

# Term Paper: Sales Management Practice

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## Marketing 4030: Sales Management

### Purpose

This term paper exercise is designed to have you study the specific sales practices of a company of your choice. You are to study a company directly, that is, by personally interviewing one or more key executives (for example, the regional sales manager). This will be a group project. You will select a company for your study according to several criteria:

1. Personal interest: your group finds the company intriguing
2. Convenience: a family member, friend, or a member of your group can provide access.
3. Availability of supplementary library material: Is the company one that the business press writes about?

Whatever your reason, the selection of your company is up to your group.

### Important Concepts

The following is a format for constructing and presenting your term paper on Sales Management Practice. Please remember that your own creativity and style are critical in any report.

- *Company and Industry Background:* Describes the context in which the sales function operates. Includes a brief company history, a description of company objectives, management philosophy, strategy, etc. You must do a library search on the industry and company and present an original strategy overview relevant to the sales position (in other words, identify key marketing strategies and the role of personal selling within them).
- *Description of the Sales Manager's Position:* Provide background information as to the qualifications of the sales managers position, what previous job experience they had on their way to this current position. How many people do they manage? How much time do they spend working with their reps vs. office paperwork?
- *Sales Planning and Forecasting:* Discover how often the plans their sales forecast, how well the plan is used in the day to day operations, what forecasting tools are used, etc.
- *Organization of the sales function:* Defines the position and role of the sales function within the organization. Includes a description of job responsibilities, lines of communication, territory division, account management practices, and assignment. An organizational chart-included in the report or in the appendix-is helpful for presenting this information.

- *Recruiting and Selection:* Who performs the recruiting function, how are candidates identified, what selection procedures are used, what training programs do new recruits participate in, who conducts the training sessions?
- *Compensation:* How are individuals paid, what compensation methods are used, what methods of motivation does the firm use, what rewards are given, etc.?
- *Sales expenses:* What expenses does the firm cover (auto, meals, hotels, office equipment and supplies)
- *Territory Assignments:* How are sales territories and quotas assigned?
- *Performance Appraisals:* How often, who performs them, what is the impact on compensation as a result of the performance appraisal?

In addition to summarizing information from your interview, *your report must include recommendations or a critique of the sales management activities of the firm that you have studied.* In this recommendation/critique section, you are to critically analyze the sales management practices of the company: what are they doing right? What are they doing wrong? Where could they improve? In fact, you might ask your sales manager these questions when you meet them. Good recommendations will incorporate class material with information gathered and sound, personal judgment. Recommendation: a good target to shoot for as you are developing your project is to dedicate about half of your time summarizing how your company operates in practice and the other half on recommendations/critique.

### **Presentation Guidelines**

- Presentations are not to exceed 20 minutes in duration (5-10 minutes following your presentation will be allowed for questions - i.e. max of 30 minutes allotted for each group).
- All group members must play an active role in the presentation (presenting a portion of the material or active in answering questions).
- Presentations should be developed using Powerpoint '97 or later edition. Bring presentation on a floppy disk, CD-ROM, or ZIP disk (multiple media is recommended in the event of complications). **SCAN ALL DISKS FOR VIRUSES PRIOR TO BRINGING THEM TO CLASS.**
- Role play - you are a sales management consulting team presenting your findings to senior management. Therefore, it is imperative that you sell yourselves.
- Finally, be sure to leave ample time for recommendations for the organization. Although we need to understand where the organization is now, we really need to know where to go from here.

### **Written Report Guidelines**

- Written reports are not to exceed 5 pages, plus unlimited appendixes. Given the group nature of this paper, you should be struggling to cut the information down to 5 pages.

Thus, this document should be as efficiently written as possible - to the point, with no wasted words.

- The report should act as a supporting document to the presentation, and should act as a reference and elaboration of material presented. Make sure the two are consistent!
- Reports are due on the day of your scheduled Sales Management Presentation (TBA).

The papers will be evaluated on the following dimensions:

1. Grasp of the subject: Overall view of the subject, comprehensiveness; extent to which concepts from the course is applied to your paper ("40%).
2. Research: Soundness of interpretation; quality of material; effort expended to gather information ("40%).
3. Format: Appearance of paper; sentence structure- spelling - READABILITY ("20%).

### **Group Member Participation**

This is a group project. Students will work in-groups of 4-5 members. As could sometimes be the case in-group projects, 1-2 students often carry the bulk of the load and the other team members are carried along on their "coattails". To avoid this, there will be a group evaluation form that will be distributed after the presentations. Fifteen percent (20%) will be based on these evaluations.

To ensure that you are making progress, I will be available to help you individually or as a group. I don't want you getting bogged down and not knowing where to start. I will also be more than happy to review any and all material you have collected for the project, including rough drafts of your final papers.

### **Grading**

Presentation (40%); Written Report (40%); Individual Evaluation (20%)

### **Some Helpful Tips**

1. Be professional and prepared. Respect the executive's time and your own. Prepare a professional interview guide and list of questions.
2. Schedule in advance; show up on time - be friendly, but focus on your objectives.
3. Start early: Do your background reading on the company and schedule an interview before midterms at the latest.
4. When interviewing your selected company, do not ask for proprietary information. Executives will most likely not give it to you, and it is not an assigned part of the project to uncover company secrets.

5. Appendices and Exhibits: Please use these supplements effectively - I will only look at it, if your paper tells me to. Do not attach company brochures or product manuals, unless you have a really good reason.
6. References: Cite all library and published company information that was useful in supporting your paper. Include the names and titles of the people you spoke with at your company.
7. Select your company in the next few weeks, construct your interview questions, and find out what you can about your company/industry at the library. The earlier you get this done, the better.

### Sample Interview Questions

These questions are meant to be illustrative-many other questions could (and should) be asked. Be creative and curious-what would you really like to know about your chosen company, its sales force, etc.

1. What corporate and product strategies most directly affect the role of the sales force?
2. Is the sales force a key strategic asset to your companies' success? Why or why not?
3. What is your background, (educational, sales experience, managerial, marketing, etc.)?
4. How does your sales force strategy compare to that of your key competitors?
5. How do you determine how many sales reps to employ? Has the number increased or decreased recently? Why?
6. How is the sales force budget established? Has the budget increased or decreased recently? Why?
7. Do you recruit through college placement offices? Why or why not?
8. What are the starting sales positions with your company? What career paths are typical for a successful salesperson at your company?
9. What training programs do you provide? Does the sales manager perform sales training for his/her staff.
10. How are the new reps initial sales assignment determined?
11. Do you or your company set sales quotas? What method is used? Do you forecast sales? What method is used (avoid getting too specific on this one)?
12. What compensation methods are used? Why?
13. What process is used to evaluate sales reps? How do you motivate and reward sales personnel? Why?
14. What are the primary responsibilities of a sales manager in your firm?
15. What special skills, abilities, knowledge are required to be a sales manager?
16. What are ethical and legal responsibilities of sales managers?

**Note: This is an illustrative list and not an exhaustive list!**

Timothy, M. Smith. Marketing 4030: Sales Management Practice, Term Paper. Carlson School of Management, University of Minnesota. 11 Nov. 2002.