



Think Twice Before Promoting Your Star Producer into Management

Richard T. Cleary
Hoopis Performance Network
President – FSEdNet Division

When an agency or firm needs a new sales manager, top management’s logical first choice is often the star sales producer.

Most top performers are excited about the promotion, and they don’t want to let their bosses down, so they take the job. They think it would-be career suicide to turn it down. That’s why many top salespeople end up taking a sales management role, even though they never really wanted to be a manager. They want to please others around them, and they want to help the company, but many are not prepared for the challenges and changes that lay ahead of them.

Being Good in One Job Doesn’t Guarantee Success in Another

Remember the classic “Peter Principle”? It was an observation that in any kind of hierarchy, people tend to rise to their “level of incompetence.” In other words, as people are promoted, they become progressively less effective because good performance in one job does not guarantee similar performance in another.

Sales producers are conditioned to excel on their own, and they know what works for them as individuals. Teaching others how to have similar success is an entirely different skill. That’s why, once promoted to sales management, great salespeople often struggle to succeed in the new role. Tiger Woods isn’t known as a great golf coach, and you don’t see LeBron James conducting shoot-arounds. Their gift is in their own performance, and great coaches know that.

Why Salespeople Often Fail at Management

When we promote top sales producers into management, we lose their extraordinary sales production. And if they aren’t happy in the management role, we run the risk of losing their talent altogether if they leave the firm or agency.

Without management training, new managers typically struggle to excel in the unfamiliar role. They might not enjoy leading others to succeed, and they might become impatient with producers who lack the talent they have. To compound this problem, their associates



want strong leadership but might not be getting it, so they often leave the agency or firm, too. You can see why promoting your top producer into management without the proper preparation can be a costly mistake.

Two Potential Solutions

Here are your primary options. Choose the one that's right for your organization:

1. Conduct an external talent search for a sales manager with a successful track record of management success.
2. Promote a top sales producer only if he or she has expressed a genuine interest in management and only after providing the person with management training. Before you do that, establish a process for evaluating sales management candidates, the same way you evaluate potential agents or advisors. Hold them to the same standards you would hold external candidates. This will help you avoid moving a producer into management just because you like him or her.

Consider Hoopis Performance Network for Management Training

One effective resource for training new or existing managers is HPN, an innovative virtual platform designed for financial leaders who are building a region, an agency or firm, a sales unit or a sales team.

You can get access to hundreds of high-impact sessions for all levels of experience, divided into five distinct elements of success. These sessions are short and easily digestible, averaging less than 10 minutes. Your managers can access the video training anytime, anywhere, on their computers, smartphones or tablets.