

# Ball-of-String Supervision

*Build your sales manager's success.*



by Don McNamara

**H**AVE YOU EVER HIRED A new sales manager merely because he or she was experienced and successful somewhere else? If you did, you probably assumed that your new manager would be able to step right in and instigate your company's sales processes, policies, and procedures.

In many ways, you vest authority to your sales manager to make decisions with your sales staff, customers, and prospects. Unless your sales manager is fully knowledgeable and tested in some fashion about how it is done in your company, predictably a few things will come unraveled.

Next time you hire a new sales manager, try the "ball of string" approach.

As you verify that assigned goals are being completed, you can let a little string off the ball to see how the increased authority and responsibility are handled. Then, as more difficult objectives are completed, you let a little more string out.

You will soon learn exactly what the new managers' capabilities are

and will be in a position to identify what skill set and product or company knowledge are required for enhanced performance.

*Why do this?* Coaching your sales manager to improved performance involves understanding present competencies, as well as areas that need improvement. When you turn your new sales manager "loose," you may discover that what you had assumed when you hired him or her was most likely premature. In fact, your new manager may not be ready to act as a full-fledged sales manager. Jumping the gun and assuming he is up to speed too soon will require you to intervene, or worse, perform triage in rectifying scenarios created from lack of company and product knowledge, or inappropriate supervision of your sales team.

Letting a little string out as you go and as objectives are met ensures you know what the manager understands and what you need to address with him so he continues to improve. Through observation and coaching, you can judge what remains open for improvement, letting a little more string off the ball as you go. Trust me, the last thing you want to deal with is an upset sales organization that is barraging you with complaints about the new sales manager's leadership style. **SSE**

*Don McNamara, CMC, is the founder of Heritage Associates and is a sales management consultant, trainer, and coach. 949-230-4363, djmcr@heritage-associates.net.*

**ACTION:** Test your new managers' capabilities.