

# The Future of Sales Leadership

## TRENDS, PITFALLS & WINNING STRATEGIES

BY AMY FRANKO

While some leaders adapt and thrive, others fall into common traps that stifle growth. What separates the leader that every seller wants to work for from the rest? A keen understanding of shifting dynamics, a commitment to continuous improvement, and the ability to navigate change with agility.

This article examines key trends impacting sales growth, highlights common leadership mistakes, and offers strategies for leaders to build and sustain high-performing sales teams.

### Trends Impacting Sales Growth and Leadership

Leading a winning sales team requires you to stay ahead of the game. Here are the latest trends influencing sales success:

#### 1. Missed Forecasts Amid Disruption.

Economic pressures, supply chain issues, and personnel shifts are pushing sales leaders to meet ambitious targets under tighter constraints. While these are real disruptors, the best leaders don't allow them to become excuses; rather, they guide the team to work through and around them.

**2. From Transactional to Consultative Selling.** Modern customers demand more than quick transactions; they expect meaningful, value-driven relationships. Sales teams must transition from transactional approaches to consultative, problem-solving approaches that demonstrate unique value propositions.

**3. You Can't Not Mention AI.** A few years ago, AI was something on a far-out horizon. The reality is that it's here to stay, and elite sales organizations use it wisely for tasks like prospecting, call research, and meeting summaries.

**4. A Decline in Sales Skills.** In the past several years, many of my clients have noted a drop-off in both fundamental and advanced sales skills. The best organizations invest in skill development for sales growth and talent retention.



Amy Franko

### Common Sales Leadership Mistakes to Avoid

Even the most experienced sales leaders make critical missteps that inhibit their team's growth. Here are six common mistakes, along with tips for avoiding them:

**1. Metrics Overload.** Too many metrics—or the wrong ones—can distract from what matters most. Conduct a metrics audit and focus on tracking 3-5 KPIs aligned with your organizational goals to ensure clarity and direction.

**2. Lack of Clear Sales Processes.** A lack of well-defined processes—such as sales methodologies, onboarding protocols, or customer journeys—can lead to inconsistencies and frustrations. Map out and optimize processes to create a solid foundation for success.

**3. The Unsustainable Player/Coach Role.** Leaders juggling individual sales quotas alongside their leadership role risk burning out and creating tension within their teams. Develop a strategy to transition leaders out of this dual role as soon as possible. A side effect of this pitfall is an environment where the leader isn't seen as a leader but as one of the sales team. This can negatively affect accountability and credibility, leading to lackluster sales results.

**5. Poor Hiring and Firing Practices.** Poor hiring and firing might be the top reason for culture and performance problems on sales teams. Too many leaders tolerate poor performance for

extended periods of time. Or the individual hired isn't a fit for the role. New hires also need structured onboarding within the first 90 days to perform effectively.

### How Can You Take Action?

Below are several strategies to address today's challenges:

**1. Upskill Your Team.** Invest in training programs to help your sales team master consultative selling and build digital and in-person communication skills. This ensures your team adapts to modern customer expectations.

**2. Use Frameworks and Not Rote Process.** Stay flexible and open to change. Build contingency plans that allow your team to pivot quickly when disruptions arise. Encourage experimentation and collaboration to develop creative solutions.

**3. Own and Create a Productive Sales Culture.** Take an active role in shaping your sales culture. A culture that prioritizes sustainable growth, accountability, and professional development will deliver long-term success.

**4. Leverage Data Strategically.** Focus on insights and productivity, not just numbers. Lots of low-impact activity doesn't equate to results. Use data to identify prospecting and cross-selling opportunities, to coach, and to guide sales professionals in strategically managing their territories.

Sales leadership is not just about managing quotas and numbers; it's about cultivating an environment where teams can consistently thrive. Business leaders who adapt to change, invest in their teams, and avoid pitfalls will position their organizations for long-term success.

Amy Franko is the leader in modern sales strategies. She helps mid-market organizations to grow sales results, through sales strategy, advisory, and skill development programs. Her book, *The Modern Seller*, is an Amazon bestseller, and she is recognized by LinkedIn as a Top Sales Voice. amyfranko.com.