DESIRED SELLING SKILLS: COMPLIANCE OF A SAMPLE OF LEBANESE COMPANIES.

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DEDICATION

... to my father ...

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OUTLINE

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DETAILED OUTLINE

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION : The general trend for training in the Lebanese companies, taking into consideration the post war situation and the increasing importance of training, along with the possible gaps and further needs.

CHAPTER 2: GENERAL THEORIES OF SALES MANAGEMENT: An overview of the theories with a focus on training in general. The aim of this chapter is to understand the need for training within professional sales management practices.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY: This chapter intends to explain how the working procedure will be resumed through the research.

CHAPTER 4: TRAINING THE SALES FORCE ON SPECIFIC SELLING SKILLS: This chapter discusses the skills to be used by the sales representative along the selling cycle which consists of the six below steps.

CHAPTER 5: TRAINING THE SALES FORCE ON COMPLEMENTARY SUBJECTS: This chapter discusses the most important topics to be given to the sales representative as a complementary package to the basic selling skills. The aim is to discuss general theories that apply to all sales reps and not limit the study to one specific field or line of business/product.

PROLOGUE

It's all about sales.

In the summer of 1982, I woke up at 8:00 after I dreamed of swimming in the hot mediterranean waters. By 8:30, after a sweating conversation, I had convinced myfather of the idea of taking us to the beach. At 9:30, while we were mid road, another need arose: Ice cream! Only this time it was somehow easier to get. New challenges like getting more ice cream on the shore or delaying the time to leave until 5:00 were annoying but finally overcome. On the way back, competition was fierce. My brother and sisters wanted to eat Lebanese food while I wanted a pizza. I will never forget the taste of that particular pizza, even though I am now persuaded that it was like any other pizza – if not less tasty.

Today I realize that on that ordinary 10 hours vacation day, I was able to close five sales, two of which were really hard to get.

Isn't this what we do in every moment of our lives? Buy and sell.

Ironically, I think about the oldest and most powerful sale of all times. The product was an apple, the salesperson Eve and the customer Adam. A sale that changed forever the history of mankind.

It IS all about sales.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Why train in the first place?

The aftermath: During the 20 years of war in Lebanon, "survival" was the name of the game. Minimizing risk, danger, inventories... and maximizing safety, direct sales... were often key issues leading to successful operations. In most cases, training was regarded as a second – or third- priority for the business.

With the end of war in 1991, "resurection" became the new theme. Minimizing mistakes, complaints... and maximizing efficiency, loyalty, profitability... are the new clues. Meeting these new criteria after 20 years in the cave is impossible without adequate training, especially that Lebanese firms are bound to compete with foreign companies that are going international and trying to standardize their products in different markets including Lebanon.

Today's war: Even with the end of the physical war, an ever lasting war remains and gets more agressive: COMPETITION. Building competitive edges, using economies of scale, innovating, getting more professional in management practices and most of all, having highly skilled human resources are all necessary factors for success. Training fits with the above trend.

In addition, the new market structures that are putting the customer at the top of the hierarchy, make the employees who are closer to him, the sales reps, the most important ones in the company.

Today's sales representatives are managers of a market area – their territoties. They are also often assigned many marketing tasks such as identifying customers' wants and solving their problems, many times on the spot, and often as a result of an exciting counter offer from competition.

As their name suggests, sales representatives do represent their company with customers and with society in general. It is very unlikely that a customer blames the production, accounting, or any other department when he has a problem. The perceptions of the company's products, services, culture... are the impressions left by the sales reps during their work. Their outside activities contribute to the forewarding of those perceptions. Therefore, a sales rep needs more tact, sociability, skills at all levels, product and industry knowledge... than any other employee on the same level in the organization. He makes his living out of dealing and spending most of his time with all types of people, many of whom may be a real pain in the neck but still inevitable to enable him reach his objectives. The cost of failure can be high, the sales rep is continuously facing mental stresses and disappointments, coupled with the harch physical demands of the job.

Besides, the sales department is the only department that brings direct revenues to the company. No other department can operate if the sales reps do not bring home the money at the end of the day. The sales reps are also largely responsible for implementing the firm's marketing strategy in the field. They are the ones who give feedback to the marketing department about new customer needs, trends, complaints, competitors' plans... and if empowered, they can most of the time suggest the best solutions and alternatives for the reactions and possible counter attacks.

All these factors combine to require that the sales people be highly trained in order to best fulfill their tasks.

1.1: SCOPE OF THE STUDY

In the mid 90's, Lebanese companies started to give more and more attention to training. New training centers, companies, and individuals emerged to satisfy this once forgotten basic need. New words such as "empowerment", "Life Long Learning"... are being repeated by managers in their daily activities. A better focus on the customer and on the employee (the internal customer) is aimed at. It is beyond doubt that companies with a direct sales force are realizing how important it is for them to upgrade their sales reps' skills and standards and are aiming at giving them the adequate training to achieve these standards.

However, some key questions remain unanswered:

- Do companies know exactly which type of training is needed for their sales reps to attain the optimal skills and knowledge levels?
- Do companies work on ensuring all the necessary training for their sales representatives?
- Do companies analyze alternative training techniques and use the most adequate ones?
- Do companies ensure that sales reps apply what they learned in training programs in their daily work?

Such questions raised the need for this study, which will attempt to analyze the training function regarding the sales reps in a sample of Lebanese sales oriented companies.

1.2: OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This research project has 2 major objectives:

1- To study the selling skills and other related topics that would form the desired training package for a sales representative, which will result in obtaining a manual containing the main ideas about the training and learning material needed by the sales rep.

2- To analyze the compliance of a sample of Lebanese companies with the optimal training package, which will give us an indication as to what is still to be improved in current practices on sales training.

1.3: LIMITATIONS

This study will have the following limitations:

- The research will be held during july 1999. This year has faced many changes in the economy which led many firms and companies in various industries, including the insurance industry, to reengineer, downsize, reduce expenditures and even close. This affects the companies' vision towards training, which might be considered as the least urgent subject to handle. This might give us less accurate results.
- Another factor, which cannot be denied in the Lebanese mentality, is the general tendency to exaggerate figures. Although closed ended and choice questions will be used and direct interviews with managers for questionnaires findings will be held aiming at reducing the gaps, there is no practical control system that could allow us avoid them.

CHAPTER 2

METHODOLOGY

To conduct this study, a variety of information sources was required. In order to achieve the first objective, the following were the data sources:

- Business textbooks (secondary)
- Interviews with sales trainers (primary)
- Attended courses (secondary)
- Interviews with various managers (ptimary)
- Various business oriented journals (secondary)
- Naji Bejjani's related training guidelines (secondary)

In order to achieve the second objective, a questionnaire (primary) was formed and filled by a sample of Lebanese companies. The questionnaire was, whenever possible and in the majority of cases, paralleled with an interview so to avoid any misperception of the questions. The interview was formal and the questions filled in the prepared sequence so that any differences in the managers' responses would be attributed to genuine variations.

2.1- SAMPLE SELECTION

The aim of this research is to study a sample of companies in industries/sectors that have a direct salesforce to market their products and services. Furthermore, the companies' products/services should be of the type that requires professionalism in selling skills in order to achieve the sales. For example, the FMCG sector, which is usually aimed at in most researches that are undertaken in Lebanon, were not chosen for the simple fact that most sales reps are "order takers" and don't need much selling skills to take the order and assure its delivery. Therefore, the selected sample included the following industries:

- Insurance Industry
- Pharmaceutical and Medical products Industry

The selection of the sample took into account the number of companies in each industry. The distribution within the sample was done on a pro-rata basis. Having 81 companies that are operating in the insurance industry and 43 companies that are operating in the pharmaceutical and medical products industry, the sample included 9 insurance companies and 5 pharmaceutical and medical products companies. The percentage of chosen companies from the total was deliberatly taken this high (10% rounded up) due to the relatively small number of companies. This allowed more reliable results. Selection among the sample was done sequentially, surveying the first company that has more than six sales representatives covering the Lebanese regions. This minimum required is to make sure that the company has a substantial sales force (and adequate market coverage) which makes it possible to evaluate the training given to them from a professional point of view.

2.2- QUESTIONNAIRE STRUCTURE

The questionnaire contained five parts:

1- General company info

2- General information on the training activities to the sales force

3- Specific in depth info on the training of selling skills

4- Specific info on the training of complementary subjects

5- Information on the follow up after the training activities

To allow better interpretation of the results. Closed ended and mostly choice questions were used. The open ended questions were used with care and only when necessary.

The questionnaires were filled during a personal interview with the person who is concerned with training the sales force (sales manager, HR manager, general manager...) This allowed us make sure that all questions are understood as they are by all the audience, which added to the results credibility.

A sample of the questionnaire is enclosed in annex 1.

The questionnaires results and findings were compiled and results were ploted in tables that showed the companies answers in terms of percentages. The results showed each industry's answers separately in order to allow comparative analysis. In addition, the sample's consolidated answers (including both industries) were also added as total results in order to allow general trends and findings.

CHAPTER 3

GENERAL THEORIES OF SALES MANAGEMENT

This chapter is intended to allow us to understand where training fits within a professionnal approach to sales management in a company. The aim is not to learn in debth the theories of sales management, it is rather to put us again on the right track as a reminder of "what should be".

The issues treated in this chapter are a summary of the sales manager's activities. They were grouped into three main areas: Developing, directing, and controling the sales force.

3.1- DEVELOPING THE SALES FORCE

This is the first step in the sales management process. It contains two parts: The first is to recruit the sales force and the second is to train the sales force.

1- Recruiting the sales force: A successful recruitment of the sales people makes all the stages to follow much easier. A bad take-off could lead the company into serious burdens ranging from the direct recruitment and training/initiation costs to the indirect opportunity costs incurred. The recruitment process involves the following steps:

1.1- Conducting a job analysis: The first step is for the company to know what the job is before getting people to do it. A job analysis is done to determine the duties and responsibilities as they are actually performed, and as they should be performed, in the sales environment. This is impossible without observing and recording the tasks as they are performed on the job.

1.2- Preparing a job description: Job descriptions are the written and detailed results of the job analysis findings. They are the guidelines that show the sales rep what is expected from him. They are also used for selecting, training, compensating and evaluating the sales force, which explains the importance of job descriptions in each company and not only for the sales rep's job.

1.3- Developing a set of job qualifications: This can also be refered to as "Applicant Profile". It describes the qualifications that a recruit should have in order to perform the sales job satisfactorily. The qualifications can be tangible, such as education, years of experience, age, sex, specific skills... or intangible, such as energy, self confidence, hunger for money, perseverance, competitive attitude, empathy, ego drive.... It is important to note that knowing what and how much of the above stated qualifications should be present in every sales rep always depends on the situation (the company culture, environment, product line, target customers...)

1.4- Attracting a pool of applicants: Companies have a continuous need to identify, locate, and attract potentially effective sales reps. There are many sources for managers to chose from in order to find potential recruits. These sources include: (1) people within the company, (2) people in other firms, (3) educational institutions, (4) advertisements, and (5) employment agencies.

1.5- Selecting the sales force: The selection process includes many activities. The more they are consumed, the more we are likely to chose the best. These activities include: (1) applicant forms, which mainly help collect information pertaining to physical conditions, family status, education, business experience, military service, outside activities of interest…, (2) personal interviews, which allow the manager assess the candidate's communication style, intelligence, sociability, aggressiveness, empathy…, (3) reference checks, which mainly help confirm information collected from applications and interviews, (4) physical examination, which is more important for a sales job as it requires much physical, as well as mental and emotional stresses, and (5) tests, which are becoming more and more important in the selection process. These tests can be in the form of intelligence tests, aptitude tests, personality tests…

2- Training the Sales Force: Developing effective sales training programs for both new and experienced salespeople is rapidly becoming one of the most important parts of a sales manager's job. The training program is a vital link in the process of converting the competent recruit into a full-fledged and productive member of the work group. Sales training should be thought of as a specific program, formal or informal, designed for sales force development in order to achieve the overall, long-run goal of a marketing organization. According to Ed Flanagan, president of the Sales Executives Club of New York: "It may be one of those summary statements, but it's true: Sales and increased sales will always go to the better trained people". (Anderson, Hair, Bush, p. 246)

The major point to remember about designing training programs is that they should be developed on the basis of the skills and experience of the salespeople. Usually, training programs serve to identify the skills needed by the sales force and then to develop these skills.

Basically, there are two types of sales training programs. One is the *initial sales training program*, designed for the newly recruited salespersons. This program usually lasts three to six months and is comprehensive, including general knowledge of the company, basic training on sellig skills, in depth training on the company products or services along with the best ways to present, propose them... The second type is the *continuing sales training program.* This type of program is for experienced salespeople and is normally shorter and more intensive in its coverage of topics than the initial sales training program.

Wherever the sales manager is designing initial or continuing sales training programs, several planning decisions should be made. These planning decisions cover the major areas: training objectives, responsibility for training, content of programs, methods of training, location of training, timing of training, and evaluation.

<u>2.1- Training Objectives:</u> The first step in designing an effective sales training program is to decide what you want to accomplish from the program. The objectives should be stated in realistic, quantifiable terms with respect to a specific time period. These are the following:

- <u>Increase productivity:</u> One objective of sales training is to provide trainees with the necessary skills so that their selling performance makes a positive contribution to the firm. Sales trainees need to know about company products and policies, the nature of the market, and selling techniques, if they are to represent the company adequately and achieve both company and personal goals. In a relatively short time, sales training should attempt to teach the skills possessed by the more experienced members of the sales force.

- Lower job turnover: Good training programs lower job turnover because well-trained people are less likely to fail. A well-thought-out training program will prepare the trainee for the realities of life in sales. One of these is that discouragement and disappointment are to be expected early in a sales career. Being forewarned of these mental hurdles is the first step toward overcoming them. The trainee who is able to handle the early problems is less likely to become discouraged and quit.

- Better morale: One of the major objectives of a sales-training program should be to give trainees some idea about their purpose in the company and in society. Those who have a purpose in life can tolerate many incoveniences, disappointments, and adverse events to reach what they believe to be a worthwhile goal.

- Improved customer relations: Trainees should become aware of establishing and maintaining good customer relations. They should learn how to avoid overselling, how to determine which products are needed, and how to adjust complaints.

- Manage time and territory better: A subject in many sales-training programs is how salespeople should spend their time. How much time should be devoted to calls on existing way of covering the territory to ensure that the routes traveled are the most efficient with respect to miles driven and time spent? One important objective of many sales-training programs is to provide salespeople with ways to answer these questions (Churchill,Ford, and Walker, p. 403).

- Teaching sales reps to work as a team: It is very important for the company to have a group of sales reps who are able to work in teams and for the same goals instead of having conflicting interests. It is only the effective teamwork that could yield synergy among the members. Each individual is unique and has his strong as well as weak points. An effective team will allow its members learn from eachother and enhance their weak areas through communication and observation of the others.

2.2- Responsibility for Training: In order to develop and successfully implement a sales training program, it is very important for management to decide who is to do the actual training. The responsibility of training can be delegated to line personnel, staff trainers, or outside training specialists. The specific situation determines whether one or more types of trainers should be used. Table 1 presents the probable candidates as well as the advantages and disadvantages of each type of trainers.

Table 1- Advantage & Disadvantage of each type of trainers and the probable candidates

	May be	Advantages	Disadvantages
el	-Senior sales representitives -Field supervisors -Territorial managers -Sales managers	-Have more knowledge about trainees/ needs -Trainees sell the way line personnel want -Have better ability to evaluate sales trainees -Establish a better rapport with their sales force	-Lack of time -Lack of teaching skills
	-Persons within the company like personnel, production, or office managers -Other company employees hired to conduct this job	-Give the trainees all the attention required -Attend to all the program details -Have time and teaching skills for sales training -Can give their professional opinion on the type of training decided	-Not all companies can afford to hire sales trainers
ts	-Specialized firms in sales training -Individual experts (indiv. with successful sales exp, college professors...)	-Helpful for small companies that can't afford having their own sales training dept. -Offer great flexibility in conducting sales training -Can give professional opinions	-Takes time to really understand what is required from the training program -know much less about the trainees' specific needs

2.3- Content of the Training Programs: The content of salesperson training programs should include the following four **basic** elements: company knowledge, product knowledge, market/industry knowledge, and selling process knowledge (Shapiro, pp. 492-493).

Besides the above basic elements that are pre requisites to performance, there is a multitude of training programs that could be considered by management to develop the sales people and make better performers out of them. "In your search for the best areas in which to improve your knowledge and skills, consider the following: Negotiation... Thinking about people... Become more creative... A second language... Persuasion... Product knowledge... Voice... Public speaking... Memory... Speedreading... Mathematics... Computers... Touch typing... Delegation... Reach for peak performance..." (Hopkins, pp 238 – 240)

The above mentioned training subjects, along with others, will be considered and elaborated in detail in the next two chapters.

2.4- Methods of Sales Training: The methods employed to train the sales force depend not only on the objectives and content of the training but also on whether a group or an individual is being trained. When there is a group of trainees, the training methods typically used are lectures, group discussions, role playing, teletraining, videotapes, audiocassettes, slide presentations, and simulation games. While for individual training, several methods can be used, including on-the-job training, personal conference, correspondance/ courses, and interactive video.

In order to achieve an optimal level of effectiveness in teaching, combinations of both group and individual training methods should be used. For example, after assisting to a group training session, the sales rep should be followed up on the job in order to make sure he is practicing what he learned, this is the essential role of the most widely used form of individual training, the on-the-job training. Usually, group training methods are used in formal training programs, and individual training methods are used in informal training programs (specifically, in field training).

2.5- Location of Training Programs: The location of training programs and the various training approaches are highly interrelated. The content of the training program influences the location as well. In deciding on the location, the advantages and disadvantages of centralized versus field sales training, presented in Table 2, should be considered. In addition, it is important to note that centralized sales training (where a group of sales reps are gathered for training purposes) can be in-house (company premises) or public (hotels, training centers...). In other cases, training could be done abroad. This is usually due to general international conferences, global company meetings, specific topics with no local trainers...

Table 2- Advantages and disadvantage of centralized vs. field sales training

	Advantages	Disadvantages
ralized training	-Easier to conduct a sales training -Trainees can meet home-office personnel & trainees from other locations -Skilled sales trainers are more likely to be available (company or outside specialized trainers) -Removing trainees from the distractions of their daily home life is conductive to learning	-It is very expensive -Requires a great deal of organization effort -Difficult to keep trainees at a centralized location for long period of time
ntralized training	-Less expensive -Sales trainees can work while learning -Branch managers may know more about the fields conditions and adjust the content of sales training accordingly	-Sales managers may not be highly skilled as sales trainers -Facilities are less likely to be designed specifically for sales training -Trainees may not have the opportunity to meet executives or sales trainees from other areas

2.6- Timing of Training Programs: There are two basic attitudes toward the timing of training. Some executives believe that no one should be placed in the field who is not fully trained, not only in product and company knowledge but also in selling techniques. Their training programs may last from a few weeks to as much as a year or more before sales people are sent into the field. They may ask the trainee to work for a while in either production or service to acquire product knowledge. Other managers want the recruit to exhibit a desire to sell before they invest in training that person. Thus, recruits are placed in the field with minimum information concerning selling and then evaluated on the basis of how well they do, taking their lack of actual training into consideration.

2.7- Evaluating Training Programs: Once a sales training program has been carried out, it is essential that the program's effectiveness be evaluated. That is, the sales manager should determine how well overall objectives and specific goals have been met.

An important aspect of the sales manager's job is to determine how a sales training program is to be evaluated. There are four levels at which training programs can be evaluated. First, at the reaction level where the trainees' attitudes and feelings toward the training program are measured. Second, evaluation at the knowledge level where we assess how well the trainees learned basic principles, facts, and so on, during the training program. Third, attitude-level evaluation where we measure changes in behavior as a result of the training. This is usually accomplished by collecting questionnaires from supervisors, subordinates, and even customers; however, such assessments are often subjective because of the personal relationships that frequently develop during training. Finally, at the results level where changes in performance are measured. This is done by plotting salespeople's performance before and after training and comparing the results against training program objectives.

3.2- DIRECTING THE SALES FORCE

This is what represents the major portion of the sales manager's daily activities. After completing the development of the sales force, it is important for management to direct them toward achieving sales company objectives. This directing process is composed of five parts: time and territory management, sales quota, compensation, motivation, and coaching.

3.2.1- Time and territory management: this part implies the division of the target geographical market into separated sales territories, and assigning each to a sales representative.

An effective sales manager should know the procedures of establishing territories and set optimal time allocation strategy so that his team can be more productive by working smarter not longer. Enhancing the sales team productivity has to take the following into account:

- Selling time: "On average, salespeople report spending only 30 percent of their time in face-to-face selling" (Dalrymple, Cron, p 226). Increasing the time that is allocated to selling by decreasing the time allocated to non-selling activities can increase the sales volume of the company. This is mainly done by integrating new techology into the sales force that will allow them be more efficient in dealing with their non-selling activities (laptop computers, mobile phones, electronic mail...)

  Furthermore, it is essential that sales people be trained on time management and territory coverage techniques which will be elaborated in chapter 4.

- Account and product focus: Pareto's law explains that the top 20 percent of all customers represent 75-80 percent of total sales volume. This could be the basis of a strategy to differentiate the sales force efforts between large and small accounts. This strategy is being more and more used in view of the current world globalization, mergers, and competition which are multiplying the alternatives to customers and making them more volatile. As to product focus, the concentration of the sales force's efforts could be directed towards the stars products and the promissing "?" products, leaving the cash cows and dogs to sell themselves (the BCG matrix distribution). This should be followed by a compensation and incentive system that takes into account the above. That is the sales rep should be compensated with a higher reward for selling a product that is newly launched by the company than for selling the company's old, established product(s).

- Minimum account size: A salesperson's time is valuable and expensive. Therefore, the sales manager should determine the minimum size customer on whom he should be calling. In order to be able to determine this number in a professional manner, the sales manager should have the following figures: (1) the average cost per call, which is the direct selling expenses divided by the number of calls made, (2) the average number of calls needed to close a sale, and (3) the sales costs as a percentage of sales. This will allow the sales manager to determine the break-even sales volume ((1)x(2)/(3)). The findings may then determine which customers to visit and which customers do not cover the costs incurred by visiting them. However, the company management may have another vision and long term marketing strategy towards these accounts, which also affect the process of management by figures.
- Account analysis: Within the existing accounts of a company, there are ways to divide them in order to allow better efficiency for the sales force allocation of time and effort. The simple method is the single-factor model, which divides the accounts into categories (usually A,B, and C

accounts) according to their sales volume and hence directs the sales force to dealing with each type of customer according to his category. The second method is to construct a customers portfolio model, which is a two dimensional model to assess the customer's importance. It takes into consideration the *Account opportunity* (the magnitude of an account's present and the future need for the salesperson's offering) and the account's *Competitive position* (the strength of the salesperson's present relationship with that account). (Dalrymple, Cron, pp 233-235).

- Sales forecasting: It is an essential tool and indicator for the sales manager to know in which way to direct his sales force. Forecasting can be done through many methods. Many of these are based on past figures and on mathematical equations, but forecasting had better include the sales rep himself so that he gets committed to the targets. Most of the forecast techniques used are those asking the sales rep to set a forecast for his territory, the next stage would be the agreement with the sales manager on the figures after discussion and the final stage would be the consolidation of all figures by the sales manager. The forecasts for each sales rep according to the specifications of his territory and accounts will help in the decision over his time and territory management.
- Territory profitability: "There can be dramatic differences between accounts both in price and in cost" (Dalrymple, Corn, p 240). The sales manager should also evaluate the overall sales rep's territory profitability. This will help him direct the sales rep in: (1) the allocation of effort, according to the profit opportunity of the account, (2) the mix of products,

according to the profit margin per product, and (3) price concessions, which help determine the negotiating power to be granted to the sales rep.

3.2.2- Sales quotas: these specific objectives which are limited within specific time frames represent the daily motivation of the sales people. They also represent an important portion of the sales rep's monetary compensation and overall evaluation. Sales quotas are important for managers as they indicate strong and weak points in the overall structure (sales reps' activities, effectiveness, selling expenses...). This means that they serve as an indicator to what training might the sales rep be lacking. Looking at sales quotas from this view point is no easy task. Managers are likely to urge the sales rep for better performance in order to compensate the lack in achieving the quota (which is usually set in dollars), they seldom take it as an indicator to what further training, development and education is needed to overcome the problem in the future. Sales quotas vary from sales volume quotas to profit, expense, and behavior-based quotas.

3.2.3- Compensation: According to the line of business, companies have to chose the most adequate compensation plan. There are three types of compensation plans:

- Straight salary plans, which have advantages like reduced stress to sales reps, cost predictability for the company, encouraging teamwork by decreasing conflicts between sales reps, simplifying administrative control of costs... and disadvantages like no incentive to increase selling effort, burden on sales managers to motivate sales reps, and burden to elaborate procedures and criteria for evaluating the sales reps performance.

- Straight commission plans, which have advantages like high incentive for sales reps to sell, freedom of operation for the sales reps, controllable selling costs... and disadvantages like poor after sales service, difficulty of supervision, earnings fluctuations...
- combination compensation plans (which have become the most widely used). These plans tend to take the advantages of both the above stated.

After chosing the adequate plan, companies must develop and test it before final adoption.

3.2.4- Motivation: It is one of the hardest tasks for a sales manager. An effective sales manager should have high leadership skills (which will make of his person a motivation catalyst) and should master the following:

- The theories of motivation, which include: (1) the needs theory (Maslow) that links motivation to the need level of humans in general, they start from basic needs to security, social belonging, ego-status, and self actualization needs, (2) the hygiene-maintenance theory (Herzberg) that separates maintenance factors (such as physical, social, economic, security, orientation...) from the real motivators (such as achievement, recognition, participation, responsibility, growth...), (3) the expenctancy theory, which states that a person's motivation to behave in a certain way is determined by the outcomes the person sees as desirable and the person's belief that desired outcomes can be attained, (4) the equity theory, which states that motivation is related to how fairly employees feel the outcome of their work is judged compared to that of other employees.
- Specific tools that apply to the sales force, they include: (1) sales contests, which can be used to focus the sales force attention on any particular area

for short periods of time, (2) sales meetings, which help motivate salespeople to greater productivity through open communication and renewed consciousness of total company support efforts, (3) promotion opportunity (the chance of having a higher grade such as junior/senior sales rep, supervisor, manager...), which keeps salespeople motivated in order to meet their targeted career path, and (4) incentive programs, which are part of the compensation plan and which help boost the individual sales productivity of the sales force.

It is important to mention that motivation theories alone cannot ensure performance. Selling also needs fundamental traits that should be present in the person. These act as inner motivators and are more powerful contributors to effective performance. "IBM's policy for hiring salespeople is to seek a person with certain fundamental characteristics and then furnish the necessary sales training" (Buskirk, Buskirk, p32). Attributes such as energy, hunger for money, confidence, perseverence, tendency to be competitive... are good signs of an internally motivated person who is more likely to succeed in sales, provided he is given the necessary training, motivation, coaching...

3.2.5- Coaching and effective team building: A good coach is one who assists and helps others achieve their objectives rather than having others work for him. The effects can be exponential when all the sales force is working for one goal and when each sales rep considers that he's working for his own company. In addition to being a motivator, coaching also helps the sales manager detect specific training areas where the sales rep needs improvement.

The sales manager duties also contain building highly performing teams. This includes the following steps:

- Direction: each team member needs to believe that he/she can make a contribution. They need to believe that the task of the team is important and useful. They need to believe that team members' skills are useful and used.
- Identity: to build trust, everyone needs to discover about others. Determine whether the other is competent to do the task.
- Aims: The team's next step is to be certain of its aims and each member's role in achieving these. Aims must be clarified and roles agreed upon.
- Responsibility and Interdependence: Negotiation and clarification of each role and expectations should be addressed. In this step, members take up their responsibilities and duties to ensure that the team's aims can be attained.
- Performance: High performance fall into two categories. First, crisis can be the energizer that forces a team to work together. Second, high performance in a team occurs when there is mastery, step by step, of the team building. Control and discipline within the team is needed and flexibility of roles and leadership are needed.
- Review: Reviews are rewarding and they can refocus and re-energize the team, especially since teams experience continuous changes.

3.3- CONTROLLING AND EVALUATING THE SALES FORCE.

This stage can be considered as the moment of truth: the moment of the sale. By this stage, the sales manager will be able to assess whether his team has achieved the overall objectives which in turn will realize the general company objectives. This step is also the main clue to determining the areas to enhance along with the training needs of each member of the sales force.

This step has two important dimensions:

3.3.1-Analysis of figures (sales, cost and profitability)

1- Sales analysis: It is the regularly used analysis to evaluate current sales performance compared with past sales, competitors' sales, or forecasted sales. For a meaningful sales analysis, the sales data should be sorted into territories, products, customers, and salespersons. This will allow the identification of the exact areas of strength and deficiencies.
2- Cost and profitability analysis: Sales analysis alone can be a misleading indicator of performance. The cost and profitability analysis of the sales should be done in order to define the unprofitable segments and inefficiently performed functions of the company's marketing program, if any. This analysis includes the following steps: (1) specify the purpose of the analysis, (2) convert natural expenses (salaries, commissions, travel...) into functional costs (direct seling, promotion, marketing...), (3) allocate functional costs to the various business segments as they are divided by the company, and (4) determine profit contribution of segments.

3.3.2- Measuring and Evaluating Sales Force Performance: A statistical evaluation of sales-force performance is a major tool for improving sales performance and for lowering marketing costs. Management can identify the outstanding sales producers and then study their sales techniques with an eye toward having the other sales people adopt them. It also can show high-cost performers how to reduce their selling costs. A performance evaluation shoud ensure that those reps who deserve favorable recognition receive it, and that those who deserve criticism are handled appropriately. By evaluating the sales people's achievements, management helps them discover their own strengths and weaknesses. This should motivate them to raise their levels of performance.

3.3.2.1- Program for Evaluating Performance: Sales force measurement and evaluation process is composed of: (1) establishing sales goals and objectives and dveloping sales plan, (2) selecting bases for evaluation, (3) setting performance standards, (4) comparing performance with standards, (5) discussing the evaluation with the sales person.

1- Establishing sales goals and objectives and developing sales plan: The first step for a sales manager in measuring sales performance is to establish sales goals and objectives. A sales goal could be the recognition by customers as the most service-oriented sales force in the industry. While for objectives, they might include reaching 100 percent of sales quota, or increasing profitability on sales by 10 percent, etc. After setting sales goals and objectives, it is important to secure the salespeople's comprehension, approval, and support through an open, two-way communication that connects their personal goals with the larger organizational goals. Next step is to develop the sales plan. It provides the "road map" showing how to reach sales goals and objectives.

2- Selecting bases for evaluation: One key to a successful evaluation program is to appraise a sales rep's performance on as many different bases as possible. Both quantitative and qualitative factors should be used as bases for a performance appraisal.

- Quantitative bases: the quantitative factors that can be used as evaluation bases include: Sales volume (dollars, units, quota, market share...), Profit (by product, customer, order...), Orders (number, size, needed calls...), Collection, Accounts (new, lost, increasing, problematic...), Time management (days worked, calls per day, routing, selling time...), Expenses (total, incentives, promotion, percentage of quota...), Services (number of service calls, number of customer complaints...)
- Qualitative bases: it would be nice if the entire evaluation could be based only on quantitative factors. Unfortunately, this can not be done. Too many factors-all of a qualitative nature- should be dealt with because they directly influence a sales person's performance. Qualitative factors include: Personal efforts of the sales rep (time management, planning, presentation...), Increase in knowledge (products, policies, competition, customers...), Better relation with customers, Attitude (cooperativeness, decision making, initiative...), Cooperation with other sales reps, Ability to work in teams, Appearance...

3- <u>Setting performance standards</u>: Performance standards are planned achievement levels that the sales organization expects to reach throughout the year. An individual's performance standards is an agreement between a subordinate and a superior as to what level of performance is acceptable in some future period (Hulbert, Toy. pp. 12-20). These standards serve as a benchmark, or a par for the course, against which a sales rep's performance can be measured. Setting standards is one of the most difficult phases of performance evaluation. Standards should be equitable, ambitious, and reasonable, or the sales people may lose interest in their work and confidence in management. If the standards are too high or too low, the resulting interpretations will be worthless or even harmful in that management can be misled. The evaluation system will not be workable unless the sales rep and his supervisor agree on the standards of the qualitative bases in order to avoid diferent interpretations of the expectations in later stages.

4- Comparing performance with standards: The next step in the performance evaluation procedure is to interpret the cumulative information. This step involves the comparison of an individual's performance with the predetermined standards. Ideally, a sales person should be judged only on factors over which he has control. Consequently, management should identify the uncontrollable factors that affect sales performance and then take these factors into consideration when evaluating an individual's performance. The sales potential in a territory, especially in relation to its size and the number of customers, is a good example of these factors. Differences in competitive activities or physical conditions among territories should be considered when comparing performances. These and several other factors tend to impair the comparability of performance data. It is recommended that the sales rep fills an evaluation report before meeting with the manager. This will show his motivation and personal assessment of his work and will make him more prepared to find the way out of the weak areas of performance. Psychologists state that this is not likely to lead to conflict with management as the personal evaluation of oneself is usually at the lower end of the real outcome, that is in everything we do, if we are asked to evaluate our achievement, we are likely to give a lower grade than that of the specialist, teacher, boss...

5- Discussing the evaluation with the sales person: After each sales person's performance has been evaluated, the results should be reviewed in a conference with the sales manager. The sales manager and the sales rep should agree and explain the person's achievements on each evaluation factor and point out how the results fit in comparison with the standards. Then, the manager and the sales person together may try to determine the reasons for the performance variations above or below the standards. Based on their review of all the evaluation factors, the manager and the sales person then agree on:

- Reward to be granted on performance, if any.
- Goals and operating plan for the coming period. This should take into account two major issues: (1) Stressing on and widening the sales rep's strong areas of performance and (2) Enhancing the sales rep's weak areas of performance.
- Necessary training needed to achieve new or unachieved goals.
- Standards of performance, rewards...

CHAPTER 4

TRAINING THE SALES FORCE ON SPECIFIC SELLING SKILLS:

It goes without saying that selling skills is the most important theme to be covered by sales representatives. Its major quality lies with it being universal. Whatever the product we're selling, there is one thing in common for all sales calls: we are selling this product to People. This is the reason why selling skills is important for every person –especially sales people- as it gives general guidelines to raise the probability of getting a commitment. Needless to remind that selling skills are general theories that apply to all kinds of sales (including the sales of ideas, programs...) and to all kinds of people (behaviorist).

The selling skills will be treated for the six parts that constitute a sales call. It is important to note that the distribution of the steps as done in this study includes the information collected from different sources and books. It is inclusive but does not take one specific model.

1- PROSPECTING: This is the first step in a sales call. It consists of **finding** and **qualifying** the potential customers. At this stage, the sales rep did not get yet in contact with the customer.

1-1- FINDING the customer can be done through various means and sources, depending on the product, which include:

- Searching in indexes, directories, and databases that are available in the market (the Internet can be helpful)
- Visiting specialized fairs and making various contacts

- Companies that provide confidential reports about individuals and companies
- Refferals through existing clients
- Through personal contacts: friends, relatives, parties...
- Through membership in professional and social associations.
- Through direct physical searching within the territory

1.2- QUALIFYING the prospect involves getting all the criteria that are necessary to decide whether he is or not a potential customer. These criteria should be set by upper management and include:

- Size or business volume (preferably quantitative)
- Location, facilities, and initials
- Products of interest
- The decision maker (background, reputation, personal information, social environment...)
- The contact person (background, reputation...)
- Key internal/external influencers on the decision maker
- Historical evolution, reputation and solvency of the company
- Relation with competition
- Previously used products (ours or competitors')
- Solvency

When the above information is collected, it should be well classified/filed in a way that it be easily accessible to the sales rep. Even if the conclusion states "not to be visited", the collected info should be properly maintained. This contact could be a prospect for a new product that the company might develop in the future, or his activity and his personal information may evolve and change in the near future in such a way that he will become an interesting prospect.

The prospecting phase being completed, it is recommended that sales reps learn about buying motives before going through the next steps of the sales call.

1.3- BUYING MOTIVES: If we ask a sample of people who bought the same product about the reasons why they bought it, the answers would probably bring a multitude of outcomes and reasons for the purchase, and all will be valid. This is normal and it is due to the diversity of our human nature. "People are different from each other, but also the same person is different under different conditions." (Buskirk, p71). One thing is for sure, behind every purchase there is a reason. Psychologists call this reason "drive" and describe it as "...a motivating factor of personality-such as wish, purpose, ideal-which regulates and directs one's conduct." In salesmanship terms, the reason(s) for which the prospect will actually buy the product or service is referred to as "buying motive(s)". This is why a sales rep should know about buying motives. They are one of the hidden secrets between him and the closing of the deal.

There are different thoughts as to whether buying motives are acquired or innate. There are also different theories that try to explain them.

- **The traditional approach**: This theory divides buying motives into two groups: The first is the rational buying motives, which include matters as price, cost-in-use, durability, servicing, reliability, length of useful usage...the prospect takes into consideration all the above matters, analyzes them, and buys the most economical product. The second is the emotional buying motives, which include security, comfort, emulation, pride, sex, recreation, pain, fear...the prospect is an emotional buyer under these motives. However, it was found that a mixture of buying motives are often found for the same sale. It is difficult to separate rational from emotional buying motives as it was done because people include both rational and emotional thinking, in different percentages and magnitudes, in their daily purchases of products and services.

- **The problem solving approach**: This theory views every purchase as a means to solve a problem. Here, it is important to note that every situation that can be improved may be viewed as a problematic situation, depending on the way it is perceived by the bearer. This theory pushes the sales rep to search for and clarify the prospects' problem(s) and sell him the proper solution through his product or service.
- **The self-concept theory**: This theory combines the above approaches and relates buying as well as non buying behavior to the conceptualization of the following different "selves" in the individual's mind:
    - The real self or what one thinks he really is.
    - The ideal self or how one would like to think of himself, his personal goal.
    - The real other or one's perception of what people think of him.
    - The ideal other or how one would want other people to think of him.

In buying decisions that people make, and according to this theory, they chose the alternative that brings them closer to the ideal selves because their personal goals are the most powerful drives. This reasonning is sound in theory but in practice, it is hard to uncover the individual's different selves. It often requires the intervention of psychologists, or of knowing the client well through previous purchases or referrals.

Regardless of what theory is used, the ėssential strategy for the sales rep is to uncover the prospect's real buying motives and sell him the benefits that his product has in order to satisfy those buying motives. In order to make a sales rep's life easier, the most common buying motives can be grouped into the following:

1.3.1- Make a gain: sales reps who sell to manufacturers and/or intermediaries know what we're talking about here. Making money doesn't necessarily mean buying a product and selling it at a higher price. It also means saving money and reducing costs which will reflect as a gain. Any product that is sold to a wholsaler, retailer, manufacturer, contractor can be a good example of a product bought with the buying motive of making a gain.

1.3.2- Fear of loss: people buy products that will help them maintain their differnent kinds of assets. Direct examples include alarms, safety boxes... Some people even buy books to read because they are afraid of losing their social status or present job. People are also afraid of losing their lives and leave their dependants to their own fate, so they buy insurance... All these are examples where fear of loss is the buying motive behind the purchase.

1.3.3-Avoid pain: people prefer buying products to work for them rather than having to do the work themselves. Pain to be avoided can be physical (examples include cleaning machines, sunglasses, herbicides...) or mental (calculators, robots...)

1.3.4- Receive social approval: people buy products that will help them get closer to the ideal self or ideal other. The urge to belong to a certain social standard is behind this buying motive. Imitation is the key word, even if we don't admit it easily. We often buy products and services that are beyond our budget or real capacities just because it is the current trend in the surroundings. Examples include fancy clothes, jewelery, furniture, deluxe cars, wedding dresses...

1.3.5-Receive pleasure: people buy all kinds of products that yield pleasure to them. Pleasure can be physical or esthetic and is a human need that comes directly after the basic needs (food, shelter,security) are fulfilled. Examples include food and beverage, clothes, entertainment products, ranch-style houses, travel...

1.3.6- Pride: people buy products that reflect to them the sense of achievement, the fulfillement of oneself without giving attention to the social surroundings. Examples include drawings, collectors' items, icons...

The above stated buying motives are the ones we are most likely to discover through our daily sales calls. There are other motives that do not fall directly under one of the above stated, they include: curiosity, the urge to create, desire for justice, love of others...

In understanding and analyzing buying motives, one should always bear in mind the following:

- There may be more than one buying motive for the same purchase but there is always **one** that is the strongest and that is the clue to closing the sale.
- All buying motives are equal in importance. Some are met more frequently than others, according to the product and the prospects' profile, but the

sales rep should not pretend to know for sure what the buying motive is before the prospect reveals it.

- Same as there are buying motives for the purchase of a product, there are motives that act against the purchase of the product. Consequently, we may consider that a strong buying motive that is better satisfied with the competitors' product acts as a barrier to buying for our product. Other barriers to buying include the risk of moving away from the ideal selves in one's perception, the feeling of guilt, the tendency to avoid change because it hides unexpected things...
- The whole selling "game" consists of finding the real buying motive(s) and selling our product's benefits that satisfy this/these specific motive(s).

2- PRE-APPROACH: This step can also be called **planning**. During this stage, the sales rep should be prepared with info/research on the possible buying motives of the customer, the competition offers, the features/ benefits and USP's of his product. Finally, he should set a SMART objective and make an appointment with the decision maker or with the key influential person whenever possible.

It is important to shed a light on some major parts of the pre-approach step.

2.1- Features v/s Benefits: Features are the physical, tangible caracteristics of the product. In marketing, direct features are called product mix and include the substance, package, color, design, shape, size, label... There are complimentary features for every product and they include the name of the manufacturer/distributor, price, promotion, warranty, important users...However, all of these are of no importance whatsoever to the prospect. People don't buy Features (or what the product is), they buy Benefits (or what the product does).

Benefits are the solutions, the end result, the satisfiers of buying motives, the only things that people buy.

Was it the drill you needed to buy or the hole in the wall?

Features are important only for the sales reps. They are the tools that will provide the benefits for the prospects. Furthermore, one feature can yield more than one benefit, thus allowing more propositions to the prospect. A group of sales trainers agreed that most of the sales people find it hard to show the prospect the real benefits of the product and stop somewhere just beyond the meaningless feature, like the transition proposal is this example:

Product: Personal computer

Feature: Pentium 2 version

Transition: Faster operations and processing

Real Benefit: Saves precious time, allows better work efficiency, makes customers more satisfied by waiting less for their requests...

It takes a lot of practice to reach the phase of presenting the true benefits for the customers. It is often the case because we think that prospects will do the calculations themselves but even if they do them, they prefer to hear the result – the real benefit- from the sales rep. It will give them more confidence in their decisions. Of course, some customers do the calculations themselves and might feel offended if we push it. Here, the sales rep's flair should guide him to what extent he should get into details explaining about the real benefits.

A step further in the preparation phase is the determination of the Unique Selling Proposals that our product has v/s competition. The biggest benefit can become idle once competition has it. What competition does not have is what makes our product unique, what allows us to say: "my product is the only product that has/

can provide you with/ ensures/ saves/ makes this..." which is the proposition of a strong benefit that could conclude a sale if it appeals to the right buying motive. Knowing all the benefits of his product (which is no easy task, in a workshop participants could generate more than 50 benefits for a simple ashtray), along with its USP's is a pre requisite job for the sales rep during the pre-approach phase.

2.2- Setting an objective: A sales rep should never go to a sale blindfolded. He should always know what he is aiming to achieve, his target of the visit. In setting the sales call objective, the sales rep must make sure that his objective is SMART. In other words:

Specific: the objective should specify exactly what product(s) the sales rep is intending or planning to sell. It would not be bad to sell other products or services on the way, but it would be much better if they were included in the objective.

Measurable: the objective should be detemined by a quantity, value, time frame... that is measurable. This is what will allow us assess whether the sales call was successful or not. Standards of achievement should be agreed upon for objectives that are behaviorist such as "convincing him of..." "make him understand our..." and should be paralleled, whenever possible, with a specific action/reaction from the prospect in that respect.

Ambitious: this term is relative to the size of the prospect, his relation with competition, his previous purchases from us, changes that occurred on the different levels of the sales environment... Ambition is a need to achieve more. Therefore, if a client purchased 100 units from us during the last season, it would be ambitious to aim for 110 in this season's objective (other things considered constant for the sake of the example)

Realistic: this term is necessary to keep ambition at an achievable level. Too ambitious objectives are harder to meet and often leave sales reps in a low morale and frustrating situation. Objectives have to be realistic, in other words achievable. An unrealistic objective would be to aim for 200 units in the above stated example.

Triggering action: the objective has to be set with an eye on persuasion. It should be of the type that needs the sales rep visit and convincing power in order to make it happen. In other words, the objective would not be triggering action if the prospect would anyway call to place the order if the sales rep didn't visit him.

Still, one should not be surprized to get such answer from a sales rep when asking him about his visit's objective: "to sell him as many of my products as I can".

2.3- Getting an appointment: The decision maker is the person who has the money, authority, and the need. Most decisions involve more than one person in the decision making process (key influential persons). Setting an appointment has 5 steps:

2.3.1- Present yourself, company, products

2.3.2- Ask questions to raise the issue of something wrong or that could be improved.

2.3.3- Get his interest by making him believe you could bring the solution or the improvement. But don't lie !

2.3.4- Propose an appointment, or better propose the choice between two appointment dates (not more than 2).

2.3.5- Conclude by thanking him and repeating the date, time, and place so as to avoid any misunderstanding.

The following are some hints that could be useful while calling to set an appointment:

- Try to get in contact with the decision maker himself. If you can't fix an appointment directly with him, ask him to lead you to the person who is the most critical after him. This way the appointment will be set easier with the latter because it is easier to go down than go up the hierarchy.
- Try to be friendly with his secretary. If she doesn't like you, you will have a small chance of getting your name through. Always talk with a clear voice and with respect. Be gentle but don't overdo it.
- Don't waste time or ask too many questions over the phone. 2-3 minutes and 2-3 questions is optimum to set an appointment.
- Prepare your questions and strong statements (that will get his interest) on paper, as well as your free and most appropriate schedule.
- Try to mention your purpose in a way that clearly shows him that you/your product can make him save time, money, space... but don't get into the "how" over the phone. The objective for now is to sell him the appointment not the product.

3- APPROACH: This is when the sales rep gets into **first contact** with the customer. Although the approach lasts usually less than one minute, it is considered as a major step in the selling process because of its impact on the direction of the sales call towards a successful closing. In approching the prospect, the sales rep is selling himself. This he has to do very carefully because "first impressions are lasting" and it is impossible to sell one's product without having sold oneself. Furthermore, take into account that a high percentage of the sales is usually made during the first minutes of the visit.

The approach has three objectives: First to get the attention of the prospect. Second to get his interest and Third to move/lead the prospect smoothly into the presentation.

Depending on the situation, the sales rep has a variety of approach methods from which to use, the methods include the following:

- The introductory approach: To present himself and the company he represents. This method is very common but less likely to get the interest of the prospect. The latter's concern is not the sales rep but himself and how to improve his situation through the sales rep.
- The product approach: To thrust the product into the hands of the customer. It has a strong impact whenever the product is unique and has such a strong eye appeal that it tends to sell itself.
- The consumer-benefit approach: To open the interview by stating or asking a question that shows the benefits he intends to offer. This is most adequate when the benefit is a strong advantage over competition and when the prospect is currently facing the problem that he could solve.
- The visit purpose approach: To state the reason for the visit. This mainly works when the purpose was clearly agreed upon while making the appointment. It also works when the prospect mentioned his problem or need prior to the visit.
- The premium approach: To give the prospect something free of charge as a premium to getting the interview. Usually, this puts the prospect in a better condition to talk and be more receptive.

- The product/benefit approach: To get the customer straight to the point. By informing him about a new benefit, an upgraded product that could be of value to him.

Other types of approaches include the question approach, the consultative approach, the shock approach, the showmanship approach, the statement approach, the survey approach, and the compliment approach. These approaches might work better than the above mentioned in certain circumstances. Usually, they are not recommended to be used as they are very delicate and could make the sales rep lose the opportunity of getting through. However, they can be successfully used by experienced salesmen.

Finally, after the approach method has been chosen and implemented, and in order to reach the transition phase and move into the presentation, it is recommended that we ask a question that will push the prospect to start talking about his company, problems, needs… which is the best start of an effective presentation.

Another thing to do –which is of significant importance in our country and the neighbouring regions- , especially when it is the first time we meet the prospect, is to establish rapport with him. Upon questionning a sales rep in Jordan, it was observed that he had a product with so many unique benefits and such a high value that it was able to sell itself. However, there is one prospect whom he couldn't sell to simply because they didn't sympathyze with each other. The solution came after he was convinced of esablishing rapport with that prospect. Finally, after an "off the records" dinner, the prospect became a regular customer. Another example comes from a sales rep in Lebanon who worked so hard to ensure a better overall offer for a prospect but couldn't get through because of the good relationship that the prospect had built with his traditional supplier.

In modern TQM techniques, this step is essential to guarantee the loyalty of the customers. Building strong customer relations is a pre requisite to sales and continuous sales. This is surely more important in Lebanon and Arab countries where human relations are given more importance than in other western countries.

Establishing rapport means building mutual relationship. This is strengthened by knowing the prospect's concerns and by caring about them.

4- PRESENTATION: This is the heaviest part of the sales call. Although all steps are important for a successful result, this step is the most delicate as it represents the contact time with the prospect, which is a time when the mistake cost is highest. In many of the sales calls that are daily encountered, we still find the sales rep attacking the customer with the various features/offers of his product and trying to convince him to buy, whereas the professional presentation should contain the following actions:

- Asking questions to find out the prospect's needs and real buying motives
- Presenting the benefits of our product that respond to those buying motives
- Handling and dealing with the various types of customer responses

It is important to discuss the above actions in detail.

4.1- Questions: The general purposes from using questions include:

- Getting information on the needs and problems of the prospect
- Confirming the information at hand
- Confirming the needs and interests of the prospect
- Leading the conversation in the direction we want
- Getting the order

There are three types of questions:

- Open-ended questions, which are of the type What, Where, How, Who, When, and Why (which should be treated with care so as not to be offensive). These questions allow us to get open information about the prospect's general aspects, needs, behavior... It is recommended that they be used in the beginning of the presentation where we need to get the prospect to talk openly thus allowing us to know his buying motives. Usually, the approach should be followed by an open-ended question that should stimulate the prospect to talk. The sales rep should listen to the answers and memorize the important sentences used by the prospect in order to use them later to confirm the needs. It is easier to get the prospect's approval on something that he mentioned early in the presentation. This will guarantee that he will buy because of the benefit that satisfies this need. The sales rep should have some of these questions prepared ahead of the interview in order to better control the conversation and be sure that the questions are likely to yield the desired answers. One very important example of open ended questions used is "What do you expect/expect to achieve from the product/service/company..."
- Close-end / choice questions, which are questions to which the answer can either be "yes" or "no" or a choice between alternatives given by the sales rep. These questions are most important in the middle of the presentation as their main target at that stage is to confirm information previously mentioned by the prospect so as to make sure of his real buying motives and to use it in order to lead him to the closing stage. These questions are also important at the end of the presentation, because they should help us

getting the order. It is important to note that 80% of the prospects don't buy unless the sales rep asks for the order.

Close end and choice questions should also be used with care and preparation. The close end questions should not be too attacking on the prospect in order to avoid getting the opposite answer from the one wanted. The choice questions should give the alternative between two answers that are both positive to the sales rep. Good examples include: "do you prefer regular or big packings?","do you prefer cash or credit payment?"... Of course, the sales rep should have the solution whatever alternative the prospect choses. Otherwise, he risks getting trapped.

- Benefit tag questions, which are the most important type of questions. They are formed of two parts. The first part is a sentence that mentions a benefit to the prospect. The second part is asking a question to check if the stated benefit is of interest to the prospect in order to build on it. The importance of these questions lies in the fact that whenever the prospect agrees with the sales rep on a benefit that is of interest to him, the prospect has automatically bought that benefit. If one can succeed to sell many benefits that appeal to the right buying motives, he has higher chances to get the sale. With these questions, it is important to remember the following:

  - Always use one benefit per question. This has a double mission: First, it will give us the chance of getting the prospect to agree on as many benefits as possible, thus getting many small "yes's" paving the way to a higher chance of getting the final "YES". Second, it will allow us avoid the possibility of getting a "no" on many benefits stated in a row while the real "no" is only for the benefit that is stated last.

- Whenever a benefit is of no importance to the prospect, change the subject. This benefit does not appeal to his buying motive. Don't try to convince the prospect of what you feel is right. Let the customer buy for **his** reasons, not yours. Try to find out the real buying motive and ask a benefit tag question that appeals or satisfies it

4.2- Customer responses: There are three types of statements or responses that we can expect to get from a prospect. Positive, Positive/Negative, and Negative responses. It is important to dig a bit into them:

- Positive responses: Those are the words that we like to hear. They include flattering statements about the product, service, company, sales rep…, statements of agreement on a benefit, proposal…, or physical gestures showing relaxation, satisfaction, agreement…

  The golden rule is to Pick Up on the positive responses. If we think about it, we may tend to take such responses for granted and simply talk through without using them. However, it is very important to use these responses in order to keep a positive mood through the presentation. The sales rep should acknowledge a positive response and thank the prospect for it. Moreover, he could ask more questions about the same area in order to let the prospect talk more about a thing that he likes. If a prospect says "I like your product" it would be recommended that the sales rep answers "thank you, what is it that you like most about it?". Positive wave making is essential, and mostly desired, for the success of a sale call. The prospect will find himself talking about things that he likes and needs and will feel pleasure in buying it.

Picking up on the positive is a skill that works in our daily lives too. It is much easier to continue flattering his girlfriend's qualities when she thanks him for praising her hair style and clothes. He will feel like doing it because she showed interest in his words.

- Positive/Negative responses: Those are of the type "yes but..." and we are more likely to encounter them during a sales call. Unfortunately, our instincts are likely to lead us to handle the negative part but it is recommended that we use the positive part of the response since it is there and it could give us the chance to avoid the negative part. For example, if a prospect says "I like your product but the price is too high" (which is a very common positive/negative response), the tendency is to plunge into an endless debate about price issues forgetting that the prospect mentioned that he likes the product. A more suitable answer for the time being is "thank you for liking the product, what is it that you like most about it?". The same above skill is needed for this type of responses: Pick up on the positive. At least you still have something positive to hold on to, which might gear the presentation in a positive and most recommended direction, forgetting the second part of the response which can be fake, smoke, or simply made out to put the sales rep in a defensive position. The third type of responses doesn't offer this advantage.
- Negative responses (Objections): "Objections are an integral part of the selling process. Once you accept the idea that objections are to be

expected and are normal, you will have a much sounder philosophical attitude with which to approach them" (Buskirk, Buskirk, p 254). A positive thinking sales rep regards objections as a sign of interest for the prospect. As a matter of fact, if the prospect is not interested in what the sales rep is offering, he would simply prefer to quit than enter into arguments that could generate from his negative responses. Objections are normal to encounter in a sales call and handling them properly is a key factor contributing to the success of the sales call. The objections handling skills include:

- Avoid arguing: The golden rule for dealing with any negative response or objection is to avoid entering into argument where each side take a position and starts to defend it. Unfortunately, people tend to argue in order to prove that their position is right. Instead, the sales rep should deal with the objection from the prospect's view point, making him believe that they are both on the same side and facing the problem rather than on opposite sides and facing each other. This technique helps the sales rep lead the prospect to his side smoothly rather than trying to force him through arguing, which is very unlikely to yield the desired outcome. The section on negotiation skills in the coming chapter gives more detailed procedures to follow.
- Avoid irrelevant objections: As mentioned before, some negative responses are raised by the customer as "smoke" objections which have no relation to reality. Prospects may do this to disrupt the presentation, delay the purchase, get a better price, test the sales rep, or a multitude of other reasons (which sometimes can be very difficult to trace). However, it is

essential for the sales rep to avoid this type of objections. The "smoke" objections can be recognised by the absence of physical gestures, the low/monotoneous tonality of the voice, the irrelevance of the subject... and should be avoided by simply ignoring them for the first time. If the same objection is raised again with a difference in the above stated factors, it would be a real objection that is worth handling. However, practices on ignoring such negative responses show that they are seldom brought again by the prospect.

- Be inoffensive: Being inoffensive is indispensable in order for the prospect to accept the idea of his objection being removed. This can be done by (1) exonerating the prospect from blame, (2) making some concessions before giving an answer, (3) having the deliberate attitude of taking the prospect seriously, (4) pointing out that others would agree with him, and (5) paying tribute to the prospect for his thoughts. In each of the above situations, continue by removing the objection and explaining your point of view. The prospect will be more prepared to listen.
- Chose your time: This means postponing the answer to the objection: (1) when a price objection is raised early in the interview, (2) when the objection will be answered later in the presentation, and (3) when the objections are frequent and the sales rep judges them as "smoke". In all above situations, the sales rep should put the prospect at ease by informing him that the subject will be discussed/solved later on during the presentation. This will allow him to get the prospect's attention again on his presentation rather than thinking of the unanswered objection.

- Forestall objections: This skill should be used with care. Forestalling objections, or mentioning the counterargument in such a manner as to preclude the objection, is successful when the sales rep knows the prospect and knows what objections he is likely to encounter and when. In these circumstances, forestalling objections could be an efficient technique. It will prohibit the prospect from raising the objection, thus the sales rep will avoid an obstacle between him and the sale.
- Clarify objections: Before dealing with the objection, it is recommended that the sales rep (1) listens carefully before answering, (2) appears interested in the objection, and (3) doesn't hurry to answer. Sometimes it is better to restate the objection before dealing with it as it allows the sales rep to restate it in more favorable terms than the prospect, but this could also increase its effect in the mind of the prospect.
- Do not magnify objections: This means taking the right time to deal with it. If the objection is handled for a long period of time, which could be because the sales rep is happy with the arguments he has, it will be magnified in the mind of the prospect. It will seem much bigger than it was at the start. On the other hand, real objections must not be taken too lightly, the prospect might feel offended.

  "You should answer each sincere objection clearly, emphatically, and in a straightforward manner" (Buskirk, Buskirk. p. 265)

5- CLOSING: This is when we ask for the order. For the sake of repetition, and given the importance of the matter, it is of the utmost importance for the sales rep to remember that 80% of the prospects expect him to ask for the order and they don't do it unless he asks for it. There is another saying: "CLOSE or LOSE" which summarizes the importance of closing.

Closing should be done after a buying signal. Buying signals are simply strong positive customer responses indicating that the prospect could be ready to buy. They take many forms and could be easily overlooked since very few prospects will say: "yes, I want ... units ot that product". Therfore, the key is to listen carefully to what the prospect is saying and learn to distinguish or identify the buying signals. Buying signals include "yes I like the product","I could use it", "are there other colors", "is the product available"... or simply the agreement on a major benefit.

The many types of closing techniques include:

5.1- Direct close: Simply asking the prospect to make the decision on how many units he needs. Examples include "Is it a deal?", "Can I send you ... units tomorrow?". The prospect's response will tell the sales rep if he should go on with the presentation to convince him of the decision.

5.2- Either/or close: Giving the prospect the choice of two positive solutions. Examples include "would you like this to be delivered on Tuesday or Thursday ?", "do you prefer to pay cash or credit?". The prospect will find it easier to make a decision when he has alternatives to chose from.

5.3- Step by step closing: Leading the prospect to the decision. It is most often used if a prospect, after a direct close question, says "I don't know" (which is a buying signal). The step by step closing consists of many small questions leading the prospect to know his exact needs and make the decision.

5.4- Summary closing: Repeating the features and benefits that brought out the most positive reactions from the prospect. This technique works well after 3 or

4 "yes's" on behalf of the prospect during the presentation, finally leading to the big "yes" of the purchase decision.

5.5- Incentive closing: Offering something "extra" in order to encourage the prospect to make the decision. Examples include: "if you order today, you get a 5% early shipment discount". This type of closing should be handled with care. The offer should not be kept for the final seconds of the sales call, after losing hope of gaining a commitment, this will put the sales rep in a low credibility position vis-à-vis the prospect.

Some types of closings work better on certain people. This depends on how much they have time, their attitude... Examples on closing techniques to be used with people according to their communication style are brought up in the coming chapter.

6- FOLLOW-UP: The post call action. This is the final step in the sales call and also a very important one. This phase has many objectives which include:

- To follow up on promises made to the customer (sample, delivery, chart, technical services, personal...). Failure to keep the promises might create a bad attitude towards the sales rep.
- To make a personal evaluation of the sales call. Why was the sales call successful/unsuccessful? What exactly went wrong? How could the next call be enhanced? What skills were effectively used? What skills should be used? What changes should be made for the next call? What was learned about the customer?... By evaluating himself and answering these questions, the sales rep will work on the necessary changes and hence increase his effectiveness. It is recommended that the sales rep fills a form of evaluation of the sales call (answering the above questions) in order to keep record and refer to it for the next sales interviews.

- To help in the prospecting. Customers may reveal new needs, or lead to other potential customers in the area... This is the last step in the post call action and the first step of the next call (which is the chain that makes the sales call an ongoing cycle)
- To make sure the customer is using the product. This is specially important with government related clients, but also relevant in private trade markets (stocks not sold at dealers' level, feedback on the proper use of a newly launched product...)

CHAPTER 5

COMPLEMENTARY TRAINING SUBJECTS

Selling skills are the basic skills that every sales rep should have in order to be able to compete and increase his ratio of closed sales. However, selling skills alone are not enough to enable the sales rep to become a real professional in his job. Some of the important complementary subjects are to be taken into consideration:

1- Advanced training and follow up on selling skills: It is not enough to let the sales reps know what are the selling skills. Most of the times, in such circumstances, they might forget about them and prefer to stick to their own traditional way of doing things. Changing people's attitudes and behavior is quite hard and demands a lot of time and effort, especially when the sales rep's own way of selling is "working" which makes it harder for people to take the risks involved with change. It is therefore essential that sales reps be followed up –preferably on the job- to sharpen the skills acquired. Another interesting action is to chose a specific skill, usually the one that is the least implemented, and make a specific training on it. Sales meetings can be used efficiently if a small section of the meeting is reserved to discuss specific selling skills and examples encountered with the prospects. This will help the sales reps learn from others in the same sales team (which can be more effective if the prospects are similar) and will also enhance team performance. This method has to be treated with care in the cases where there is a competition (such as sales contest) between the sales reps.

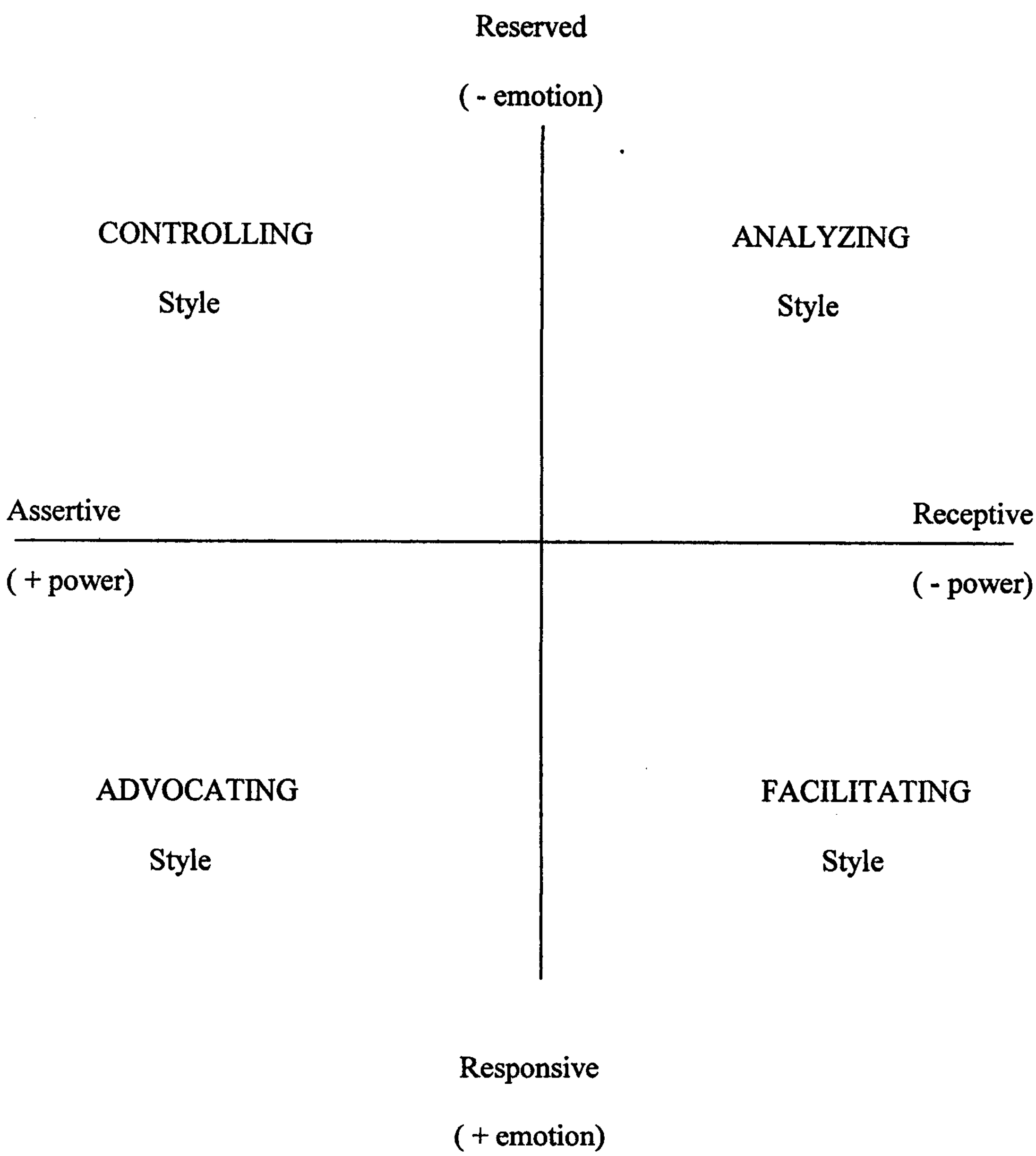
Advanced training on selling skills is also very important when the initial training was given in light of training material (such as fast presentations, short videos, hand outs…). The most important phase in the learning process is the "learn by doing" phase. If the sales rep was not given the chance to practice the skills he learned during the training session (which in this case should be in the form of a workshop, role playing...), then follow up and further training will be inevitable to reach the necessary impact, willingness, and ability to change.

2- Product/company knowledge: It is constantly heard that some sales reps are very friendly and have a very warm presence and persuasive style, but they do not know what they are selling. No matter how much training they received on selling skills, they will not be able to sell the product or service unless they know exactly what they are selling and every little tiny detail about it. In salesmanship terms, the sales reps should know **all** the features and benefits of their products. The knowledge of the company, its facilities, plants, teams, strength, visions, professional aspirations, ... is also part of the package. These might carry some benefits that a customer is searching to buy.

In training the sales reps on the company products, management has to be demanding on the feedback part. Whenever possible, the training should be in the form of a workshop for services and demonstration for tangible products. Furthermore, sales reps should be asked to summarize the benefits in oral presentations/ role playing, and written manuals should be kept with the sales reps for reference. In many instances, especially when the company has a wide range of products, the sales reps are likely to forget some of the benefits that are not often needed. This could be the reason behind the loss of sales to special or different prospects.

3- Market/Industry knowledge: Knowing the product in every tiny detail is not enough to sell it. What if competition offers the same benefits at a lower price? What if competition has more benefits to offer for the same price? What if the whole industry is shrinking to be replaced by a new modernized concept? (the case of Britanica whose sales reps were trying harder to sell the huge volumes of books for several hundered dollars while the market was moving to CD ROM products, buying Encarta at $50). The sales rep should also be trained on the products he is competing with. He should know all the technical details of the competing products and know exactly where his product can compete or has an advantage over competition (product's USPs). This is where the use of benefits will help the sales rep present the strongest benefits that no one else has: the product's Unique Selling Propositions which are the most important benefits of the product to the sales rep. It is important to note that any product has USP's, the key is that the product should have the right USP's that appeal to the strongest buying motive(s) of his target segment.

4- Communication skills: Sales are impossible without good communication between the sales rep and the customer. The easiest sales are done to people who are very much like us (same line of thought, attitude, mentality...). However, people are different and have different communication styles. Determining the communication style of people is done by studying the levels of power and emotion involved in his actions. The results are placed on a graph that will detrmine the communication style of the prospect.



Characteristics of each style:

CONTROLLING persons are: Goal oriented, disciplined, organized, efficient, determined.

Their way of thinking goes like the following:

- I know my business, and you'd better know yours
- I don't have much time to waste

- I want results, strong figures
- I take decisions on the spot, you just give me the benefits and the price, and it should be better than competition. I know what is good for me.

ANALYZING persons are: Task oriented, precise, rational, objective, logical

Their way of thinking goes like the following:

- I like to be organized and plan in advance
- I don't like loose ends
- I like to be right and analyze everything
- I want the job to be done properly, so I give it the time
- Better be safe than sorry
- I am a good listener and like the logical approach to things
- I don't like to argue under any circumstance

FACILITATING persons are: Loyal, cooperative, friendly, people oriented.

Their way of thinking goes like the following:

- People are as important as the product
- I like to keep everybody happy
- I involve other people in my decision and take all the time that is needed
- I like to know who else is using the product and their feedback
- I like to have friends and keep them
- I don't like to argue. It is a pressure for everybody

ADVOCATING persons are: Idea oriented, energetic, competitive, creative.

Their way of thinking goes like the following:

- I like to know what is going on around me
- I like to make things happen
- I like to be recognized as an innovator, a winner

- I like people and like to talk to them (not only about work)
- I make decisions by knowing the facts I need

In order to enhance his communication skills an his chances of getting a "yes", a sales rep should first determine his own communication style. Then, he should discover the communication style of the prospect and adapt his own style with that of the others in order to gain **credibility** and build **trust** with him. This will allow a more convenient perception of the sales rep in the mind of the prospect. Perceiving the sales rep as having the same style as his puts the prospect at ease and makes the sales call more fruitful.

Discovering the prospect's communication style is made through:

- Looking over his facility, office, house…
- Listening to the way he talks
- Watching his attitude and non verbal cues
- Knowing how he makes use of his time
- Knowing which opportunities he looks for
- Looking for the kind of relations he has with others
- Knowing the pressures and conflicts he faces
- Watching how he communicates with others

That can be determined by asking people who know the prospect, making a visit to his location prior to the sales call… and at the beginning of the sales call through careful observation.

Once the sales rep defines the communication style of the prospect, he can reorganize his sales call to best fit with his findings, namely:

With CONTROLLING persons:

- Better if we use the call objective as the approach

- Stress on his plans, objectives and needs in your questions
- Avoid getting into small details which are time consuming
- Better if we use the action close method

With ANALYZING persons:

- Better if we use personalized call objective
- Stress on details, measurements, procedures, technical aspects in the presentation
- Better if we use the summary close method

With FACILITATING persons:

- Better if we use a referral in our call objective
- Stress on his person, social group, relationships, and feelings in the presentation
- Give example on other people who tried the product

With ADVOCATING persons:

- Better if we use the product/benefit approach
- Stress on the conceptual, creative, futuristic aspects and use the big picture during the presentation
- The incentive close has good chances

Along with the communication style of the prospect, the sales rep should also assess the attitude that the prospect is taking in addressing him. This attitude can be the attitude of a brother (elder or younger), father, or son. In this regard, the sales rep should take the opposite attitude than that of the prospect. For example, if the prospect is addressing the sales rep as a father, the sales rep should have the attitude of a son.

This will allow the prospect to feel that the communication is logical and healthy which will allow better chances of success.

5- Negotiation skills: "There's an extreemly fine line between selling and negotiating. In many situations, there is no line at all". "Negotiating is the process of getting the best terms once the other side starts to act on their interests" (Mark H. McCormac. P.7)

The most common negotiating problem is "bargaining over positions" which means that each of the negotiating parties takes an initial position and fights to keep it or to stay the closest possible to it. Finally, they agree on a certain compromise between the two extreme positions. This is the type of negotiation that we see every day. In Lebanon, we meet "sales people" on the roads who try to sell us a variety of products, ranging from a simple dust remover to cameras and crafts. Bargaining over positions is what usually takes place between them and the crowds of drivers stuck in the trafic jam. However, bargaining over positions produces unwise agreements, is inefficient, endangers an ongoing relationship, and gets worse when there are many parties involved. (Fisher, pp 3 to7)

In his book "On Negotiating", M. McCormac stresses on two golden rules for a successful negotiation. 1) Think Big and 2) Question Everything.

Thinking big or "shooting for the moon" enables the rep have a wide margin that will allow him reach an acceptable compromise. Furthermore, since we cannot always guess what are the acceptable terms for the prospect, it is better to think big because what sounds Big to us might sound fair to the prospect, allowing us have better terms. "Whatever you say, you should expect that the other side will almost always hear something different." (Fisher; p32). Questionning everything has the objective of making clear all the needs of the prospect, which sometimes can be hidden, difficult to trace, wrongly perceived, and which are essential information in order to know the real concern of the prospect and overcome the various barriers to the solution.

In his book "Getting to YES, negotiating agreement without giving in" Roger Fisher suggests a four steps method that allows the person to avoid the problem of bargaining:

1- Separate the people from the problem:

   In negotiating, the different perceptions of the parties become of the personal type. They often reach a phase where no one is ready to give up some of his share in favor of the other due to the identification of his ego with his position. Here, one should understand that human beings have strong emotions and different perceptions of the other. Emotions typically become entangled with the objective merits of the problem, which makes position taking even more difficult.

   As a solution to this problem, the negotiating parties should work on solving the people problem before working on the substantive problem. They should reach a phase where they see themselves as working side by side and attacking together the problem together instead of attacking themselves, which obviously is an approach with better chances of leading to a convenient solution for all parties.

2- Focus on interests, not positions:

   The objectives of a negotiation are to satisfy the underlying interests of the parties. Bargaining over positions often obscures what each party really wants, leading to deviation from the initial objective. Human needs and interests and satisfying them should be the base of the negotiation.

3- Invent options for mutual gain:

During the negotiation, the parties are usually under pressure. This makes it difficult to design an optimal solution. This problem can be avoided by setting aside a designated time within which to think up a wide range of possible solutions that advance shared interests interests and creatively reconcile differing interests.

4- Insist on using objective criteria:

In positions based negotiations, the parties might try to get results to their favor by being stubborn. They draw red lines behind which they would not operate or continue. Overcoming this problem is done through agreeing on objective criteria to take decisions rather than leaving it to the parties willingness. The criteria need not be imposed by one party but mutually agreed upon. It can be in terms of market value, expert opinion, custom, law...and its outcome should be to allow the yielding of a fair solution to the parties involved.

Other aspects are very important to note for the success of negotiations. They are summarized from James Patterson's book "How to become a better negotiator":

1- Determining your communication style and that of others and adapting your style to come closer to them. This is essential for negotiation as it is based on communication between the parties involved. The characteristics of the different styles are discussed in the above section on "communication skills"

2- Listening as a primary negotiating skill: A good listener hears, interprets, evaluates, and reacts. Listening is essential in all negotiations. The following are ten listening rules to improve one's listening ability:

- Resist distractions
- Find areas of interest by asking "What's in it for me?"

- Judge content, not delivery
- Don't be quick to argue or judge until you comprehend
- Listen for ideas and central themes, not just facts
- Be flexible in your note taking. Use different systems depending on the speaker or subject
- Work at listening. Show that you are interested
- Exercise your mind by occasionally reading difficult materials. Don't pretend that you are challenging your mind if you read only light recreational materials
- Keep your mind open. Don't be too quick to react emotionally to trigger words
- Understand that you can think faster than you can speak. You must fight the temptation to daydream with slow or boring speakers. The good listener mentally summarizes, weighs the evidence, and listens between the lines to the tone of the speaker's voice

3- Understanding conflict management: Conflict, if handled right, can be a good thing. Depending on the parties' concerns for people and production, there are five conflict resolution styles:

- Withdrawal/Avoidance: used by people who like to maintain neutrality at all costs and view conflict as a worthless and punishing exercise.
- Smoothing/ Accommodation: used by people who have a greater concern for people than for whether a task is completed, and they try to smooth over or ignore conflict to keep everybody happy.
- Compromise: used by moderators who try to find a solution everybody can live with.

- Forcing/Competition: used by people who consider their own goals as more important than people and see nothing wrong with using the force to get what they want.
- Problem Solving or Collaboration: used by people who have high concerns for people and production and view conflict as beneficial if handled in an open manner.

4- The importance of assertiveness in negotiations: Assertive persons are most likely to be win-win team players. An assertive person is one who makes his own choices, has a win-win problem-solving orientation, and stands up for his own rights while respecting other. In order to become a better negotiator, one has to learn to be more assertive in dealing with others. Passive people are less likely to get what they want, especially if they are dealing with an aggressive party.

6- <u>Stress management and physical fitness</u>:

In today's world of hypercompetition, continous change in technology, the urge to cope with wider challenges, and the need to keep up with an ongoing learning process make stress an inevitable fact of life. If we still find some people who don't have stress problems within the organization, they are surely not the sales people. As mentioned in previous chapters, sales reps should be mega performers, their daily activities and responsiblities impose on them wide sources of stress. It is essential that today's sales people be trained on the possible ways to cope with stress.

Traditionally, stress management aimed at eliminating, avoiding, or at best reducing stress. The new approach to stress management is to harden ourselves by sustaining stress and allowing recovery from physical, mental, and emotional stress. Recovery is a positive reaction that acts against the negative effect of stress thus allowing oscillation between positive and negative waves at the mental, emotional, and physical levels, which is an indicator of life and health.

Effective management of stress requires a tough response to it. The toughness response to stress engages: (1) flexibility (remaining open and non defensive), (2) responsiveness (remaining fully active and engaged in the competition), (3) strength (generating great emotion or passion), and (4) resiliency (developing the capacity of bouncing back quickly). It is important to note that the recovery is faster when the response is tougher and that to recover may be the most updated skill in one's life.

The objectives of stress management are to get the person closer to the positive wave (i.e to feel challenged, energetic, engaged, pumped...or peaceful, relaxing, letting go, re-energizing...) rather than negative (afraid, anxious, angry, defensive...or depressed, lonely, burned out, defeated...)

The recommended recoveries which the sales rep can chose from include:

6.1- Sleep:
- 7-8 hours/day, if possible within a cycle
- Take naps
- Don't look at your watch if you wake up during midnight

6.2- Nutrition:
- Eat a variety of light food. Eat often
- Try to have a meal with: 55% Carbohydrates, 25% Protein, and 20% Fat
- Low water consumption. None or very low amounts of alcohol
- Take vitamin or mineral supplements

- Low amount of sugar, cholesterol, and salt
- None to low consumption of caffeine
- No exaggerated diets

6.3- Physical exercise:
- 100 curl-ups/day
- Cardio-respiratory fitness and aerobics
- General muscle stretch

6.4- Humor:
- Enjoy your work and laugh often
- Humor changes your chemistry
- Every laugh is a wave of recovery

6.5- Rest:
- Active (yoga, fishing, walking, etc)
- Passive (massage, whirl-pool, nap, music, T.V, etc)

6.6- Need fulfillment:
- Say "no" to wants
- Say "yes" to needs
- Exercise on self discipline

7- Time management: If the saying "Time is money" is true, it surely applies to sales reps. A part of time management was previously discussed in chapter 2 (section time and territory management), however, this section is more specific with the personal time of the sales rep and the ways he can improve in his own use of time. There are three categories of people regarding to their effectiveness in managing their time, energy, and memory. They are the Wasters, Users, and Achievers. There are many techniques to use in order to make more efficient use of time and hence get closer to becoming an achiever, these techniques include:

7.1- Controlling time wasters: In their daily activities, sales reps encounter many things that tend to waste their time. The most common time wasters, as observed by sales reps, include:

- Telephone interruptions
- Drop-in visitors
- Lack of self-discipline
- Crises
- Meetings
- Lack of objectives, priorities, and deadlines
- Indecision and procrastination
- Attempting too much at once
- Leaving tasks unfinished
- Unclear communication

Recognizing and controlling time wasters is one key element in time management. The sales rep must first assess which of the above (and there may be others) are the most time consuming and work on handling them (preferably one at a time) in order to grasp the time saved and use it on selling, servicing, leisure...which will, in each case, make of him a better performer and more efficient person.

7.2- Planning of activities: Sales reps should have clear understanding and focus on what is expected from them in the coming period. In order to better manage their time, they should have a weekly plan that states their objectives, along with the time needed to achieve each objective. Breaking these objectives into daily goals will enable the sales reps plan their activities by the day, along with the time needed for each activity (visit, preparation, service, prospecting...). It goes without saying that the sales rep should have long run personal and professional objectives, which should also match with the weekly and daily programs he is preparing. Writing the weekly and daily plans is important. It is also important that each activity be worked on until it is finished and then crossed. It will keep the motivation high to end the ongoing work.

The tasks to be undertaken by the sales rep are better analyzed and tackled when putting a framework into the consideration. Usually, people tend to do first the things they like, the things they know, the easy things, the less time consuming... This is why a distribution of the tasks according to their **importance** (in meeting one's objectives) and **urgency** (in terms of time pressure to perform them) is very important. This will yield the following groups:

- Emergencies: High importance and high urgency
- Personal growth: High importance and low urgency
- Time wasters: Low importance and high urgency
- Recreation: Low importance and low urgency

The high urgency of both emergencies and time wasters will make them inevitable to deal with and very hard to control. The whole game is in most instances reduced to spending less time on recreation activities and invest the time saved on personal growth activities.

In planning, one has to be realistic about what and how much can be achieved. The objective is to decide on what to Do first, what to Delay, what to Delegate, and what to Drop (the 4 D's of time management)

Planning should also be considered for travelling, which often takes about 20 % of the sales rep's time. The sales rep can chose among a variety of techniques (such as the largest angle technique) in deciding on the route to follow and the sequence of prospects to be visited. In general, a route should be circular, shouldn't cross itself, and should not be used to go to and from a customer. However, the

Lebanese unique routes structure and unanticipated traffic jams leave more opportunity for improvisation than for scientific routing procedures.

8- Persuasion Skills: Persuasion involves motivation aimed at inducing action. Selling is the art of persuading people aimed at inducing the action of buying. Since the selling cycle was explained in detail in the previous chapter, we shall directly discuss the techniques used for effective persuasion.

The first technique is that of suggestion: It is unlikely that the prospect interrupts the sales representative in the middle of his presentation saying: "I want to buy this product now". Any decision to be taken by the prospect is more likely to materialize if it is an answer to a suggestion from the sales rep. Therefore, and in order to master the art of suggestion, the sales rep should consider the following principles:

1- Regardless of the absolute authenticity of the suggestion, people accept it as true as long as they don't have a contradictory idea that blocks its acceptance. Sales reps have to beware of this fact. Sometimes, we tell the truth and they don't believe us, each person has a viewpoint or perception of what is acceptable and this perception has to be unfolded by the sales rep in order to be able to make sound and acceptable suggestions.
2- People will not accept a suggestion unless its source is credible. The sales rep can be a credible source when he is knowledgeable, experienced, educated, and masters the general as well as the minor technical details and caracteristics of his product/service.
3- The way a suggestion is delivered affects its impact. The sales rep has higher chances of having his suggestion accepted when the words are delivered in a firm, intense voice, with feelings ...

4- People are more apt to accept a recent suggestion than one made earlier. Key suggestions should be repeated for maximum effectiveness. However, repition is also an art, the sales rep should study well the rephrasing of the suggestion.
5- People will believe a suggestion if they want to believe it, regardless of its merit. When people are carried in a positive mood through the presentation, they could use some suggestions that would help them reach the decision they are still afraid to take.
6- Spontaneous, initiative based suggestions usually have the highest impacts. Planned or contrived suggestions are less effective.

Suggestions can be effective with most people as their actions are often only reactions. However, in some cases, more than a suggestion is needed to get the prospect to act. These cases include professional purchasing agents, buyers with trained minds, selling a complicated or new product ...

The second technique is Logical Reasoning: This technique should be used when the prospect is expected to reach a rational decision. The sales rep's argument should flow in a sequence of three parts: A major premise, a minor premise and a conclusion. The major premise is a general statement that the prospect agrees upon, from which he is taken to the minor premise, which puts the prospect within the general info stated before, and leads to the Conclusion, which suggests the product/its benefit as a logical result of the reasoning.

The sales rep has to have the following in mind:

1- It is very important that the logical reasoning be accepted by the prospect. It is much better when the prospect does the reasoning himself or together with the rep. This will strengthen the impact of the conclusion. In extreme cases, if the logical reasoning is done by the sale rep in a form of child teaching, the prospect might feel offended, disturbed and might even turn the tables.

2- It is very important that the sales rep avoids logical falacies. In our daily conversations, we encounter arguments that are based on hasty generalization, bias, exaggeration, personal experience... These falacies could ruin the sales call if they are discovered by the prospect and used as a counter-argument to refuse or reject the desired commitment.

9- <u>Marketing knowledge</u>: personal selling falls under promotion (which is one of the 4 p's of marketing) (D. Dalrymple, W. Cron, p7). Given this fact, it is important for the sales rep to have a certain knowledge in marketing subjects. Keeping in mind that marketing has its human resources to take care of the various activities requested from the department, the following are some of the marketing topics which could help the sales rep enhance his performance:

- The general marketing concept which explains that the general company aim is to satisfy the customer and build a long term relationship with him.
- SWOT analysis: the sales rep should know how to analyze the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats that pertain to (1) himself, (2) his product, and (3) his company. By completing this analysis at the three levels, he will be able to assess his overall position before going to the field.
- The consumer buying behavior: which starts with the need recognition, setting specifications, evaluating alternatives, chosing one, and evaluating the performance.

- Consumers' needs analysis (Maslow or other): which helps the sales rep anticipate what USP's are the most likely to serve specific customers.
- Adoption of products: the APAPLI sequence, which starts with awareness, perception, adoption, purchase, loyalty to identification with the product. The completion of this sequence will necessitate stronger personal relation between the sales rep and the customer and will lead to personalization of the price and payment conditions.

10- Miscellaneous: Depending on the line of business, there is a stream of training topics that could enhance the sales rep's performance. In many cases, some of these topics are considered as essential and pre requisite topics for performance. The most common on these topics include:

- Computer skills
- Languages
- Psychology

As training should be regarded as an ongoing process, there are no limits as to what topics should be given to the sales reps. The opportunity for learning should always be opened for the sales rep, even when learning about sports or any contemporary subject, the sales rep will be widening his knowledge and this will make him a better person in general which could reflect positively on his sales performance.

CHAPTER 6

QUESTIONNAIRE RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

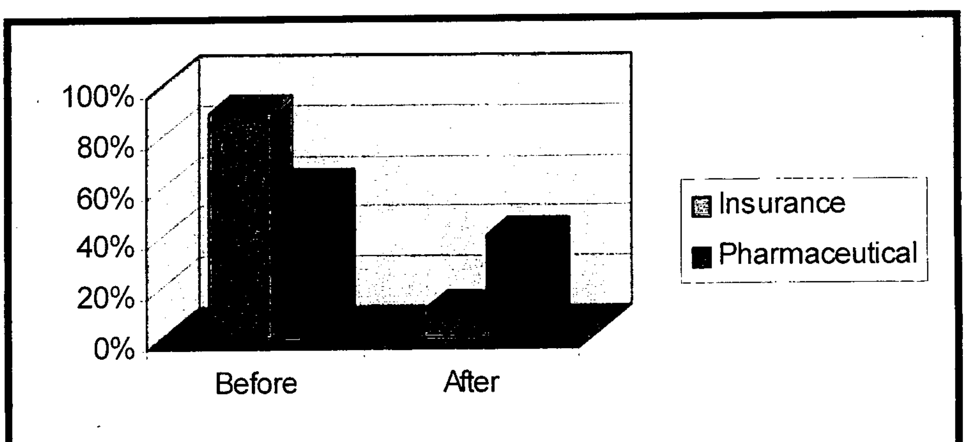
Part I : COMPANY INFORMATION

This section contains general information on the company that pertain to its sales force. The results revealed that all companies surveyed had an annual sales turnover of more than $1 million, with the majority having a sales volume of more than $5 million. As to the number of reps, the majority of companies surveyed have between 10 and 25 sales reps. One insurance company has 120 reps and 4 companies have less than 10 reps.

Part II : GENERAL INFO ON THE TRAINING ACTIVITIES

Q1) Are new sales recruits trained before or after they are placed in the field?

	Before	After
Insurance	89%	11%
Pharmaceutical	60%	40%
Total	72%	28%



10 out of the 14 surveyed companies train their sales reps before going to the field. Only 4 train them after. It is important to note that most of these companies –including 40% of the total pharma/paramedical products companies- do so in order to assess the chosen

candidate's capabilities of undertaking the sales activities as they are required by the company (of course in this case, minimum company and product knowledge will be given in advance so that a real sales situation can be observed). This is sound thinking because training a new recruit without actually observing his capabilities could be harmful to the company in terms of the time and effort. Also, there are significant costs incurred along with a high risk that the recruit leaves the company for a competitor after having received an intensive initial training with it.

The initial training given in the above majority of the companies involves mainly basic selling skills (along with company/product knowledge) with a clear focus on prospecting and ways to present the product/service.

Only 14% of the companies do not train their sales reps before going to the field because they believe it is his duty to make the effort and prove himself. In the insurance example, it is because sales reps' only remuneration is commission which leads the management to think that no investment should be done in him before he brings in the money. This way of thinking is not effective because it leaves the company with the least professional and capable sales reps (the good ones prefer to leave to a company that values them more and invests in them more).

Q2) As to old sales persons do you train them continuously?

	Yes	No
Insurance	100%	0%
Pharmaceutical	100%	0%
Total	100%	0%

If yes how often and on what bases?

	Within a time frame	On new product or services	Refreshment	On new skills
Insurance	22%	100%	55%	33%
Pharmaceutical	0%	100%	20%	60%
Total	14%	100%	43%	43%

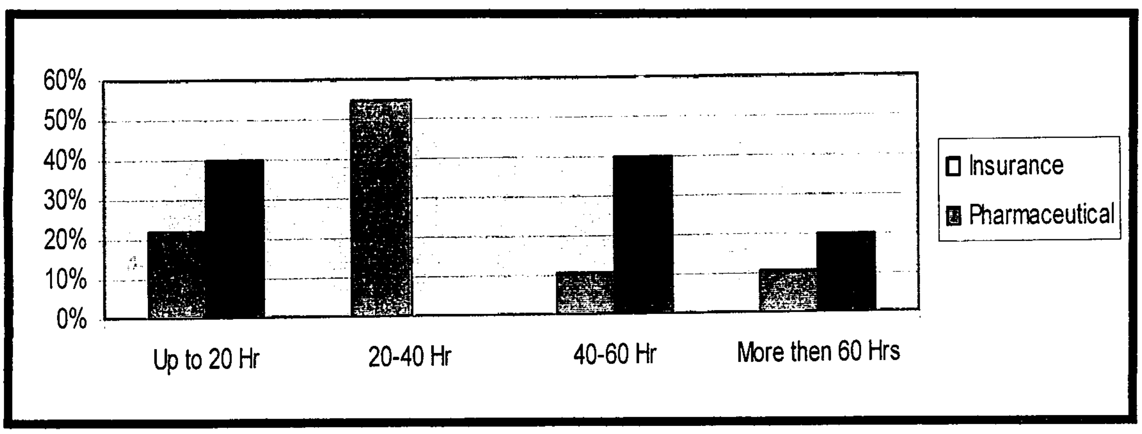
While all the companies train their old/current sales reps continuously, the majority does it mainly for the new products and services. Needless to mention that (1) in the insurance business, there are continuously new insurance types and demands on the market which let salesmen need continuous updating, and (2) in the pharma/paramedical products, there is a multitude of new products that are launched worldwide every year in order to improve people's health, fight new diseases, and serve in the advancement of surgery and medical practices. Only 42% of the companies train their sales reps continuously on new skills or as refreshment of already acquired ones, and none of the pharma/paramedical products companies (along with only 22% of the insurance companies) train their sales reps within a time frame. This is an indicator of training deficiency as sales reps might forget the learned skills, especially in the pharma business where the nature of work and that of the prospects profiles require continuously trained people who should maintain high level of knowledge in sales and communication skills. Without continuous training on mastering the sales call, sales reps might tend to get more blocked by the objections they receive or might even go back to doing the whole sales call their way, regardless of company strategy

Q3) On average, please specify schedule when a sales rep is accompanied by supervisor to assess/enhance his performance?

50% of the companies do not have a schedule for accompanying the sales rep during his daily work in order to assess and enhance his various skills. They only do it during the first weeks after the recruitment of the sales rep, for specific businesses/ customers, or in an informal way according to the availability of the supervisor. The other half has a formal schedule for accompanying the rep which varies from 2-3 times/week to 2 times/month. It is very important that the supervisor keeps close supervision of the sales rep through continuous coaching and visits to various types of customers. This supervision will be needed until the sales rep becomes mature (i.e having the needed skills or ability paralleled with motivation or willingness). This is one of the direct ways (although it may be subjective) to find out where the sales rep needs improvement in order to decide on the training material to be followed so that the sales rep's performance be enhanced. Accompanying the sales rep could also be used to discover the person's strong areas in order to focus on them, noting that these strong areas could be used for developing these same areas in another sales rep who shows weakness in them.

Q4) On average, how much training does each sales representative receive early?

	Up to 20 Hr	20-40 Hr	40-60 Hr	More than 60 Hrs
Insurance	22%	55%	11%	11%
Pharmaceutical	40%	0%	40%	20%
Total	28%	36%	22%	14%



The big majority of the insurance companies (78%) give their sales reps less than 40 hours of training per year. However, the percentage of pharma products companies that give their sales reps more than 40 hours is 60%. It is hard to determine which number of hours is optimum for each sales rep in general terms. However, training specialists agree that a sales rep should receive at least 40 to 60 hours of training per year, depending on his needs which are affected by his experience, learning ability, training received.... To back this premise, let's take the example of Kodak: "Kodak commits to a minimum of 40 hours of training which is designed to meet each employee's specific goals" (Fortune, jan 13,1997. p 51) This is one of the new trends in the company which were put into practice when the new CEO George Fisher joined in 1993. In reality, this commitment was implemented and sales reps usually receive more than the minimum 40 hours. Besides, if we take an average of 30 hours per year for the total portion of companies that fell below this minimum (64%), and if we consider that, as a minimum, half that time is allocated to training on new products and services, the sales rep will be left with 15 hours of training per year on all selling skills and complementary subjects. This figure is definitely very low and even dangerous as competition will be harder from companies that are taking training more seriously and at the international standards. This low rate also affects the quality of training and learning capacity which will be discussed later on through the analysis. It is important to note that highly skilled sales reps might need less training than others but continuous training and refreshment are usually unavoidable.

Q5) Are all sales representatives given equal chance for training?

	Yes	No
Insurance	89%	11%
Pharmaceutical	100%	0%
Total	93%	7%

Only 11% of the insurance companies are selective as to who should be trained from the sales force. Ideally, all sales rep in any company should be given an equal chance for training. Discrimination is harmful for the whole team, even the trained persons in a company might feel disturbed with the fact that one of their collegues was not chosen due to his bad performance. This is more likely to take place in our society where human and friendly interrelations tie the persons in a company together, and where competition among sales reps is much lesser than that in the western parts of the globe. The way to overcome discrimination is better handled if all sales reps are given equal chances for training and later judged according to their performance, which in some cases could lead to putting on probation, firing, lowering the income... of the inapropriate person.

Q6) Is training compulsory?

	Yes	No
Insurance	89%	11%
Pharmaceutical	100%	0%
Total	93%	7%

Only 11% of the insurance companies do not impose training on their sales reps. This is due to the system used in only contributing to a portion of the training and education costs (other than training on company/product knowledge). Although this could be a sound strategy for developing their employees in assisting them for the continuation of their education in universities or in separate courses, it is not as good when used for training on selling and complementary subjects. The outcome of these training topics will reflect on the company's sales and image and is preferred to be fully financed and encouraged by the company. Furthermore, the sales rep's motivation to be a continuously better achiever will increase when he feels that his company is investing on training him, which will increase his efforts in addition to the change resulting from the training topic (which are the basic tools for performance).

Q7) Who has the responsibility of conducting your sales force training?

	Company personnel	Specialized trainers in the staff	Trainers sent by your suppliers	outside training specialists
Insurance	78%	44%	22%	11%
Pharmaceutical	20%	40%	40%	20%
Total	57%	43%	28%	14%

The majority of companies (57%) use company personnel for training their sales force. The sales manager is usually the person in charge of giving the training in these cases. This represents a lack in training efficiency as the sales manager alone cannot secure the proper delivery of the training messages. Even though the sales manager is the person who knows his team best, he was not trained to be a trainer himself. A good portion of the sample (42%) have specialized trainers among the staff. This is one of the most efficient training sources as the trainers will be knowledgeable about the trainees and their weak areas from their daily contacts with them and their managers. 28% of the companies use trainers sent from their suppliers. This is one very important source as it gives the sales reps knowledge about the international standards, problems, prospects, successful techniques for selling... Of course there might be some areas which will be irrelevant to our society, culture, norms, rules... but the amount of information learnt by the sales rep is usually worth the trainer's trip. Finally a low 14% of the companies use outside training specialists for their training programs. Training specialists, as their name suggests, are one important source especially for selling, communication and other related skills (which are common to all lines of business). Their solid and specialized expertise along with the heterogeneous sample of companies they gave training programs to, make them very effective in delivering training messages. The disadvantages of training specialists lie in their partial ignorance of each trainee's needs along with the time it takes for them to understand the company environment and specific training needs.

Q8) Who decides on the training:

	Topics			Settings			Budget		
	Sales Manager	Hr Dept	General Manager	Sales Manager	Hr Dept	General Manager	Sales Manager	Hr Dept	General Manager
Insurance	67%	22%	55%	67%	33%	33%	33%	11%	89%
Pharmaceutical	40%	20%	40%	20%	0%	80%	40%	20%	100%
Total	57%	21%	50%	50%	21%	50%	36%	14%	93%

As the results show, on average only 21% of the companies have their human resources department involved in the decisions on the training topics, settings, or budgets. This is a big problem in the way HR departments are conceived in general in the lebanese companies. This department's main actual activities are those of personnel departments. Even though the unit manager is the best HR manager for the team he is in charge of, the role of the HR department should not be neglected and this department should always be active in areas such as training, motivation, compensation, career planning...

In addition, it is shown that the general manager is in 93% of the cases responsible for the budget set to training. This is also an indicator of the low portion of authority that is delegated to the HR department or the sales manager. Authority delegation and empowerment are essential tools that help the organisation have more flexible and efficient operations. The HR department in cooperation with the sales manager should have enough authority to decide on the optimum amount of money to be invested in training the concerned staff. Of course, the general manager should approve on the budget so that he consolidates it with the overall company expenditures but he should not be the only one involved in the decision. Unfortunately, this is the case in the majority of the companies.

8b- When are training plans conceived and agreed – upon?

	When joins	Yearly with budget	After performance review
Insurance	33%	67%	55%
Pharmaceutical	20%	60%	40%
Total	28%	64%	50%

In most cases for both industries (64% of total), the training plans are set for the reps at the end of the year. In only 50% of the cases equaly distributed, training plans are conceived after the performance review. This is the most efficient way of deciding on the rep's needs for training. This requires that the performance review be done as it should, meaning taking the areas of weak performance and deciding together with the rep on the best way to improve it, which will elicit the training that is to be followed by the rep for the next period. From there on, the training needs will be fixed within a periodical frame which will take into consideration the total needs of the team and respond to them in the most efficient way. It is hard to decide on what training is needed by the sales rep when he joins the company, especially that no specific tests are done to him to reveal what areas are to be improved. Furthermore, it takes a lot of observation coaching, and continuous performance evaluation in order to assess the sales rep's real strong and weak points in order to stress on the strong and improve the weak through adequate training plans.

8c- When does training take place?

	Working hours	Outside working hours
Insurance	78%	33%
Pharmaceutical	80%	40%
Total	78%	36%

The majority of the companies hold their training sessions within work hours. Only 20% of the pharma and 22% of the insurance companies hold their training sessions exclusively outside working hours. This could be a drawback for the outcome and reach effect of the training material. The sales reps might feel annoyed that all training is given during their free time, this will decrease their learning ability, especially when training is given after a full working day. The sales rep might even consider training as a less important matter as it is not given within working hours, adding the tendency to take such matters more as leisure time in such circumstances. In mixing between inside and outside working hours, the company might reach the best formula of continuously training its staff in an efficient way without sacrificing a lot of time that could be used for actually achieving sales figures.

Q9) Which methods are mostly followed in conducting your training programs?

	Lectures Presentations	Role playing	Simulation games	Videotapes	Workshop	On the job	Courses
Insurance	67%	22%	11%	22%	55%	44%	44%
Pharmaceutical	100%	40%	40%	40%	60%	20%	0%
Total	78%	28%	21%	28%	57%	36%	28%

The big majority of the companies use lectures as the main training method. 57% use workshops. The workshops used are usually in a form of general sales meeting where training material is provided and discussed among attendants. It is important to note that the percentages of companies that use role playing, simulation games, videotapes, courses are low as stated above. This implies that the learn-by-doing technique (which is the most effective after listening, observing and participating) is little used. It is known that people retain only 20% of what they hear and more than 60% of what they hear and see which explains the importance of using videos, role playing and simulation games. Furthermore, the persons practicing the skills during the training session will be incorporating and enhancing them in their usual behaviour.

About 60% of the companies are not using the above techniques which allow maximum assimilation and which ideally should be used as basic training methods and reinforced by lectures, hand-outs, reminders...

Q10) Where do you conduct your training programs?

	In-House	Public	Abroad
Insurance	89%	55%	0%
Pharmaceutical	80%	60%	60%
Total	86%	57%	21%

Only 55% of the insurance companies (versus 60% of pharma companies) hold their training sessions outside the company premises. This is a much better way than holding the training in-house as it allows better focus, better mood, lower stress and much better assimilation away from the daily work atmosphere. In addition, none of the Insurance companies (versus 60% of Pharma companies, which is an excellent ratio) send their reps abroad for training purposes.

In addition to the advantages of public training, training abroad is usually regarded as a special event by the sales rep. This will help in increasing the sales rep's self confidence, motivation and general culture, which will, in addition to the training effect, enhance his overall performance.

TABLE 1: CORRELATION BETWEEN NR OF HRS & CHOICE OF TRAINING LOCATION

	NR OF COMPANIES	IN HOUSE	PUBLIC	ABROAD
0-20 HR	4	100%	50%	0%
20-40 HR	5	80%	40%	0%
40-60 HR	3	67%	67%	67%
MORE THAN 60 HR	2	100%	100%	50%
TOTAL	**14**	**86%**	**57%**	**21%**

This correlation matrix shows the increased importance of public and especially abroad training for companies that give their sales reps more than 40 hours of training per year. Abroad training is inexistent in companies who give their sales reps below 40 hours of training per year. This will create a deficiency in the quality of knowledge for those reps when competing with others who are trained abroad.

Part III: SELLING SKILLS:

Q1) Do you train your sales representatives on prospecting?

	Yes				No
	Lecture	Video	Workshop Courses	On the job	
Insurance	11%	67%	44%	55%	0%
Pharmaceutical	40%	60%	40%	40%	40%
Total	21%	64%	43%	50%	14%

All the insurance companies train their sales reps on prospecting. Many of those companies believe that this is one of the most important phases of the sales call. Finding the right potential client is considered to be the key to the success of the sales call. However, lectures are still the major tool to teach the reps how to find and qualify potential customers. In this respect, more attention could be dedicated to this specific area. Workshops among different sales reps and brainstorming sessions could enhance the way prospecting is done by the sales reps in general, especially when they are divided into territories that ban competition over the same customers. As it is shown, 40% of the pharma companies do not train their reps on prospecting. This is mainly due to the clear location of the customers (hospitals, pharmacies, clinics). Still, qualifying the customer is half the prospection phase and should be taken more seriously by those companies in order to aim for the best portion of prospects before competition does.

Q2) Do you train your sales representatives on Pre-approach?

	Yes				No
	Lecture	Video	Workshop Courses	On the job	
Insurance	55%	11%	22%	55%	22%
Pharmaceutical	40%	20%	20%	40%	40%
Total	50%	14%	21%	50%	28%

40% of the pharma companies (versus 22% of insurance companies) do not train their sales reps on how to prepare their sales call. Some of the companies who do train their reps on pre-approach do not ask them to set clear objectives, anticipate possible buying motives and objections, chose a tentative closing statement... but only to prepare themselves in terms of customer information, leaflets, and necessary papers. In this respect, more focus should be secured as this is the last phase before getting in contact with the prospect. Once they meet, the sales rep will rarely have time to fix things up in case things go bad.

Q3) Do you train your sales representatives on approach techniques?

	Yes				No
	Lecture	Video	Workshop Courses	On the job	
Insurance	44%	11%	33%	55%	22%
Pharmaceutical	60%	20%	40%	60%	20%
Total	50%	14%	36%	57%	21%

21% of companies equally distributed, do not train their sales reps on the various ways to approach the prospect. They leave the prospect to do it his own way. As to the other portion, the techniques used are in the majority of cases in the form of lectures and on-the-job. It is important to note that an on-the-job method could be effective for this phase of the sales call. This is due to the nature of Lebanese prospects which necessitates tailored approach styles. The sales manager takes the sales rep with him to a sales call and asks him to observe the approach used to get into the presentation. Still the approach per se is given less importance compared to establishing rapport which is considered of higher importance. Although this may be true in our society, the approach should not be neglected. Even after spending some time chatting about various issues and getting to know the prospect, the sales rep should be trained on the various approaches he could use to get into the presentation in the appropriate way and time. Needless to remind that workshops where sales reps would try the various techniques through role playing and brainstorming would yield better results as to how to approach the prospects.

Q4) Do you train your sales representatives on presentation techniques?

	Yes				
	Lecture	Video	Workshop Courses	On the job	No
Insurance	67%	0%	33%	44%	11%
Pharmaceutical	60%	0%	60%	40%	20%
Total	64%	0%	43%	43%	14%

The big majority of companies (64%) use lectures to train their sales reps on how to present their product or service (while 14% of the companies do not train their reps on presentation techniques). It is essential for the reps to know how to present their product to the prospect, and how to present the benefits whenever possible through a benefit tag question, of course after having asked the right questions to uncover the buying motives. This phase of the sales call is best learned through workshops where role playing is used. It takes a lot of effort and time for the sales reps to practice and acquire the ability to talk in terms of benefits rather than features (workshops are used by 64% of the companies). It is also very difficult for good talkers to learn to ask questions and become good listeners. This phase should be concentrated on as it contains the bulk of what the sales rep is selling, his proposition. On-the-job technique, which is used by 43% of the companies, is also an efficient way to train the reps on presentation techniques. Same as the approach, when the sales manager takes the rep with him to a sales call, the rep will observe and learn how to enhance his presentations. As the above shows, the majority of companies have a lot to enhance in training their reps on this important part of the sales call.

Q5) Do you train your sales representatives on dealing with customer responses?

	Yes				No
	Lecture	Video	Workshop Courses	On the job	
Insurance	55%	11%	33%	67%	11%
Pharmaceutical	60%	0%	40%	40%	20%
Total	57%	7%	36%	57%	7%

86% of the companies train their reps on handling objections. The majority of the companies who train their reps on handling objections do it on-the-job or through lectures. Objections, especially of the smoke type, are very likely to emerge during a sales call with a Lebanese prospect. Unlike any other, the Lebanese prospect tends to give objections that take into consideration the sales rep's feelings as well as the prospect's ego status. We are unlikely to encounter a statement such as "I don't have the money for your product" or "your product has more benefits than I actually need". These facts contribute in making this subject a very important one to be taught to the sales reps. Workshops and role playing are better ways to train the reps on handling objections. It is also a skill that is very hard to actually perform as it is a natural tendency for people to argue about the things they do not agree upon with the prospect, which often leads to major disagreements and ruins the sales call outcome. Lacks are obvious in this phase as only 7% of companies use videos and 35% use workshops.

Q6) Do you train your sales representatives on closing techniques?

	Yes				
	Lecture	Video	Workshop Courses	On the job	No
Insurance	55%	22%	33%	67%	11%
Pharmaceutical	40%	0%	0%	0%	60%
Total	50%	14%	21%	43%	28%

64% of the companies train their reps on closing techniques. The majority does it through lectures and on-the-job. However, the results show that 60% of the pharma companies do not train their sales reps on closing techniques. This is an important and major drawback for them. Closing is the final stage that leads to commitment from the prospect. Without closing, all the previous efforts would be in vain. Even if pharma companies consider that the sales rep's focus should be on presentation (especially with doctors who do not actually buy the product but the idea of including it in their prescriptions), the sales reps need to get a commitment from the doctors which requires a closing. As explained in previous chapters, closing techniques could be very effective in getting the sale. Sometimes, all the prospect needs is a final help or push from the sales rep in order to take the decision, therefore the sales rep should be knowledgeable in the various closing techniques to use. Workshops and role playing are also very effective techniques for training on this area. They should be used as basic training and later reinforced through lectures, hand-outs, on-the-job...

Part IV : COMPLEMENTARY SUBJECTS

Q1) Do you train your sales representatives on your product and company knowledge?

	Yes				No
	Lecture Seminars	Leaflets Sales manual	Demonstrations On the job	Others	
Insurance	89%	55%	67%	0%	0%
Pharmaceutical	80%	20%	60%	20%	0%
Total	86%	43%	64%	7%	0%

All companies train their reps on products and company knowledge. As a matter of fact, this is the most frequently used training topic to be given to the sales force. It is interesting to note that 20% of the pharma companies make special video sessions of live surgeries and bring specialized doctors to comment/explain the uses of the company product to the sales force. This also allows the sales rep get into the picture of what happens during specific live surgeries which makes his communication with the doctors he is selling to more effective. In general, this topic is well covered by both the insurance and pharma companies, bearing in mind that it is deadly for both industries to neglect this topic due to the continuous innovations and complicated caracteristics of the products.

Q2) Do you train your sales representatives on industry and competition knowledge?

	Yes				No
	Reports	Informal Oral or on the job	Lectures Seminars	Others	
Insurance	33%	89%	44%	0%	11%
Pharmaceutical	40%	20%	0%	20%	40%
Total	36%	64%	28%	7%	21%

21% of the companies do not train their sales reps in a formal way on competition knowledge. They leave the reps to discover them during their daily activities. This is a major drawback and shows a gap in the communication process between the marketing specialists and the sales force. Being a part of the marketing department, the sales reps should be given adequate feedback on the competition's products, their marketing strategies and their weakness areas (this information usually include the sales reps' consolidated reports). This is better reached when lectures are given and global meetings are held, especially that the sales reps could give important feedback to the marketing department as to what should be done to win over the competition.

Q3) Do you train your sales representatives on specific Marketing subjects?

	Yes				No
	Hands-outs	Courses Workshops	Lectures Seminars	Oral on the job	
Insurance	11%	22%	33%	33%	33%
Pharmaceutical	40%	40%	20%	20%	40%
Total	21%	28%	28%	28%	35%

A big portion of companies (35%) do not give their sales reps training on marketing subjects. Most of those companies believe that marketing should be separated totally from sales. In reality, the sales rep does not need to be aware of all the details of the activities of the marketing department (it would be too much asking) but he should be trained on the specific marketing topics discussed previously. These topics will increase his ability to master the sales process and will help him think more in terms of customer satisfaction and long term client relation. Furthermore, being an essential provider of data for the marketing department, the sales rep should know exactly how this data will serve to enhance the company's marketing strategy, which justifies the need to train him on the marketing strategy used by the company.

Q4) Do you train your sales representatives on Negotiation skills?

	Yes					No
	Lectures Seminars	Workshops	Within another topic	Books Hand-outs	Oral or on the job	
Insurance	22%	22%	33%	11%	11%	22%
Pharmaceutical	40%	0%	0%	40%	20%	40%
Total	28%	14%	21%	21%	14%	28%

28% of the companies do not train their sales reps on negotiation skills. On the other hand, only 14% of the companies hold workshops on this topic, the others give it as a marginal subject. Negotiation skills are of major importance, especially to pharma companies whose prospects are highly educated people who know what they want and could be tough negotiators. Here we can say that 40% is a high percentage for pharma companies who do not train their reps on negotiation skills. If the saying "Lebanese people like to bargain more than any others" is true, then negotiation skills are not to be taken lightly.

Q5) Do you train your sales representatives on Communication skills?

	Yes					No
	Lectures Seminars	Workshops	Within another topic	Books Hand-outs	Oral or on the job	
Insurance	44%	22%	33%	0%	22%	33%
Pharmaceutical	20%	0%	0%	0%	20%	80%
Total	56%	14%	21%	0%	21%	50%

50% of the companies do not train their reps on communication skills. This figure is especially important for pharma companies, out of which 80% do not train their reps on this topic. Communication skills are important for every person involved in communicating with different kinds of people, it is of a higher importance for persons involved in communicating with people like doctors and pharmacists who are themselves well trained to deal with different kinds of people under different kinds of situations. This topic should be taken more seriously, especially by pharma companies as sales are practically impossible without a good and sound communication process between the sales rep and the prospect.

Q6) Do you give your sales representatives language courses?

	Yes	No
Insurance	44%	55%
Pharmaceutical	0%	100%
Total	28%	72%

Only 28% of the companies (which are actually 44% of the insurance companies) give their sales reps language courses. Although the country's second language is still French, the english language is the one chosen due to its increased importance in the business field. It is important to note that all the pharma companies, along with most of the insurance companies, have the english language as a pre requisite for getting the job, which justifies why they do not give language courses to their reps.

Q7) Do you train your sales representatives on specific persuasion skills?

	Yes				No
	Lecture Seminars	Workshop	Books Hand-outs	On the job	
Insurance	78%	11%	0%	22%	22%
Pharmaceutical	60%	0%	20%	0%	40%
Total	71%	7%	7%	14%	28%

Selling is the art of persuasion. Any effort done to train the sales rep on persuasion skills has a direct effect on the improvement of the performance of the sales reps. The results show that 28% of the companies do not train their representatives on specific persuasion skills. This subject should be given more importance especially that 71% of the companies tackle this subject through lectures. Persuasion skills are better assimilated when given through workshops and role playing/video recording sessions.

Q8) Do you train your sales representatives on time management?

	Yes				No
	Lecture Seminars	Workshop	Books Hand-outs	On the job	
Insurance	22%	11%	11%	11%	55%
Pharmaceutical	40%	0%	20%	0%	40%
Total	28%	7%	14%	7%	50%

50% of the companies do not train their reps on time management. This is due to the concentration on results and achievements. However, time management is of major importance because it allows the sales rep use his time in a more efficient way which will reflect positively on his overall achievement. Routing techniques could also help the sales rep plan a more efficient day by spending the least amount of time in avoidable traffic jams.

Q9) Other related topic

	Stress Management		Computer Skills		Memory		Speed Reading		Other	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Insurance	33%	67%	100%	0%	22%	78%	11%	89%	22%	78%
Pharmaceutical	0%	100%	20%	80%	0%	100%	0%	100%	20%	80%
Total	21%	79%	72%	28%	14%	86%	7%	93%	21%	79%

The above results can be analyzed as follows:

- Stress management is given by a very low percentage of companies given its importance. In addition to the daily usual stress of the work itself, the Lebanese sales rep encounters endless traffic jams, noise, pollution... which are causes of stress. Furthermore, in many Lebanese family owned businesses, the sales rep is faced with personal critisisms and pressure which also increase the amount of stress. Therefore, stress management should be a topic of primary importance to sales reps as well as other persons in the organization.

- Computer skills are used by a big portion of companies. Some give very limited computer usage skills just to enable the sales rep write his report or retreive a certain needed information. It is important that every sales rep be at least computer literate due to the wide use of computers in our daily lives.
- In the "other" section, 20% of the pharma companies give their sales reps general medical knowledge and 11% of insurance companies give their sales reps topics in psychology. These are important complementary subjects that enhance the reps' performance.
- Very few companies give their reps training on enhancing their memory or on speed reading. These topics are considered as marginal in comparison with what the sales rep should master in direct selling techniques. In fact, it is not recommended to widen the topics to this extent before the sales rep gets the initial and more important subjects discussed in the previous sections.

TABLE 2: CORRELATION BETWEEN THE TOPICS CHOSEN AND THE NR OF TRAINING HOURS GIVEN PER YEAR:

	NUMBER OF TRAINING HRS PER EMPLOYEE PER YEAR					
	10 - 20 HOURS		20 - 40 HOURS		40 - 60 HOURS	
TRAINING TOPIC	INS. (2)	PHA.(2)	INS. (5)	PHA.(0)	INS. (1)	PHA.(2)
PROSPECTION	2	1	5	0	1	1
PRE-APPROACH	2	1	3	0	1	1
APPROACH	1	1	4	0	1	2
PRESENTATION TECHNIQUES	2	2	4	0	1	2
CUSTOMER RESPONSE	1	2	5	0	1	2
CLOSING TECHNIQUES	2	1	4	0	1	1
PRODUCTS KNOWLEDGE	2	2	5	0	1	1
COMPETITION KNOWLEDGE	1	1	4	0	1	2
MARKETING SUBJECTS	1	0	3	0	1	1
NEGOTIATION SKILLS	2	2	3	0	1	0
COMMUNICATION SKILLS	1	0	4	0	1	0
LANGUAGE COURSES	0	0	3	0	1	0
PERSUASION SKILLS	1	1	4	0	0	1
TIME MANAGEMENT	1	1	2	0	1	1
STRESS MANAGEMENT	0	0	2	0	1	0
COMPUTER SKILLS	2	0	5	0	1	1
MEMORY	0	0	0	0	1	0
SPEED READING	0	0	1	0	0	0
OTHER TOPICS	0	0	1	0	1	1
TOTAL CHOSEN TOPICS	21	15	62	0	17	17
AVG CHOSEN PER COMPANY	10.5	7.5	10.4	0	17	8.5
TOPIC COVERAGE (OUT OF 19 TOPICS)	55%	39%	55%	0%	89%	45%
AVG NBR OF HRS PER TOPIC	**1.4**	**2**	**3**	**0**	**3**	**6**

This correlation matrix applies to the companies that give their sales reps less than 60 hours of training per year (which includes 86% of the total) and gives us the following results:

- The average chosen training topics per company is high. Most of the companies chose among topics 10 to be given to their sales reps. This gives the sales rep a diversity of topics to learn which will increase his general level of knowledge.
- However, this diversity faces a major drawback as the low number of hours leaves little time to be invested in each of the topics. This implies that the topic will be rarely assimilated and incorporated in the sales rep's activities. This applies most to companies who give their sales reps less than 20 hours of training per year, which leaves an average of 1.4 to 2 hours per year for each training topic. The allocated time for each training topic should be increased in order to allow better learning which will reflect on the sales rep's daily performance and way of conducting a sales call. If the allocated time cannot be increased, it is better to focus on the selling skills at the first stage (through workshops, learn-by-doing procedures) and later tackle other topics once the first one is completed. For companies who give their reps 40 to 60 hours of training per year, the average time allocated to each training topic is 3 hours for insurance companies and 6 hours to pharma companies, which gives the subject higher chances of being assimilated by the sales rep, especially at the level of pharma companies who are focused on the subjects chosen and give them the needed time.

TABLE 3: **PERCENTAGE OF COMPANIES WHO TRAIN ON TOPICS**

	% INSUR	% PHAR	%TOTAL
PROSPECTION	100	60	**86**
PRE-APPROACH	78	60	**71**
APPROACH	78	80	**78**
PRESENTATION TECHNIQUES	89	80	**86**
CUSTOMER RESPONSE	89	80	**86**
CLOSING TECHNIQUES	89	40	**78**
PRODUCTS KNOWLEDGE	100	100	**100**
COMPETITION KNOWLEDGE	89	60	**78**
MARKETING SUBJECTS	67	60	**64**
NEGOTIATION SKILLS	78	60	**71**
COMMUNICATION SKILLS	67	20	**50**
LANGUAGE COURSES	44	0	**28**
PERSUASION SKILLS	78	60	**71**
TIME MANAGEMENT	44	60	**50**
STRESS MANAGEMENT	33	0	**21**
COMPUTER SKILLS	100	20	**71**
MEMORY	22	0	**14**
SPEED READING	11	0	**7**
OTHER TOPICS	22	20	**21**

The above matrix gives us the following insights:

- The subject the most tackled by companies is product and company knowledge. This is obvious as companies are compelled to train their sales reps on their products no matter what are their visions regarding training.
- The subjects that come directly after product knowledge include prospecting, presentation and handling objections. It is important to note that these topics should be treated same as other selling skills as the whole process is interlinked and not one chain should be missed. Only 71% of the companies train their reps on planning (vs 86% for the above mentioned phases), although planning is an integral part of the selling cycle.
- Stress management, which is a subject of major importance for today's sales reps is only considered by 21% of the companies.

- Communication skills, which help the sales rep increase his chances of getting commitments in sales and also help the sales rep enhance his collaboration with the rest of the company team, are placed in the fourteenth position (over 19 topics) whereas they should be placed among the top priority subjects.

Part V : FOLLOW-UP ON TRAINING

Q1)Do you measure sales performance?

	Before Training		After Training	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
Insurance	89%	11%	100%	0%
Pharmaceutical	80%	20%	100%	0%
Total	86%	14%	100%	0%

All companies measure the sales performance after training in order to compare the results. However, the most widely used method is through verifying direct sales results in money terms. Very few companies observe the number of closes per call or similar ratios which are more indicative of sales performance. An increase in the number of calls made will probably yield more sales and will not be an effect of the training received. Therefore, ratios are better to be used when comparing sales performance and the effects of the training received on it.

Q2)Do you evaluate the sales representatives attitude and behavior towards training?

	Before Training		After Training	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
Insurance	78%	22%	89%	11%
Pharmaceutical	40%	60%	40%	60%
Total	64%	36%	71%	29%

Q3)Do you evaluate the sales representatives learning ability?

	Before Training		After Training	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
Insurance	78%	22%	78%	22%
Pharmaceutical	80%	20%	60%	40%
Total	78%	22%	71%	29%

Although a big portion of companies evaluate the attitude towards training and their learning ability, most of them use the observation technique to do it. This could create problems and leave room for bias and personal opinion of the sales manager or the person in charge when evaluating the sales rep. Ideally, tests, questionnaires, and interviews should be paralleled with close observation in order to assess the sales rep's attitude towards training along with his learning ability.

Q4) Do you ask for a written report about each training topic?

	Yes	No
Insurance	55%	45%
Pharmaceutical	40%	60%
Total	50%	50%

50% of the companies do not ask for a report after the training topic is given. This could annulate all the efforts invested on training. The report gives us the feedback of the person who is the most involved and to whom all the efforts are aimed. Furthermore, the report could use as a tool for the rep to summarize and revise the learned topic which will add to his learning ability. On the other hand, some of the companies who ask for a written report give it the needed attention and ask the sales rep to give his insights as to what could be enhanced in the training procedures, what subjects he would like to learn about, what was his favourite teaching method... in order to enhance their training methods and cope with the sales reps' consolidated comments and expectations. This is a major issue for the responsibles of training activities to make the necessary adjustments on the training function for the company.

Q5 Do you set action plans for performance enhancing further to the training achievement?

	Yes	No
Insurance	67%	34%
Pharmaceutical	60%	40%
Total	64%	36%

In the majority of the above positive replies, the action plans consist of having the supervisor watch the sales rep's behavior on-the-job through presence during a sales call to be done in the near future. This area could be elaborated by having the sales rep suggest an action plan for using the skills learned during the training session and later agree with his supervisor on how to execute the action plan. Whenever the training is given by a company trainer, it is also recommended that the trainer assists the sales rep on-the-job in order to give a third and more reliable opinion to assess strong and weak areas aiming at enhancing future performance.

Q6: Are the sales representatives followed up on the job to make sure they are using the skills Learned in their daily work?

	Yes	No
Insurance	89%	11%
Pharmaceutical	60%	40%
Total	78%	22%

As explained in the previous question, the follow-up on-the-job is usually done by visits of the supervisor with the concerned sales rep. No specific follow-up is aimed at improving the skills learned during the training sessions. Most of the positive replies stated that the usual schedule when the sales supervisor accompanies the sales rep is also used for enhancing the performance through the application of the learned material. This is also the method used with companies who do not have specific schedules for accompanying the sales reps on-the-job. In this respect, more attention should be given to this area. The sales rep might feel under pressure when his supervisor is with him and might focus more on the closing of the sale rather than delivering a complete professional presentation. Whenever possible, it is better if the trainer accompanies the sales rep to a sales call, away from the pressure of getting the deal or not, and later discuss with the sales rep about what went right during the sales call so that it be maintained and what went wrong so that it be enhanced.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion:

The first part of this research, the theory part, was the most time and effort consuming. The information collected from all the tangible sources (books, magazines, reports…) as well as from all the intangible sources (interviews and personal experience) were gathered in a condensed way so to form a training guideline that could be of practical use to any sales manager (chapters 3, 4, and 5) or sales representative (chapters 4 and 5).

The link of the theory part to the practical research of the chosen sample was only possible after having completed the first five chapters. It is the condensed theory of sales management and sales training topics that paved the way to the formation of the questionnaire, which in its turn allowed us evaluate the adherence of the chosen sample with the desired selling skills. The research on companies could have shown lacks had the theory part been taken lightly. This is why the time spent on studying the various sales management functions as well as most of the training topics usually given to sales reps helped the practical research be more reliable and complete.

As a conclusion, and after all parts of this research were completed, the main finding that could be drawn states that the surveyed industries are not considering training as a key issue for successful sales performance and thus overall company performance. The following are some of the important indicators to this finding:

1- The time allocated to training activities is insufficient to make real professionals out of the sales force. Though very few companies give their sales reps more than

60 hours of training per year, the majority still does not give them more than 40 hours, which is a minimum required (along with the quality of training which will be discussed later) to have a sales force of high caliber. Furthermore, it was noted that most of the training is allocated to product and company knowledge, whereas it should be guided towards selling, communication, negotiation...themes..

2- The methods used for training are in general less efficient than the desired methods that allow interactive and learn-by-doing exercices. This reflects that some of the employers under-estimate the training benefits. They consider the incremental costs for such methods as additional expenses that do not justify the need to use them. In reality, the learn-by-doing techniques (role playing, interactive training, simulation games, video recording sessions...) are the most efficient and should be given first priority.

3- Even though the surveyed companies have a large size, it was noted that in most of them there was not a person exclusively in charge of training. In most of the cases, the sales manager is the person in charge of conducting the training programs, although he was not trained to train (through attending train the trainer type courses). The sales manager may be the person who knows his team best, but this in not enough for him to deliver the training messages in the appropriate way. A very low percentage of companies who use outside training specialists was also noted. This is a major drawback as for topics pertaining to selling, communication, negotiation...skills, the outside training specialists can be the most efficient. They carry a wide experience with various types of people and organizations. Furthermore, their specialization in these topics (and the general nature of the topics) allow them to give more realistic and convincing examples which will help the trainees assimilate more the training message. Last but not least, being "outsiders", the training specialists can give constructive insight about the company overall training needs.

4- Instead of being decided on a regular basis for product and consumer knowledge, on a semi-regular basis for sales, communication, negotiation...techniques, and through an ongoing performance evaluation system, the training needs and plans are most of the time decided with the yearly budget and linked to it. In many cases, it was noted that the training plans depended directly on whether the company is tight on budget or not, whereas they should be considered as a basic need (that should be accounted for in the budget) for the company performance. This also shows the management's negligence and under estimation of training capabilities.

5- The evaluation of the training outcomes, along with the learning curve for the sales reps is, in most of the cases, done through observation. Filling questionnaires, asking for the trainee's insights, comparing ratios and numbers of sales calls needed in order to actually close the sale, holding personal files for the trainee's learned topics... are often non existent. Observation gives room to bias, incomplete evaluation and is not inclusive as to what to do next.

Recommendations:

In addition to the direct recommendations that elicit from the analysis done on the research findings in the previous chapter, the following are general insights that are suggested for the surveyed industries.

1- Include a test on selling skills early during the recruitment of the sales rep. This test could be a role playing test where the sales manager would play the role of the prospect (it would be better if the sales call be videotaped). The sales situation could be described in writing and given to the applicant with the necessary time for preparation. During the sales test, the sales manager would have a form to fill on the applicant's skills at the diferent selling, communication, negotiation, persuasion... levels along with the general assessement on his attitude, character, personality etc. This test could help make more effective the initial training plan to be decided for the chosen applicant (in a form of tailored plan).

2- Since the companies have a large size, it is recommended to have, whenever possible, a full time training specialist from within (after a cost analysis of the new position). Even when the sales manager (or other manager) is the chosen person to give the bulk of training material to the sales force, it is better to give him specialized training material that would make a good trainer out of him. This material includes train the trainer courses, advanced communication courses, psychology... Company managers should make sure that the chosen manager is a good trainer and not take this for granted.

3- Consider training as an investment and not as a burden (avoidable cost) to the company. Furthermore, turn the company into an ongoing learning center which will generate any learning opportunity for the reps, i.e get continuous feedback from the sales rep as to what he would like to learn about and try to secure it for him (it can be as simple as encouraging him to read through the existing library if available, archives...). Even if the sales rep wants to acquire knowledge in fields that are not related directly to sales (history, social science...) the sources can be secured at minimal costs. In return, the outcome will be a more knowledgeable person who will have more information that could impress prospects who have the same interests or hobbies, which will help achieve the sale.

4- Communication is a subject of major importance, it is at the basis of every human relation. It is recommended (especially for pharma companies) to consider this topic as one of the priority topics to be given in parallel with selling skills and with the same magnitude. It is also suggested that communication be generalized in its message to inform the sales reps (as well as persons in other departments) on the importance of communication inside the company, within departments and individuals. Without effective communication at the internal level of the company, the synergy effect cannot be reached.

5- Include in your training programs more methods that allow better learning of the materials (role playing, workshops...) and later use the traditional lectures and on-the-job training methods as a tool of refreshment of the acquired training material. The methods that allow to learn by doing work more especially for the subjects that are brought up for the first time.

6- Include in your training plans (especially for the insurance companies) at least one training abroad to be granted to one of the highly performing reps. Training abroad is usually regarded as an opportunity to the sales rep. This will increase the motivation of the whole team and will allow one rep per year to have international exposure, professional training and better morale.

7- Finally, and in order to cover this topic more in depth, the following are some suggestions for further research:

   - The analysis of communication processes between the company and the customer (through training the sales rep on communication skills, direct marketing, internet applications...) and between the various department swithin a company (through encouraging team work, open communications...)

- The comparison between the supply of training material in the lebanese market (through surveying the present companies that provide training services) and the demand for training material (through surveying a sample of Lebanese companies from different industries/sectors).
- The effects of the growing use of Internet (soon in every home) on direct selling. These effects already started to lead to major changes in some of the American companies' way of doing business. Many companies are concentrating more on selling through the Internet (their web sites), some are even closing their points of sale to sell through direct delivery from warehouses.

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    - Mr. M. Asmar, owner, Y U P. Lebanon
    - Various sales managers and sales representatives in Lebanon

Annex 1: Questionnaire sample

PART I - COMPANY INFORMATION

COMPANY NAME : ---
SECTOR / INDUSTRY : ---
YEAR ESTABLISHED : ---
NR. OF EMPLOYEES : ---
NR. OF SALES REPRESENTATIVES: ---
ANNUAL SALES VOLUME / TURNOVER

☐ $ 0 - $ 500 000 ☐ $ 1 000 000 - $ 5 000 000

☐ $ 500 000 - $ 1 000 000 ☐ $ 5 000 000 AND ABOVE

PART II - GENERAL INFORMATION ON THE TRAINING ACTIVITIES TO THE SALES FORCE

Q 1: Are new sales recruits trained before or after they are placed in the field

☐ Before ☐ After

If before, what is the training period? ---

Q 2: As to old sales persons do you train them continuously?

☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, how often and on what bases?

☐ Within a time frame Please specify when: --------------------

☐ On new product or services ☐ On new skills

☐ Refreshment

Q 3: On average, please specify schedule when a sales rep is accompanied by supervisor to assess/enhance his performance:

Q 4: On average, how much training does each sales representative receive yearly?

☐ Up to 20 hrs ☐ 40 - 60 hrs

☐ 20 - 40 hrs ☐ More than 60 hrs

Q 5: Are all sales reps given equal chance for training?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Q 6: Is training compulsory?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Q 7: Who has the responsibility of conducting your sales force training?

☐ Company personnel . Specify: ------------------------------------

☐ Specialized trainers in the staff ☐ Outside training specialists

☐ Trainers sent by your suppliers/business partners

Q 8: 8 a- Who decides on the training:

TOPICS	SETTINGS	BUDGET
☐ Sales manager	☐ Sales manager	☐ Sales manager
☐ HR. department	☐ HR. department	☐ HR. department
☐ General manager	☐ General manager	☐ General manager

8 b- When are training plans conceived and agreed - upon?

☐ When the sales representative joins the company

☐ Yearly within the budget (or business plan)

☐ After the performance reviews

8 c- When does training take place: ☐ within working hours

☐ Outside working hours

Q 9: Which methods are mostly followed in conducting your training programs?

a- Individual training

☐ Personal lecture ☐ Courses

☐ workshops, interactive, training ☐ On the job training - "OTJ"

☐ Others: --------------------------------

b- Group training

☐ Lectures / Presentations ☐ Workshops

☐ Role playing ☐ On the job

☐ Simulation games ☐ Courses

☐ Videotapes ☐ Others: --------------------------------

Q 10: Where do you conduct your training programs?

☐ In-house ☐ Public ☐ Abroad

PART III - SELLING SKILLS

Q 1: Do you train your sales representatives on prospecting (how to find and qualify potential customers) ?

☐ Yes ☐ No If yes, is it through:

☐ Lecture ☐ workshops / courses

☐ Video ☐ On the job

Q 2: Do you train your sales representatives on Pre-approach (how to plan their sales call) ?

☐ Yes ☐ No if yes, is it through:

☐ Lecture ☐ workshops / courses

☐ Video ☐ On the job

Q 3: Do you train your sales representatives on the various approach techniques (how to get in first contact with the prospect) ?

☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, is it through: ☐ Lecture ☐ workshops / courses

☐ Video ☐ On the job

Q 4: Do you train your sales representatives on presentation techniques (Ways to present product or services) ?

☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, is it through: ☐ Lecture ☐ workshops / courses

☐ Video ☐ On the job

Q 5 : Do you train your sales representatives on how to deal with customer responses and objections?

☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, is it through: ☐ Lecture ☐ workshops / courses

☐ Video ☐ On the job

Q 6: Do you train your sales representatives on closing techniques (how to ask for the order) ?

☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, is it through: ☐ Lecture ☐ workshops / courses

☐ Video ☐ On the job

PART IV - COMPLEMENTARY SUBJECTS

Q 1: Do you train your sales representatives on your company and products knowledge ?

☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, is it through: ☐ Lecture/seminars ☐ Demonstrations/on the job

☐ Leaflets / sales manual ☐ Other: ------------------------

Q 2: Do you train your sales representatives on industry and competition knowledge?

☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, is it through: ☐ Reports ☐ lectures/seminars

☐ Informal / oral or on the job ☐ Other: ------------------------

Q 3: Do you train your sales representatives on specific Marketing subjects?

☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, is it through: ☐ Hand-Outs ☐ Seminars/lectures

☐ Courses / workshops ☐ Oral or on the job

Q 4: Do you train your sales represntatives on Negotiation skills?

☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, is it through: ☐ Seminars/lectures ☐ Books / Hand-outs

☐ workshops ☐ Oral the job

☐ Within another topic (selling or other)

Q 5: Do you train your sales representatives on Communication skills?

☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, is it through: ☐ Lectures / seminars ☐ Books / Hand-outs

☐ Workshops ☐ On the job

☐ within another topic (selling or other)

Q 6: Do you give your sales representatives language courses?

☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, please specify which language (s)

Q 7: Do you train your sales representatives our specific persuasion skills?

☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, is it through: ☐ Lectures / seminars ☐ Books / Handouts

☐ Workshops ☐ On the job

Q 8 : Do you train your sales representatives on time management?

☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, is it through: ☐ Lectures / seminars ☐ Books / Handouts

☐ Workshops ☐ On the job

Q 9: Other related topics:

Stress management	:	☐ Yes	☐ No
Computer skills	:	☐ Yes	☐ No
Memory	:	☐ Yes	☐ No
Speed reading	:	☐ Yes	☐ No
Other topics	:	☐ Yes	☐ No

If, yes please specify: --

PART V - FOLLOW - UP ON TRAINING:

Q 1: Do you measure sales performance ?

Before training ☐ Yes ☐ No please specify tool: ---------------------------------

After training ☐ Yes ☐ No please specify tool: ---------------------------------

Q 2: Do you evaluate the sales representatives attitude and behavior towards training?

Before training ☐ Yes ☐ No please specify tool: ---------------------------------

After training ☐ Yes ☐ No please specify tool: ---------------------------------

Q 3: Do you evaluate the sales representatives learning ability?

☐ Yes ☐ No please specify tool: ---------------------------------

☐ Yes ☐ No please specify tool: ---------------------------------

Q 4: Do you ask for a written report about each training topic?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Q 5: Do you set action plans for performance enhancing further to the training achievement?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Q 6: Are the sales reps followed up on the job to make sure they are using the skills learned in their daily work?

☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, please specify procedure and time consumed : ---
