



Everything You Need to Talk to Your Boss About Remote Working

OCTOBER 2018

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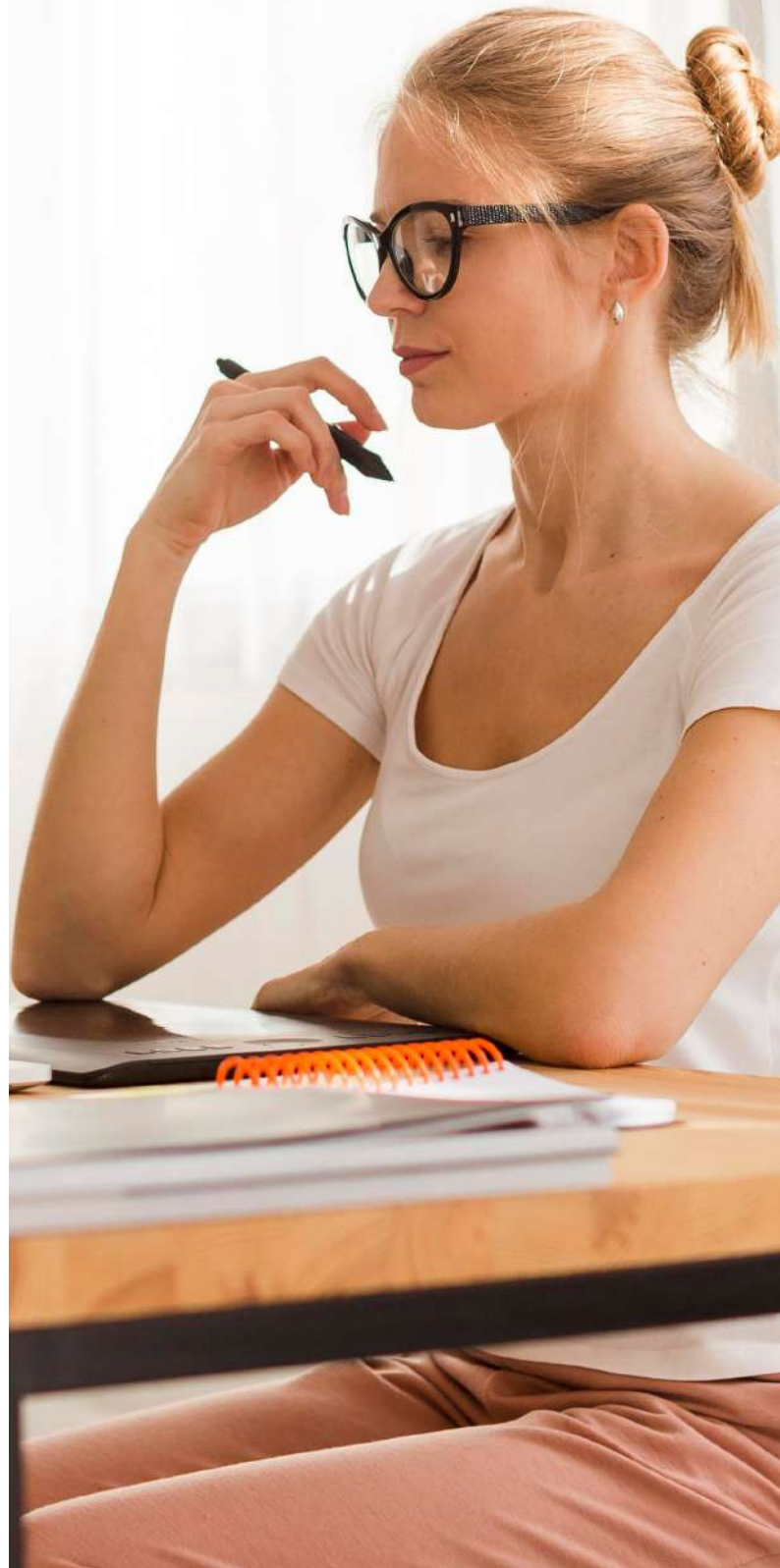
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CHAPTER 1

How Big is the Harmful Impact of Commuting?

I find it interesting how social values change over time. It appears that social norms change quickly, almost as if the collective “social consciousness” seemingly bands together to decide that a social practice is no longer acceptable. This type of transformation is happening with the harmful impact of commuting to a job – remote working is now paving the path to better options. While these types of social

changes might appear to occur suddenly, in fact, these changes slowly simmer until bursting into the mainstream.

We saw this occur in 2017 with society’s view on sexual harassment in the entertainment and other fields (ex: #TimesUp and #MeToo). No longer is it acceptable to simply look the other way, and consider it a part of getting ahead in show business.

“Increasing commute times coupled with greater awareness of health issues closely tied to being stationary for an hour at a time or more is helping to fuel a desire for change.”

The Origins of Commuting

The word commuter appears to originate from a marketing campaign set up during the early days of rail travel in the United States.

In the 1840s, the railways were eager to attract new customers living in the suburbs of New York, Philadelphia, Boston and Chicago, so they offered a reduced or “commuted” fare into the city. Later, the term variations “commute” and “commuter” followed. Commuted tickets would usually allow the traveler to repeat the same journey as often as they liked during the period when the ticket was valid.

Fast forward 150 years later, and the concept of life without commuting seems impossible. As population growth continues to shift either to or from Central Business Districts, the suburbs or further rural areas, it seemed like a constant that workers had to spend time commuting to work.

So institutionalized is this social norm, surveys are now done to measure average commuting times, most recently as of October 2017 when Business Insider published their results. [According to the article](#), most working Americans commute about 26 minutes each way to and from work.

New York, NY holds the top honor of having nearly an average of 40 minutes spent commuting each way, every day. Interestingly, Oakland, Los Angeles and Boston all average about a 30-minute commute – some of these cities clearly benefiting from better public transportation systems than others.

Commutes are Only Getting Longer

The next question you might ask is how are commutes changing? Are they getting longer or shorter? Unfortunately, they are getting longer, as illustrated in the chart to the right, based on figures obtained from the US Census Bureau and [an article](#)



[published by The Washington Post.](#)

What is further concerning is that the time traveling to and from work is essentially wasted.

As pointed out in The Washington Post article, according to the Census, there were about 139 million workers commuting in 2014. At an average of 26 minutes each way to work, five days a week, 50 weeks a year, that works out to something like a total of 1.8 trillion minutes those 139 million Americans spent commuting. Or, if you prefer, call it 29.6 billion hours, 1.2 billion days, or a collective 3.4 million years.

The article then suggested that in that amount of time, we could have built the Great Pyramid of Giza 26 times in just one year. Wow.

The future of commuting looks even worse. Averages taken across a large population base tend to hide anomalies and outliers, which are increasingly becoming more prevalent.

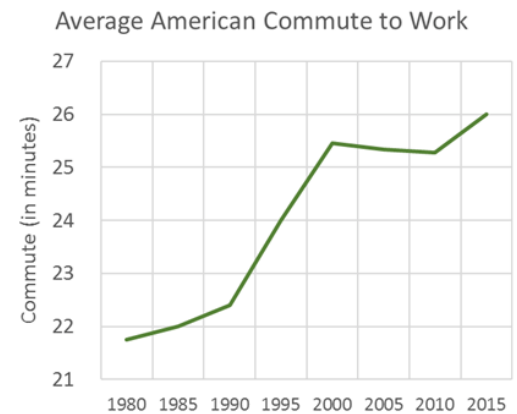
The number of commuters who travel > 45 minutes in one direction grew by 42%, from 12% of all workers in 1980 to 17% in 2015; this translates into about seven million people.

The number of “mega” commuters, or those travelling more than 90 minutes in one direction, was a metric not even tracked until 1990; in that year 1.6% of those surveyed admitted they travelled this far to get to work; the rate increased to 2.62% in 2014, an increase of 64%.

Harmful Impact of Commuting

Not surprisingly, new studies are now emerging pointing to further adverse effects of long commutes – beyond simply the time wasted. [TIME Health published an article](#) pointing to 10 things a commute does to your body. None were positive. Ailments included:

- **Your Blood Sugar Rises**
- **Your Cholesterol is Higher**
- **Your Depression Risk Rises**
- **Your Anxiety Increases**





- **Your Happiness and Life Satisfaction Decline**
- **Your Blood Pressure Temporarily Spikes**
- **Your Blood Pressure Rises Over Time**, suggesting that our bodies don't necessarily get over this repeated pattern of increased stress, based on a study that found that the farther the participants lived from where they worked—the longer their commutes—the higher their blood pressure was over an extended period
- **Your Cardiovascular Fitness Drops,**
- **Your Sleep Suffers**
- **Your Back Aches**, as if matters were not already bad, just sitting in a car seat for extended periods of time

has been shown to result in negative consequences on your posture

Sources: The American Journal of Preventative Medicine, Regus Work-Life Balance Index, University School of Medicine in St. Louis and The Cooper Institute, UK's Office of National Statistics

The Tipping Point

As I suggested at the start of this article, sometimes a new social norm seems to come out of “nowhere” such that a new cultural standard now seems normal, like it is how we had always done something. Years may pass before “suddenly” a change occurs.

We are in the middle of one such change today, with regards to [remote working](#). Increasing commute times coupled with greater awareness of health

issues closely tied to being stationary for an hour at a time or more is helping to fuel a desire for change.

As one example we are now at a new level of frustration, new hashtag topics are arising, the latest being [#MiserableCommutes](#), which has a few scary stories. Look to see stories like these to become more prevalent in the future.

At the same time, new technologies and an increasingly global business community are giving greater “permission” to consider remote working. This is a “win-win” situation whereby employees get up to three hours back into their lives (those mega commuters) and, at the same time, get to experience greater health benefits for no additional cost.



CHAPTER 2

What are the Advantages of Working from Home?

The topic of remote working has become a hot topic. The recent IBM announcement to eliminate remote working has been talked about a lot. What underlies all the discussion is a remote working revolution now in full force. What led to this transformation? Should you consider this as an option for your team or work schedule? Let's start with gaining a deeper understanding of the question "What are the advantages working from home?"

First, it is important to understand the differences

[between teleworking and remote working](#). A remote worker will typically not commute to an office. They work at home 100% of the time, between travelling to customer locations, team meetings or other travel requirements. This type of worker might be in sales, marketing or customer service where the job they are trying to do is very closely related to how productive they are at their craft. The answer to the question "What are the advantages working from home?" really depends upon what your role is

within the organization. Different benefits apply to different positions. I have summarized a few of the more common "personas" to provide insights into this question.

Advantages of Working from Home: For A Remote Working Sales Professional

For this type of person, the first and foremost benefit is improved sales success, higher quota attainment or greater efficiency. To a professional that is very closely measured

and compensated on getting sales closed, the window of what motivates behavior and decisions is typically closely tied to their bottom line.

How can remote working help improve sales performance? To start, a benefit could be more focused on building and managing their sales pipeline. This type of remote worker might not be as engaged in office politics, lunch meetings or the conversations that occur around the proverbial water cooler. Being highly motivated to close deals, this type of worker may appreciate avoiding ad-hoc meetings on ancillary topics or projects that may take away from closing deals.

Lastly, another benefit might be that it is easier to justify jumping on a plane to visit a customer or prospect, to close a deal. Remote management tools now



exist such that sales managers can easily understand what activities are being performed by their remote teams. This freedom of choice could lead to the potential for future process improvement – taking a best practice and sharing with the rest of the team. Or, to identify an employee that is perhaps not putting as much effort into their sales efforts as necessary. Regardless, with visibility now possible, the choice of where to physically sit to do work is much greater, helping to unlock new options for sales team staffing.

Advantages of Working from Home: For A Creative Marketing or Advertising Professional

This type of worker might not be the best fit to work remotely 100% of the time. Instead,

teleworking one or two days a week might be the right balance, offering benefits that help achieve greater productivity or creativity as well as unlocking more time in the day for these exercises. For example, for those tasked with creating new ad copy, marketing campaigns or content, anything that can be done to break up a normal routine can do wonders to drive creativity.

A person who teleworks can effectively disrupt the typical “Monday through Friday” routine by working different days in a different location. They can explore different places to work beyond their home office, to further amplify the potential for creative ideas. A walk to a local coffee shop to write a new blog post is a great example.



Time is another variable that is easier to shift when working remotely. For example, it maybe that at 11pm in the evening is when a marketer is most creative, potentially coming up with new ideas for a new project. As a remote worker, this type of person might be able to capture more “inspirational moments” when not locked in to a steady schedule and the thought that work takes place only in the office.

Advantages of Working from Home: For Working Parents

We all know raising a family is a difficult, time consuming and expensive. Of course, the rewards and fulfillment can be extraordinary – but no one will argue it can be a lot of work! For this type of worker, the option to work either remotely or as a teleworker could mean the difference between having a job or not. Those working to just make ends meet are highly focused on what can be done to avoid expenses.

What are the advantages of working from home, as a working parent? Child care, transportation costs (gas, train tickets, bus passes, etc.)



can all theoretically be cut out with a remote working position. Or, at least reduced when teleworking a day or two a week. Even little things like eating out for lunches can be a cost that is cut. Lastly, it becomes more cost effective to work part-time if you are a working parent. In this scenario, it might not make sense to deal with a nanny or daycare (as you might need to commit to weekly schedules), and instead flexible working hours may make more sense.

Advantages of Working from Home: For Employers

The advantages of working from home can be recognized by employers too. For example, by considering a position that is occupied by a remote worker, the pool of potential candidates expands

significantly – certainly to within a time zone or two from where your office is.

Take a company that operates in the metropolitan region of Dallas / Fort Worth in Texas, approximately in the center of the US. This company could consider candidates from either coast and in between – across the entire US – as potential job candidates, with no more than a 2-hour time zone difference. Some knowledge workers could even be considered on a global scale. This scenario creates



considerably more options, especially when filling a difficult to staff position. This strategy even could make it possible to hire employees with better skills, instead of being restricted to a search of candidates located within an hour or so drive from your office.

Advantages of Working from Home: For Global Economy Workers

In the words of Thomas L. Friedman, the world is indeed flat. What he meant is that the competitive playing field between industrial and emerging market countries is leveling. Individual entrepreneurs as well as companies, both large and

small, are becoming part of a large, complex, global supply chain extending across oceans, with competition spanning entire continents. This transformation has been occurring for the past couple of decades.

As an employee of a global organization, one thing that quickly becomes apparent is that at any time of the day or night, someone is working, a customer might need help or an action may need to be done. This demand on global economy workers would have been quite painful in the 1990s, given the level of technology sophistication was quite rudimentary. Voice calls overseas were expensive;

Internet access was in its early, nascent stages. And, if your communication was targeting a developing nation, coverage was spotty at best.

Today, amazing breakthroughs in VoIP communications and email make it possible to communicate from anywhere in the world, with decent sound quality and network throughput. In this case, the advantage of teleworking or remote working is the fact that you don't have to go into the office to take an evening call to the other side of the world. Or, an early morning call can now be accomplished from a home office, creating a huge advantage best described as leading to a better quality of life.

Those in relationships can attest that we all need to strike work-life balances. Doing so is the difference between making relationships work, keeping family ties and leading a fulfilling life. The advantages of working from home for a global economy worker, it can literally be the difference between success and failure of achieving life balance. This benefit could far outstrip any of the other advantages discussed in this article.





CHAPTER 3

5 Reasons Why Now is the Right Time to Have a Remote Work Policy

Now is an exciting time to be in the workforce – technology breakthroughs seem constant, new business models appear every year and the potential to make a change in our world has never been more possible. But, with all the opportunities to make a difference and embrace these changes, there is an equal chance of letting fear of change or concern of the unknown let you completely miss out.

Take the PC as one example. Perhaps you know someone

(likely an older person) who is not comfortable working on a computer. They might have one, and are likely on email by now but not by choice. Not being able to take advantage of all the information on the world wide web today would seriously diminish what shopping, communications and decorating ideas (just to name a few) you might never have even considered.

The same can be said of a remote workforce. If you still believe the best worker is one

who is sitting in front of you in an office, then you might be that person who felt computers were a waste of time back in the 1990s.

Based on recent research, of those who work from home:

- 91% feel they get more work done when working remotely
- The happiest home workers work 7 days a week (with shorter hours)
- 92% are happy in how they receive feedback



Given the difficulty to learn a new skill and catch up on a decade's worth of learning and education overnight, perhaps now is the right time to consider starting a remote workforce policy? Of course, this type of program may not be applicable for all workers, but knowledge workers and sales personnel engaged in complex sales can likely do their job just as easily inside or outside of the office.

To that end, here are five factors to consider that might change your perception of remote working – to be the catalyst to start your new pilot program.

1. Time spent working from home is no less productive than in the office.

In the category of distractions, they exist everywhere. From the office conversations that occur at the coffee machine

to searching online to buy something. As a parent, these distractions can be never ending, and include homework follow up, after school activities and much more. These interruptions can occur anywhere – at home or at work – so why not gain the advantages of a work-from-home sales force if the level of distractions is a constant?

2. In the office, the smart phone may be the biggest distractor.

Based on a survey conducted by Career Builder, employers cited that the biggest productivity killers in the workplace were cell phones/texting, the Internet and the workplace. On the road, however, a smart phone becomes a productivity tool. It connects you to customers, co-workers and your boss. It reminds you of pending

appointments, tells you when to leave to arrive on time and is an excellent administrative assistant. The same tool, but two completely different perspectives. Turn a negative into a positive by encouraging work from the road.

3. Remote workers are happier, so are more pleasant when engaging in work activities, sales calls and customer inquiries

[\(source\)](#) Given the personal nature of sales in the developed world's service economies, the relationships that are built right are the ones that deliver better sales results. No one wants to be sold, but everyone wants to have problems solved with a trusted advisor. Having the right state of mind is a critical step to achieve service differentiation. If the competition has a happier remote sales team, what do you do differently to compete?



4. Expand the pool of available job candidates by removing geographic constraints from the search.

Do you work in an industry where it is difficult to find and retain your best workers? Select cities have incredible competition to hire staff. Bidding wars have been known to break out in locations such as the Silicon Valley, when a never-ending demand for engineers and sales engineers has made it nearly impossible to attract and retain top candidates without paying dearly in salaries, bonuses and other perks. A remote workforce can be sourced from a far larger region, opening new options to locate your next ideal employee.

5. Productivity management tools now exist.

Just because remote workers are out of the office doesn't mean their work can't be tracked, managed or documented. Given the reliance upon smart phones,

email and other digital tools, activity spent on these activities can be readily collected, analyzed and compared to easily reveal which workers on your team are the most productive, and those that could use with some coaching.

Changing times call for changing strategies. The challenge is that sometimes these changes are not always understood until after the transformation. Companies are expected to stay competitive and maintain or expand market share. But, this isn't possible by resting on your laurels. New techniques must

continually be evaluated and tested. This strategy applies to technologies, IT systems, management styles and remote work policies.

If you don't yet have a remote worker policy, perhaps now is the time to consider it. For those that do have a policy, have the results been quantified? Do you need better visibility, or do you know enough to consider your program a success? We all can benefit with continued education. The classroom may be right outside your office, or, perhaps across the cyber-reaches of today's remote sales teams.





CHAPTER 4

5 Challenges with a Remote Work Policy - And How to Overcome Them

One way to see how far the adoption of a remote working policy has progressed is to examine its impact on culture through the study of linguistics. As something plays a greater role within a culture, more words are created. As a great example, there are 50 Eskimo words for “ice” ([source](#)).

Working out of the office is now referred to by at least eight terms that we can think of. The phrases we came up with are: remote working, working out in the field, working on the road,

teleworking, [telecommuting](#), flex-time, virtual working or working in a virtual office.

Regardless of the name you choose, remote working is now an embedded part of the corporate world. This means that it must be managed, understood and tracked if this practice is to continue.

Value must be achieved to help companies improve productivity, reduce costs, deliver better customer satisfaction, increase employee morale or enable a better

customer experience. Benefits must be delivered – or the practice will be abandoned.

With such widespread acceptance, we wrote an article suggesting [there is a remote working maturity curve](#). Consider a self-assessment to see what level of maturity organizations have achieved. As companies progress along this maturity curve, greater benefits can be achieved. But, at the same time it shouldn't be surprising that challenges do exist.

Concerns Still Exist about a Remote Working Policy

[According to a recent Gallup poll](#), the proportion of Americans who did some or all their work from home had increased to 43% in 2016, up from 39% in 2012. At this rate, over half of all American workers will likely work at least some of the time from home.

Of course, this figure will never achieve 100%. There are too many professions where a physical presence is required. It would be very difficult to be in public service remotely, such as being a Firefighter, Policeman, or similar.

But, select tasks can be performed from outside of the “office,” given the amazing technology breakthroughs of the last decade with smart

phones, communications and remote collaboration tools.

Despite this steadily increasing rate of adoption, concerns still exist.

As with any change that impacts an entire workforce, it should come as no surprise that the establishment or existing management team will have concerns over implementing anything new. Why try something new that might cause a drop of productivity, increase costs or do anything else to disrupt profitability?

No one wants to take an unknown risk for a theoretical gain if it can be avoided.

But what if a productivity improvement is missed from neglecting to experiment with something new? The

opportunity cost of not recognizing the productivity improvement potential of computers would have been a difficult performance gap to overcome for those laggard companies that neglected to embrace this office transformation.

Five Challenges to Overcome with a Remote Working Policy

I thought it might be useful to come up with a list of common concerns of remote working – to then provide an opportunity to address these potential challenges, with the goal of helping to better clarify what options and solutions exist.

1. Lack of Trust

If a manager doesn't trust that his or her team will work diligently when they are not around, then a remote working policy is not likely to work well; let workers know it is a privilege that can be lost so it has value and is recognized as a reward for trust to overcome this concern.

2. The Two-Tiers of Employee Syndrome

This is all about the career path, and whether people can climb the ladder while working from home. The short answer



is likely no. Recognize not all workers aspire to be senior managers; for those with lesser ambitions, it can be a good fit. This might not be the case for the career climber.

3. Younger Workers Just Starting Their Career

Those just getting started don't have as much of a baseline to draw upon in understanding social or political situations in the office or other workplace. This is difficult to understand when it is right in front of you. It is even harder when hundreds or thousands of miles separate you from the rest of your team [\[see article on mentoring in remote working world\]](#). This type of worker should be limited in their remote working, perhaps not more than one or two days a week.

4. Too Many Distractions When Working Remotely

This is where myth can overshadow reality. It is a common misconception that those working remotely are on the golf course or sleeping instead of working. The reality is that many studies show that remote workers have higher productivity. The question comes down to what output is performed, and how can it be measured, to then make a data-based decision on whether a



remote working policy makes sense for your company.

Several productivity measurement applications now exist, such as [Prodoscore](#). According to a study by YouGov, in the UK, 30% of respondents felt their productivity actually increased when working away from the office, 53% felt they were just as productive as at the office. Only 17% stated remote work reduced their productivity.

5. Hard to Build a Strong Team

Without regular in-person interactions, it is hard to build a new team or camaraderie, which can drive a high-performance work environment. In this type of situation, it might make sense to defer a remote working policy until the team has had a chance to gain sufficient face time. Another take away from this type of situation is that the

ideal remote working policy isn't necessarily one that requires work to be done remotely 100% of the time. Having flexibility on when to come into the office, what days to work remotely and for how long can be a powerful motivator to be highly focused and efficient while in the office. Some planning can result in taking advantage of certain days of the week when others make a point to be in the office, to then gain better access to those resources when they are readily available. Instant Messaging applications are a nice way to offset any feelings of being cut off from the rest of the company, and can certainly be used to help maintain existing relationships between employees, but it is a difficult tool to start a relationship or cultivate acquaintances into a solid working relationship.



CHAPTER 5

How Team Coaching Can be a Great Strategy to Reduce Sales Turnover

We recently published an article that offered three ways to [help reduce the high cost of sales turnover](#). Significant economic advantages exist to organizations that have a training program, apply continuous process improvement and leverage machine learning (to help predict when a salesperson is considering leaving the company). Not only are there significant cost advantages to applying these techniques, but they can effectively reduce sales turnover.

Cutting costs is obviously an important metric for any department. But, from a sales management perspective, achieving annual quota targets is likely seen as more important. Most would rather have a conversation with senior management about making sales targets at a higher than budgeted cost versus the opposite (missing quota but coming in under budget).

No matter how great your training program, or how excellent your organization is at identifying new candidates

to join the team, extending the tenure of an existing team is the best option to consistently achieve sales quota targets.

Not only are hiring costs avoided, but the performance and output of an existing team is more likely to improve over time to consistently yield better results. A team well skilled on product attributes, how to sell against the competition and what methodologies work best to close deals are incredibly valuable to keeping a sales pipeline moving.



The Star Performer Syndrome

Some might argue, however, that while a sales team's overall performance is important, in the end, overall achievement is driven by the star performer(s). This philosophy is based on the 80/20 rule, often referred to as the Pareto principle. I see this almost as a law of physics – it is prevalent and critical to understand, especially in the world of sales.

In this case, 80% of a team's success usually comes from a select group of high performers – and that group

will typically be about 20% of the team.

Learn more here: [Beating the 80/20 Rule to Improve Remote Sales Performance](#)

The problem with this concept is that sales managers often rely too much on making sure the star performer's needs are met, sometimes to the detriment of providing support to the rest of the team.

This strategy can also put an organization in a difficult situation, should a star performer decide to negotiate for a new commission plan or bonus structure. If the

company's annual sales target is at risk by a single individual, negotiating is difficult.

Embrace Team Coaching to Help Reduce Sales Turnover and Drive Sales Goals

An effective strategy to avoid placing too much reliance on star performers is to devote time and effort into coaching teams as a whole. If sales performance is seen and measured more as a team effort, then it won't be as necessary to rely on one specific participant to “save the day” every month, quarter or year. In the end, it's the team's overall performance that determines if a company has a good year. Then the performance of the team is more important than a single sales person's individual contribution.



So, what can be done to help coach a higher performance team? First, let's define what high performance means.

What Defines a High-Performance Sales Team?

A high-performance sales team can be defined as a group of people who work together for a common goal, and through that effort, are able to achieve extraordinary results. To become a high-performance team, there are a couple of core attributes that must be achieved:

- Excellent communication
- Innovative spirit to try new approaches or techniques
- Ability to measure performance improvement

The difference when coaching for high team performance is that each team member's performance impacts the group's. Everyone must communicate well, manage complex sales cycles, ensure no customer is forgotten, and services are delivered consistently.

We live in a highly dynamic world. That means new problems continually arise that require new, innovative solutions.

High-performance teams know how to apply innovation to solve these challenges and can do so with amazing effectiveness and a strong ability to execute.

Then, as a feedback loop to ensure process improvement is accurately evaluated and successfully acted upon, Key Performance Metrics must be available to measure performance.

This intelligence must then be shared and understood across the team to ensure process improvement is applied, embraced, and sustained. Alternatively, underperforming activities must be quickly identified and then removed accordingly.

Prodoscore is an Enabler to Communicate Team Performance. One of the tougher aspects about communicating team performance is how to do so in an objective way that is not critical of performers who are not at the top. Everyone has a bad week or month. The underperformer of one period could become the next period's highest achiever.

Prodoscore can help quantify how each sales team member has invested their time each day, including their activities. With this intelligence, a sales manager gains a



unique perspective on how to evaluate his or her team's performance in a highly quantified manner.

A score is generated depicting everyone's overall productivity score for the day, week or another period. This score can then be compared with scores from prior periods to visualize and better understand how performance levels have changed.

But, more importantly, so too can a team score be calculated and then shared. This metric can be quite valuable to compare team performance across regions or time periods.

Considerable insights can be extracted from this simple tool that don't get lost in "translation" like more complex or subjective evaluations of team performance. The value of a simple and easy to understand score goes a long way in helping to measure overall team performance, and how it changes over time.

Taken in aggregate, this strategy can yield valuable, insightful results that can be quickly and easily shared with teams, and ideally, offer an approach that can help to reduce sales turnover and have a significant impact on your company's bottom line.

[Learn more about how Prodoscore can improve your team's performance](#)

