answer the 19 questions and find out this information about your sales team, sign up for our [Free Demo](#).



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