



# Sales Leaders— ARE YOU GETTING THE RESULTS YOU WANT?

In many ways, selling is a bit of a black art: we can't control the customer, and their reasons for buying may or may not be the reasons we think they bought. Salespeople pump themselves up every day to go off into the unknown and find revenue. They work hard under a cloud of uncertainty and at the end of the year, they've put up a number. Then management sticks them with a new quota +5-10% higher than last year "just because." And sales managers are trying to manage this process.



By  
Don Drews

Tough talk is a popular stance for Sales Managers. The rest of the management team likes it. We expect it. "Charge that hill!" "Make it happen!" The buried assumption is that you can't be soft on salespeople or they'll slack off. But is tough talk producing the best results?

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**Tough talk is a popular stance for Sales Managers... But is tough talk producing the best results?**

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## The hard-nosed sales management approach: "FIND A WAY!"

"Find a way!" is a favorite phrase of the hard-nosed, tough-talking Sales Manager. Sounds great. He's making it happen. Kicking some tail. (And of course that tail really needed some kicking, didn't it?) But look under the hood of that comment and I think you'll find something interesting: fear, and a collapse of coping and problem solving. The real message of "Find a way!" to a salesperson is, "You're on your own, buddy."

I realized this awhile ago as I observed a fairly green VP of Sales. The volume was coming in below plan, and although he had been a pretty good salesperson, he was new as a manager. The more he said "Find a way!" (and variations on that theme), the clearer it became that what he was really asking for was for his people to save his neck. Despite the bravado with which he delivered "Find a way!", what he was really saying was, "Help!"

"You're on your own, buddy." was also the hidden message when a diligent, hardworking salesperson went to his

manager for help during the Great Recession. He was tagged with a quota based on last year's market conditions, and he truly wanted to meet his objective. But he couldn't make his customers buy, and after taking things as far as he could on his own, he sought help. What came back from his manager? "Find a way!" In effect, sink or swim.

## Consider the difference: "Let's find a way."

Now, let's just try a very slight modification to the approach. Consider the difference: "Let's find a way." instead of "Find a way!" Even reading this on your screen, you can feel the difference in the delivery and the manager's body language. And the world of difference in how it feels to the salesperson. Wow, if I get some help on this, I bet we might be able to crack this nut. Renewed hope instead of despair. Two heads instead of one. Space for creativity instead of cranking down tighter on the same screws. And notice one other very important thing from the Sales Manager's standpoint: He doesn't have to have the answer. He just has to create the sense that we're going to work as a team to solve a problem that hasn't been solved yet. That's actually how problems get solved: bring in more viewpoints, more expertise, more resources.

But the real secret that explains why "Let's find a way." is more effective is

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**The real magic of 'Let's find a way' is that it changes the interaction with the customer.**

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because it changes the interaction with the customer. Pushing harder and harder to get them to do what we want lowers the odds of success. But listening, flexibility, and problem solving invite the customer to partner with us.

## Change your approach, change your results

If you're not getting the results you want by banging your fist on the table, consider a gentler approach that encourages collaboration and creativity, confidence and hope. **Let's find a way.**