

# Andrew's Ax

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## Incent!

If you're like me, you have spent a lot of time wondering how to get non-producers to produce. Hopefully, by now you've given up. Repeated studies show that you are better off investing time in your top performers. Peter Drucker told us long ago that you require far more effort to raise mediocre performers up to average than to boost your best performers up to excellence.

So let's talk about how to "incent"—that is, how to inspire *all* your staff to perform better. We'll focus on salespeople, but you can apply this month's tips to anyone.

We'll look at some non-cash ways you can inspire excellence in your sales or other teams. I've sub-divided my discussion into three areas: Leadership, Competencies and Rewards.

### Sales requires leadership

As the title of Robert Ramsey's book says, you can "*Lead, Follow, or Get Out of the Way.*" Motivated people will join you in your quest when you have shared the story of what brought you here, showing the common **purpose** you are pursuing. The greater the purpose, the greater the motivation people have to achieve their (and your) goals. More than a slogan on the wall, you need to articulate your mission, vision and values to your sales

team.

Next, you must be selling a **product/service** that adds value to your clients and fits the market. Nothing discourages a sales force more than working with products or services that don't fit the market. Just ask the U.S. auto salesmen forced to sell only left-hand drive models to the Japanese back in the 1980s.

Third, you need a sales **system**. Give your salespeople an easy-to-understand, client- and benefits-focused map that lets them know exactly what they can offer your prospects, the kinds of questions to ask, role-play scenarios, and provide them with a system to track where they are with each engagement.

Finally, be a **role model** in terms of your own attitude and performance. Lead by example, not by edict.

### Incent with competencies

People love to do what they do well. And there is always more to learn in order to improve, especially in sales. As Steve Chandler points out in his "Live at Santa Monica" CD, you don't need to look for new techniques or areas to work on—your top performers will hungrily devour anything they can find to improve their success rate.

But you can offer training or mentoring in areas like **self-awareness**, **solution selling**, **time management**, and **listening**. Support your staff with time and/or partial payment for such skill-enhancements.

Desire to grow professionally is natural:

you don't need to instill it; just don't kill it!

### **Now for the rewards**

Besides commissions and bonuses, what can you offer your salespeople as rewards? Here are four to consider:

#### **Visibility**

For the most part, your salespeople's most important work is done with people outside your walls. Give them (and their support staff) visibility by highlighting ("starring" is what we call it at AMT Group) the behaviors you want to see. Note them on a bulletin or white board. Ask salespeople to share their best experience of the week with other salespeople and support staff...in front of the whole team.

#### **Attention**

The other day a top performer (call him Tom) told me that his boss "doesn't have time to see me but I don't blame him; he has a lot on his plate." Well that may be, but the healthiest food on the plate should be his top performers! Instead, Tom is ready to walk right away from the meal.

#### **Time**

The most motivated salespeople don't usually want time "off" but you can create an atmosphere where it is crystal clear that performance, not presence, is what you reward. If they reach a milestone, find out what they would like to do with their time. Then let them do it.

#### **Energy**

If time is more valuable than money, then energy is more valuable than both time *and* money. With more energy, you get more done, and it gets done better and quicker. Make sure your salespeople exercise, eat right and get enough sleep in order to perform at their best. They face a lot of rejection, so whatever you can do to help them recover faster will go right to your top line.

Whether it's a gym membership, dinner at their favorite restaurant, or simply encouraging mid-day workouts or 20-minute power naps, do *something* to increase the energy flow in and outside your office. Try a new one this summer!

#### **A mental note**

Even if your salespeople claim they would prefer cash to a non-cash reward, remember a key rule of mental accounting: non-cash rewards are "guilt-free." Your staff "has to" go to Hawaii or to the nice dinner she's won, so she won't feel guilty for "wasting" your special bonus on something she "should" have bought instead. And she'll remember the trip for years to come.

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