



SMA

SALES MANAGEMENT
ASSOCIATION

RESEARCH BRIEF

Sales and Sales Management Competency Dictionary

For Use in Sales Organization Competency
Model Development
Version 1.0
November 2008

SMA Research

The Sales Management Association
+1 312 278-3356
www.salesmanagement.org

About The Sales Management Association

The Sales Management Association is a global professional association focused on sales management's unique business and career issues. The SMA fosters a community of interest among sales force effectiveness thought leaders, consultants, academics, and sales management practitioners across many industries.

Through training workshops, online resources, and research materials, The SMA addresses the management issues of greatest concern to practicing sales managers. The SMA's focus areas include management leadership, sales force performance coaching, sales planning, sales process management, enabling technologies, incentive compensation, and sales force support.

Note to Members

This document has been prepared by The Sales Management Association for the exclusive use of its members. It contains valuable proprietary information belonging to The Sales Management Association, and each member should not disclose it to third parties. In the event that you are unwilling to assume this confidentiality obligation, please return this document and all copies in your possession promptly to The Sales Management Association.

The Sales Management Association has worked to ensure the accuracy of the information it provides to its members. This report relies upon data obtained from many sources, however, and The Sales Management Association is not engaged in rendering legal, accounting, or other professional services. Its reports should not be construed as professional advice on any particular set of facts or circumstances. Members requiring such services are advised to consult an appropriate professional. Neither The Sales Management Association nor its programs are responsible for any claims or losses that may arise from a) any errors or omissions in their reports, whether caused by The Sales Management Association or its sources, or b) reliance upon any recommendation made by The Sales Management Association.

Descriptions or viewpoints contained herein regarding organizations profiled in this material do not necessarily reflect the policies or viewpoints of those organizations.

Sales and Sales Management Competency Dictionary

For Use in Sales Organization Competency Model Development

The Sales Management Association's Sales and Sales Management Competency Dictionary is designed as a resource for firms developing competency models for their sales organizations. It draws upon commonly used competency descriptions used by sales organizations in defining the knowledge, skills, abilities, and behaviors associated with high-performing salespeople, sales managers, and sales support personnel.

Our dictionary is not comprehensive. Over time, the Sales Management Association will add more competency definitions so that this guide remains current, and in an effort to make this guide more complete. Please also note that competencies described here may overlap. Competencies defined in the dictionary may be used as group

competencies, as a means of linking other subordinate competencies with the group.

In using this guide, management should tailor the competency definitions to their own organizations. Effective competency models define specific competencies based on observable behaviors specific to high performers. Users of the dictionary should strive to make their competency definitions as relevant as possible to the jobs and roles within the competency model scope. This is best done through direct observation, depth interviews, surveys, and other data collection methods. Where such methods are impractical, this dictionary can provide a cost-effective alternative to jump-starting the development of an effective competency model.

Sales Force Competencies

Accountability. Understands objectives, priorities, and critical performance measures required to meet customer and organizational goals. Manages performance to achieve expected results. Stays abreast of performance results. Keeps management informed of progress, issues, and potential problems. Actively seeks out feedback on performance from customers, company management, and peers. Identifies and addresses areas of weakness that may affect organizational performance. Takes full responsibility for results, while holding others accountable as appropriate.

Always Learning. Learns quickly when facing new situations; a relentless and versatile learner. Is open to change; analyzes both successes and failures for clues to improvement; enjoys the challenge of unfamiliar tasks. Committed to personal and professional development; self-directed in pursuit of resources that aid continuous, active learning.

Ambitious. Committed to improvement and advancement of self as well as the company. Seeks out new opportunities for personal and professional growth. Tactfully challenges jobs or assignments that result in poor personal development opportunities; resists getting stale.

Analytical. Approaches problems in a methodical manner. Identifies data-collection requirements, validates information, identifies discrepancies or inconsistencies in data, and understands limitations of available information. Approaches a complex task or problem by breaking it down into its component parts and considering each part in detail. Able to discern meaningful patterns in data, using logic and reasoning to make fact-based judgments. Considers alternatives by making systematic comparisons. Weighs the costs, benefits, risks, and chances for success, in making a decision.

Builds Trust. Strives to understand others' issues and needs and communicates shared interests with others. Makes and meets commitments, following through when expected. Earns the respect and admiration of others. Establishes durable, professional relationships easily. Resolves conflicts and disputes with others in a responsible and constructive manner. Shares thoughts, feelings, and rationale so that others understand personal positions.

Change Agent. Critically assesses processes, practices, and programs in an effort to identify potential improvement opportunities. Works cooperatively with others to produce innovative solutions. Supports innovation and organizational improvement initiatives. Works to implement organizational change. Acts as a champion for change by encouraging peers to embrace change initiatives.

Communication Skills. Able to communicate accurately, concisely, and compellingly to a variety of audiences. Adapts communication methods based on situation. Clearly and concisely communicates using spoken or written communication. Presents with poise, authority, and clarity to audiences of varying size and in various settings. Responds appropriately to questions, objections, or challenges.

Competitor Awareness. Identifies and analyzes significant competitors; remains current in understanding their offerings, strategies, and differentiating characteristics.

Composure. Cool under pressure. Does not become defensive or irritated when confronted with sudden adversity. Considered mature; remains composed when under uncomfortable scrutiny. Remains even-keeled

when times are tough; handles stress. Adapts to unexpected circumstances without showing frustration. Acts as a settling influence in a crisis.

Customer Focus. Always acts with customers in mind. Dedicated to meeting the customers' expectations and requirements; acquires first-hand customer information and uses it for improvements in products and services; gains customer trust and respect by establishing and maintaining effective relationships; cultivates a customer-focused attitude among colleagues.

Customer Strategy Development. Uncovers customers' issues and needs. Establishes objectives and goals to achieve strategic plans. Prioritizes initiatives and focuses effort to optimize results for both customer and company. Adjusts customer strategy as needed. Gains input and buy-in from key customer and internal company stakeholders.

Deals with Ambiguity. Copes with change; shifts gears comfortably. Able to decide and act without having the total picture. Does not become agitated when key aspects of a situation are unclear. Does not insist on finishing everything before moving on. Comfortable with risk and uncertainty.

Decision Quality. Demonstrates good judgment. Makes timely, effective decisions without equivocating. Makes use of analysis, wisdom, experience and judgment. Has a track record of good decisions and is sought out by others for advice, insight, and solutions.

Delivers Results. Can be counted on to achieve goals; is consistently a top performer. Results oriented; steadfastly pushes self and motivates others for results. Never satisfied with performance that falls below expectations; demonstrates the ability to adapt behavior to overcome obstacles needed to achieve expected results.

Delivers Value. Adds value to all customer interactions. Manages customer interactions in a way that optimizes productivity and available time. Perceived by customers as a skilled problem-solver, knowledgeable information source, and a valuable business resource.

Detail Orientation. Maintains a working knowledge of key business requirements and processes required to achieve objectives. Conducts critical, detailed reviews to inspect quality and troubleshoot problems when needed. Allocates time effectively to balance need for acquiring detailed information without delaying timely decisions and action.

Determined. Persistent and tough-minded. Pursues everything with energy, drive and a need to finish; seldom gives up before finishing, especially in the face of resistance, setbacks or previous failures. Changes tactics, when appropriate, to achieve goals.

Financial Discipline. Understands financial terms and reports. Uses company assets carefully and conservatively. Supports and implements expense reduction and cost control measures. Earns an appropriate return on company investments.

Initiative. Demonstrates initiative by looking for, and suggesting, solutions to problems without prodding. A self-starter continually looking for ways to improve his/her effectiveness in the territory. Proactively involves

management and co-workers in order to address issues in a timely fashion. Ability to work with minimum supervision and take independent action.

Integrity. Widely trusted as a direct, honest person who can present the truth in an appropriate and helpful manner. Keeps confidences, and owns up to mistakes. Maintains confidentiality of private company and customer information. Consistently acts with a high degree of professionalism and ethics. Keeps commitments.

Interpersonally Skilled. Relates well to all kinds of people inside and outside the organization. Is genuinely concerned for people; treats everyone with dignity and respect; builds constructive and effective relationships; uses diplomacy and tact; is considerate. Can defuse even high-tension situations comfortably.

Manages Priorities. Spends his/her time and the time of others on the most important issues at hand. Puts trivial matters aside in order to focus on what's most important. Able to quickly sense what will help or hinder accomplishing a goal; eliminates roadblocks and distractions; remains focused. Always aware of performance objectives and the most actionable opportunities to achieve them. Adapts priorities to changing circumstances.

Networking. Initiates and develops relationships with influential decision-makers at all levels. Capable of cultivating multiple points of contact within both internal company and external customer environments.

Persuasive. Communicates compellingly. Able to command others' attention. Conveys credibility, trustworthiness, and good judgment when making suggestions. Uses supporting data effectively when attempting to make an argument or convince others. Adapts efforts to influence others based on specific individuals' or audiences' issues, needs, and perspective.

Planning. Accurately determines the difficulty of tasks. Appropriately prioritizes effort to maximize results. Establishes objectives and actionable goals. Identifies individual process steps and next actions associated with complex initiatives. Adapts plans in response to problems or changed circumstances. Routinely measures progress and evaluates results.

Problem Solving. Uses all resources available to analyze root causes and resolve difficult issues. Applies analytical skills to examine challenges and possible solutions thoroughly. Sees hidden problems.

Professionalism. Always represents the company in the best possible manner in speech, dress and conduct; sets a good example by displaying maturity and decorum in difficult situations. Fosters professionalism in others.

Profit Management. Able to make decisions beneficial to both the company and to customers while optimizing company profit. Balances the sometimes opposing objectives of volume and profitability attainment. Understands company profitability expectations and conveys them appropriately in internal company and external customer interactions. Invests company and customer resources wisely, with an eye toward maximum return on investment.

Prospecting. Secures new business for the firm by identifying, approaching, assessing, and closing new customers. Prioritizes effort to appropriately emphasize prospecting activities. Creative in finding new sources of customer leads. Cultivates lead referrals from customers and other prospects. Quickly assesses prospects'

potential in order to focus an appropriate level of effort on each opportunity. Closes new customers quickly and efficiently. Achieves objectives for developing new business.

Resourceful. Quickly identifies available resources. Solves problems by utilizing the best available information and support resources. Creative in identifying unusual or non-standard means of solving difficult problems. Continually trying to improve through the integration of new resources and ideas. Experiments and will try different things to find solutions.

Sales Driven. Consistently focused on developing customer-related opportunities to improve company sales and profits. Demonstrates creativity in building new business and expanding existing customer relationships. Approaches every business encounter with a sales orientation.

Self-Directed. Works with a minimum of supervision. Demonstrates initiative. Actively seeks out solutions without being asked. Proactively anticipates potential problems and seeks to address them.

Supports Company Culture. Leads others by example. Embodies company values in words, deeds, and results. Provides positive leadership to peers and subordinates even when not in a position of formal authority. Acts as a guardian of the company culture.

Work Ethic. Brings a high level of sustained energy and action to meeting responsibilities. When warranted, goes above and beyond, devoting extra effort to address difficult challenges. Seizes more opportunities than others. Is able to work effectively with minimum supervision and take independent action.

Sales Management Competencies

Accountability. Understands objectives, priorities, and critical performance measures required to meet market, team, and firm goals. Instills and understanding of critical performance measures among all individuals within the sales team managed. Manages subordinates' performance to achieve expected results. Proactively seeks out information required to stay abreast of performance results, and holds subordinates accountable for doing so as well. Keeps upper management informed of progress, issues, and potential problems. Actively seeks out feedback on performance, and identifies and addresses areas of weakness that may affect performance. Takes full responsibility for results, while holding others accountable as appropriate.

Always Learning. Learns quickly when facing new situations; a relentless and versatile learner. Is open to change; analyzes both successes and failures for clues to improvement; enjoys the challenge of unfamiliar tasks. Committed to personal and professional development; self-directed in pursuit of resources that aid continuous, active learning. Seeks input from subordinates, peers, and executive management for the purpose of developing management skills.

Analytical. Approaches problems in a methodical manner. Identifies data-collection requirements, validates information, identifies discrepancies or inconsistencies in data, and understands limitations of available information. Expects a sound analytical basis for decision-making among subordinates and peers. Able to discern meaningful patterns in data, using logic and reasoning to make fact-based judgments. Approaches a complex task or problem by breaking it down into its component parts and considering each part in detail. Considers

alternatives by making systematic comparisons. Weighs the costs, benefits, risks, and chances for success, in making a decision.

Builds Trust. Strives to understand others' issues and needs and communicates shared interests with others. Makes and meets commitments, following through when expected. Earns the respect and admiration of others. Establishes durable, professional relationships easily. Shares thoughts, feelings, and rationale so that others understand personal positions. Resolves conflicts and disputes with others in a responsible and constructive manner. Engenders subordinates' confidence that direction provided to them is appropriately motivated. Avoids being overly political.

Change Leadership. Critically assesses processes, practices, and programs in an effort to identify potential improvement opportunities. Engages subordinates and peers in the effort to identify innovative solutions. Actively cultivates an environment that supports constructive change. Directs, supports, and implements innovation and organizational improvement initiatives. Acts as a champion for change by encouraging subordinates and peers to embrace change initiatives.

Coaching. Routinely strives improve direct reports' performance. Establishes credibility and authority, and a trusting relationship with direct reports as a basis for effective coaching. Assists in solving problems in a manner that creates skill-development opportunities for subordinates. Guides others in strengthening knowledge and skills in ways that improve personal and organizational performance. Balances criticism with positive reinforcement. Prompt in addressing performance issues. Creates new opportunities and assignments that result in growth for direct reports.

Communication Skills. Able to communicate accurately, concisely, and compellingly to a variety of audiences. Adapts communication methods based on situation. Clearly and concisely communicates using spoken or written communication. Presents with poise, authority, and clarity to audiences of varying size and in various settings. Responds appropriately to questions, objections, or challenges. Validates subordinates' understanding of performance and coaching feedback.

Composure. Cool under pressure. Does not become defensive or irritated when confronted with sudden adversity. Considered mature; remains composed when under uncomfortable scrutiny. Remains even-keeled when times are tough; handles stress. Adapts to unexpected circumstances without showing frustration. Acts as a settling influence in a crisis.

Conflict Management. Identifies, locates, and clarifies significant sources of potential disagreement inside and outside the organization. Fosters constructive dialogue between individuals and groups. Actively reduces tension and conflict that can impede results. Promotes healthy conflict within the organization or team managed as a means of enhancing understanding and determining a best course of action. Uncovers areas of agreement among individuals or groups in conflict, and focuses on these as a means of resolving dispute.

Customer Focus. Always acts with customers in mind. Dedicated to meeting the customers' expectations and requirements; acquires first-hand customer information and uses it for improvements in products and services; gains customer trust and respect by establishing and maintaining effective relationships; requires and develops a customer-focused attitude among subordinates and cultivates a customer-focus among others in the organization.

Delegates. Clearly and comfortably delegates both routine and important tasks and decisions; shares both responsibility and accountability; tends to trust people to perform; avoids micro-managing while letting direct reports finish their own work with appropriate follow-up.

Detail Orientation. Maintains a working knowledge of key business requirements and processes within the area managed. Capable of conducting critical, detailed reviews to inspect quality and troubleshoot problems when needed. When needed, demonstrates a command of details required to make sound managerial decisions. Allocates management time effectively to avoid micromanaging. Empowers others while staying engaged in the business.

Develops Sales Talent. Identifies individuals with potential to be sales contributors. Seeks to learn about direct reports' aspirations, assesses their developmental needs and help them realize their full potential. Has a track record of developing individuals and teams that achieve company and individual goals. Sought out by sales talent as a desirable manager. Provides coaching, mentoring, constructive feedback; identifies and corrects deficiencies, provides developmental experiences, visibility and exposure.

Expects Determined Effort. Persistent and tough-minded. Encourages subordinates' determination by expecting goals to be pursued with energy, drive and a need to finish. Does not allow direct reports to give up critical tasks before finishing, especially in the face of resistance, setbacks or previous failures. Facilitates changes in tactics, when appropriate, to assist others in achieving goals.

Fairness. Treats subordinates equitably, without giving preferential treatment. Sets objective criteria for making judgments and sticks with them. Consistently applies logic and objectivity in making difficult decisions. Acknowledged as a manager who makes consistently fair decisions by direct reports.

Financial Discipline. Demonstrates commitment to managing company assets with the appropriate level of care and oversight. Identifies and implements expense reduction and cost control measures. Expects and earns an appropriate return on company investments. Understands financial terms and reports.

Fosters Company Culture. Leads others by example. Embodies company values in words, deeds, and results. Provides positive leadership to peers and subordinates even when not in a position of formal authority. Fosters an environment supportive of company values among subordinates, and takes decisive action when confronted situations or behavior in others that compromises company values. Acts as a guardian of the company culture.

Goal Management. Establishes goals that are actionable, achievable, realistic, and objectively measured. Aligns goals for teams or individuals managed with organizational objectives and strategy. Allocates goals across resources or teams managed in order to optimize overall productivity while aligning with total organization objectives. Ensures direct reports understand assigned goals. When required, efficiently adjusts goals mid-course within the policies and guidelines established. Prioritizes objectives based on business need.

Integrity. Widely trusted as a direct, honest person who can present the truth in an appropriate and helpful manner. Keeps confidences, and owns up to mistakes. Maintains confidentiality of private company and customer information. Consistently acts with a high degree of professionalism and ethics. Keeps commitments.

Demands high levels of integrity from direct reports, and takes decisive action when standards of integrity are compromised.

Interpersonally Skilled. Relates well to subordinates, peers, and superiors inside and outside the organization. Is genuinely concerned for people; treats everyone with dignity and respect; builds constructive and effective relationships; uses diplomacy and tact; is considerate. Can defuse even high-tension situations comfortably.

Managerial Courage. Is truthful and direct in professional relationships. Tells even the hard truth to coworkers when in the organization's best interest. Provides direct, accurate, and actionable feedback to others in a timely manner. Not afraid to reveal unpopular or unpleasant truths to management when required. Willing to be the only champion for an idea or position.

Managerial Judgment. Consistently makes good decisions involving allocating company resources, assigning responsibility among direct reports, deploying sales resources, and establishing priorities. Establishes credibility among subordinates, peers, and executive management by exercising good judgment in a range of circumstances. Makes use of analysis, wisdom, experience, and the input of key stakeholders when making decisions. Has a track record of good decisions and is sought out by others for advice, insight, and solutions.

Manages Ambiguity. Copes with change; shifts gears comfortably. Able to decide and act without having the total picture. Does not become agitated when key aspects of a situation are unclear, and engenders composure in subordinates in the face of ambiguity. Does not insist on finishing everything before moving on. Comfortable with risk and uncertainty. Adept at making good decisions and taking appropriate action with limited information.

Manages Priorities. Spends his/her time and the time of others on the most important issues at hand. Puts trivial matters aside in order to focus on what's most important. Able to quickly sense what will help or hinder accomplishing a goal; eliminates roadblocks and distractions; remains focused. Always aware of performance objectives and the most actionable opportunities to achieve them. Attends to the most important issues impacting direct reports without ignoring other team members. Adapts priorities to changing circumstances.

Manages Vision and Purpose. Communicates a compelling and inspired vision or sense of purpose; talks about future possibilities. Conveys optimism. Capable of inspiring and motivating teams or organizations. Facilitates others' understanding of company vision and purpose in ways most relevant to their individual perspective.

Motivates Others. Fosters an environment conducive to accomplishment. Inspires and enables individuals and teams to achieve. Empowers others by pushing tasks and decisions down. Invites input from others and shares ownership and visibility. Makes each person feel his/her work is important; is someone people like working for and with.

Performance Management. Clarifies expectations and performance standards. Provides sufficient direction and timely feedback. Addresses performance deficiencies in a timely manner. Makes difficult decisions regarding staff terminations without unnecessary delay. Conducts effective formal and informal performance appraisals.

Planning. Develops strategies for the company and coordinates their implementation. Accurately assess the difficulty of initiatives and tasks. Identifies individual process steps and next actions associated with complex initiatives. Prioritizes effort for self and others to maximize results. Creates clear objectives and actionable goals. Integrates available resources, including direct reports, into planning process. Anticipates potential barriers to success, and adapts plans in response to problems or changed circumstances. Always measures progress and evaluates results.

Professionalism. Always represents the company in the best possible manner in speech, dress and conduct. Sets clear expectations among direct reports for professional standards, and embodies professionalism by displaying maturity and decorum in difficult situations. Fosters professionalism in others.

Profit Management. Ensures assigned sales team(s) makes decisions beneficial to both the company and to customers while optimizing company profit. Assists subordinates in balancing the sometimes opposing objectives of volume and profitability attainment. Understands company profitability expectations and conveys them appropriately in internal company and external customer interactions. Invests company and customer resources wisely, with an eye toward maximum return on investment.

Provides Leadership. Establishes credibility, authority, and organizational standing with subordinates. Provides vision and purpose to individuals and teams managed. Leads by example whenever possible. Exerts indirect influence on peers, superiors, and indirect subordinates both inside and outside the organization. Establishes purpose, motivation, and focus to individuals or teams managed. Seen as a steadying influence and a source of sound judgment.

Recruits Talented Associates. Identifies and hires the best people available from inside or outside the organization. Seeks out strong contributors while assembling teams with complimentary skills and strengths. Follows a consistent selection and assessment process. Proactively maintains an adequate pipeline of recruiting prospects.

Resourceful. Quickly identifies available resources. Solves problems by utilizing the best available information and support resources. Creative in identifying unusual or non-standard means of solving difficult problems. Adapts management priorities to available resources, and finds new ways to achieve objectives even if under-supported. Continually trying to improve through the integration of new resources and ideas. Experiments and will try different things to find solutions.

Results-Focused. Can be counted on to deliver results and achieve assigned goals. Balances managerial effort to have the greatest impact on overall performance achievement. Directs teams that consistently outperform expectations. Instills an unwavering focus on results among subordinates, while motivating them to continually improve. Never satisfied with performance that falls below expectations; demonstrates the ability to adapt behavior to overcome obstacles needed to achieve expected results.

Sales Strategy Development. Quantifies and prioritizes available opportunities for achieving sales performance objectives. Has the ability to see ahead clearly, identify future sales-related trends, and articulate future possibilities. Aligns available resources with actionable opportunities. Creates clear action plans for achieving results. Adapts strategy to changing conditions.

Technical Management. Comfortable with new technology. Picks up on technical things quickly; adept at using data and technology to diagnose and solve problems. Conceives of ways to leverage data and systems to increase sales potential and improve customer service.