



Your Top Salesperson is Gone- How Could This Have Been Avoided?

Attrition is an anticipated byproduct of every business, but when it includes losing key salespeople, the impact can be devastating. Measures such as non-compete agreements and transferring of accounts to other sales representatives are frequently imposed to mitigate a loss in revenue, yet accounts still remain vulnerable as trust and confidence must be established between the new rep and the client. Sales professionals by nature are relationship-oriented people, and just as their rapport with key accounts is vital to a company's business, employers should be considering whether they are nurturing or squandering their relationships with top salespeople. Further, how can companies see the warning signs and redirect salespeople who have one foot out the door?

A recent article asserts that a key measurement of any client risk situation is relationships, as well as the quantity, quality and tenure of those relationships. The same criteria can be leveraged to assess relationships with individual members of a company's salesforce. "Just as it's important for salespeople to establish and maintain multiple relationships with key contacts within a client account, it's important for employers to build a multi-thread relationship with their account executives," says Suzanne Rice, director of U.S. franchise development for MRINetwork. "When companies provide several different channels to appeal to salespeople's desires for upward mobility, leadership opportunities and personal growth, they lower the chances of their account executives moving on."

Rice provides the following advice to companies looking to develop multi-dimensional relationship with their salespeople:

Lead with a motivational, team-building management style. When salespeople are disgruntled, the root cause can frequently be traced back to management. Don't create a

divisive environment through unfair policies around quotas and commissions, or by giving preferential treatment to other staff. Instead, create policies that both incentivize salespeople and encourage them to collaborate on a sale whenever possible.

Leverage your training and development team. If the organization delivers or has access to renowned sales training programs, or even [certification programs](#), salespeople are more likely to remain engaged and motivated. It's not just about up front training, but also continuous development both on basic concepts and new techniques.

Encourage account executives to access the public relations or external communications team, to promote their market knowledge on behalf of the company, through media opportunities that can help establish them as industry thought leaders. This can include personal or volunteer projects that are aligned with the company brand. This will also differentiate them from competitors, while providing added confidence and motivation to remain successful.

Provide mentorship programs, where senior account executives can guide junior salespeople. Career-tracking or mobility programs are

great, but internal mentoring programs present the opportunity for sales professionals to learn best practices and how to avoid common pitfalls, from their peers.

Keep it fun with sales contest, incentives, company celebrations, etc. Day-to-day sales activities can be very draining and monotonous. Anything that can be done to lighten the mood and improve the company culture will help offset the daily frustrations encountered by salespeople.

"Successful salespeople leave companies when they feel they've exhausted their income potential, their growth opportunities, or don't agree with management policies," adds Rice. "No company is perfect, but when employers encourage account executives to become deeply entrenched in the organization through several, mutually beneficial, relationship opportunities, it becomes more difficult for salespeople to leave."

