

Cultivate Your Sales Team for Maximum Production

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Ah, Spring has arrived and you're ready for your sales team to shake off any remaining winter doldrums! It's time for them to start sending their roots deep into their pipelines and drawing what they need to produce a bumper crop of revenue.

But like all spring gardens, they will need some encouragement. And like any good gardener, you will need to do some feeding, watering, perhaps some pruning, maybe even some weeding – to ensure a top yield.

Till and Cultivate

What novice throws some seeds out in the dirt expecting baseball-sized juicy tomatoes by summertime? Likewise, a sales manager must cultivate for success by providing a nurturing, healthy work environment.

Weed out toxic, negative, or abrasive employees. The gossips, the blamers, the slackers, even disruptive divas...they poison a workplace by impacting morale (at best) or becoming an HR nightmare (at worst.)

Make sure the new employee's office/cubicle is cleared out and clean, all tools in place and functional (computers, peripherals, informational cube hangers, and, preferably, a welcome kit and nameplate.)

Create a workspace that says "Welcome, glad you're here!"

Fertilize Early and Often

Brain fertilizer in the form of training programs that are well designed, developed and delivered are onboarding essentials. Good sales, product and process training not only helps new employees do their jobs competently, but with confidence. That confidence shows in each interaction with prospects or customers.

However, like any fruiting plant, sales professionals need on-going training – brain fertilizer to expand their sales skills and to gain a deeper understanding of their customer's industries or verticals. Today's most successful sales professionals specialize in *relationship selling*, where possessing insider knowledge of what's going on in a particular industry or vertical brings value to having a conversation.

In addition to what ongoing training brings to the art of the sale, it is also management's way of showing an interest in both the professional and personal development of employees. That investment is noticed, and appreciated. It pays off in higher levels of engagement and productivity from your sales team.

Prune to Encourage Production

Fruit trees sometimes need pruning to channel their resources to bear more fruit. Rather than using water, fertilizer and sunlight to extend their branches hither and yon, they are encouraged to channel those resources to produce more buds, blooms and fruit.

Likewise, you may have to prune your sales professionals from time to time. For example, your top sales pro Alex gets a lot of questions and requests for assistance from your less-tenured reps. Alex is spending more and more time helping with systems and processes, especially order entry. Then a few more reps are asking Alex about objection management, good ways to close, and other tips and tricks. Before you realize it, the little time caterpillars are eating away at Alex's time on the phone, the pipeline runs low, and sales dry up. The bloom withers on the vine and no fruit is being produced. It's time to prune – nurture via a good 1x1 with Alex to refocus and redirect energy, time and effort towards production. If Alex needs to grow to prevent being root-bound, then work on a plan that allows controlled growth that is still production-based.

Weed as Necessary

When weeds threaten to choke your prize seedlings, you must eradicate them. When new employees come on board, if you've done your onboarding correctly by giving them the training, tools and space to build their own business, they are eager and excited to get started. Nothing kills that buzz more than Negative Nancy or Whining Walter:

"The leads are terrible."

"Fulfillment messes up our orders all the time."

"Our product can't compete with Brand XYZ."

"You're just a number around here. A number with a dollar sign – but still, just a number."

Equally distracting is Diva Doris, a top producer that comes in habitually late, misses one to two days a week, and highlights these disruptive behaviors even as she belittles the paltry production of her co-workers with statements such as "I produce twice as much as you guys and I'm only here half the time!"

Add in Harry the Harasser and Game-the-System Gary, and you've got toxic employees who are killing the morale of your team, running good employees off, and killing your production. There comes a time when you weigh the individual contribution against what a functional and healthy team could produce, and realize your toxic employee is a "net negative." Weed 'em out before they infest the whole garden.

Provide Plenty of Sunlight

Like plants who use photosynthesis to convert light to food, sales professionals thrive under management that recognizes and rewards both professional accomplishments and personal contributions. Recognition is required – and appreciation even *more* effective. (If you don't understand the difference, make a point of reading Gary Chapman's book "[The 5 Languages of Appreciation in the Workplace](#)")

In conclusion, every principle a good gardener practices works in the sales environment:

- Create a space for success, learning, growth and development
- Provide good training to get your sales team off to a good start, and continue training and development to encourage continual growth and optimal performance.
- Remind your employees looking to advance that while it is good to have an eye to the future, the present lays the groundwork for tomorrow. Increased revenues often result in organizational growth that will open new opportunities for advancement.
- Know the signs of a toxic employee and avoid hiring one. If you end up with a toxic employee, weed them out before they spread their toxicity throughout your team.
- Be positive and encourage positivity. Be encouraging, and encourage others to be encouraging. Learn how to express appreciation and look for ways to practice the art.

This blog post was expertly written by our in-house training manager, Cindy Tincher. Need all-star training and an outsourced sales team on your side? [Contact Invenio today.](#)

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