



Do you often wonder:

1. How do some companies excel in sales?
2. What drives their success regardless of sector, size or economic conditions?
3. Do their stories offer insights that can help replicate their success?

Have you faced situations like these?

- *John, Territory Manager for a large consumer durable distributor is puzzled. Having promoted Michael, his Sales Rep from South Region, John had brought in Robert, to replace Michael. It has been six months, and John is worried as sales are down. Robert had this to say by way of an explanation – “There is something wrong with the South market. I keep meeting customers who don’t know exactly what they want and what kind of solution will meet their needs. I have to constantly overcome objections from current and potential customers”. John had never heard Michael have issues with the market. In fact, Michael had always said that he meets customers who are receptive and open and are fully aware of their needs and solutions. What do you think is happening here?*
- *ABC Inc is a large computer hardware manufacturer that caters to institutional customers. Their sales portfolio is sizeable and made up of small and large value clients. Peter has come in as their new Head of Sales, and he has been asked to review the Sales Organization Structure. Peter finds that the sales people are deployed by regions. His CEO says that Peter should look at alternative ways of structuring. He wants Peter to benchmark the best in the industry and take a decision. What options does Peter have?*

Uncovering Secrets of Sales Excellence

Is Sales Excellence a function of strategy, process, structure or people? One of these? Some of these? All of these? Or is it something more?

What drives sales excellence across organizations irrespective of size, industry, geography and economic conditions?

What makes sales leaders tick?

In search of answers to these questions and more, Mercuri International undertakes periodic worldwide surveys. The latest of these – the **Sales Excellence Survey 2017** - commissioned in mid-2016, uncovers some of the secrets of sales excellence from top performing companies across 20 countries and 12 industry categories, involving 926 respondents over 80 percent comprising CEOs and Sales Managers. The survey had 53 statements, in four buckets as seen in the Sales Excellence Survey 2017 – Framework – shown below.



Picking the Top Performers and what drove their excellence

Respondents were asked to rate themselves on a scale of 1 to 10, on 7 performance parameters. These scores were used to stack rank the Top 10, Middle 80 and the Bottom 10 percentile performers, from each country, the aggregate of which was taken for the Global stack rank.

To find out what the Top Performers did differently, the respondents were asked to assign scores on a 1 to 7 scale, to 33 sales practices. The practices covered were diverse and comprehensive including elements of Sales Strategy, Sales Process, Support Tools, Sales Behaviors, Sales Rep Competence and Perception / Image of Sales function.

Difference in scores assigned to these drivers by Top 10 performers and the Bottom 10 turned the spotlight on key differentiators that helped the Top 10 excel. This was then aggregated to complete the 'big picture' as seen through a single global lens.

Secrets uncovered – The 10 most important drivers of sales excellence

Here are the top 10 Sales Practices on which Top Performers rate themselves significantly higher compared to their bottom peers, listed in the order of decreasing differences between the ratings.

These Sales Practices could be among key drivers of Sales Excellence for Top Performers.

1. ***Each member of your sales team has a systematic account management planning process for each of their Customers*** - Top performing companies score high in allocating sales resources for each of their Customers such that an account management plan specific to the requirement of every individual Customer is in place.
2. ***Your sales strategy is documented in writing*** - According to studies, only 14% of all people in a company know its strategy. Top performers seem to overcome this risk by documenting their strategy, for consistency of communication.
3. ***For each step of the sales process / workflow you have defined training modules, checklists / instruments*** - A process is only as good as its implementation. Top performing companies don't stop with defining sales processes and workflows. They get better at supporting their people in living those processes by developing training modules, checklists and instruments for each step of the process.
4. ***Your corporate strategy defines explicit sales topics*** - Companies at the top of the performance spectrum are inclined to take sales beyond being an execution function and leverage the strategic value of sales by ensuring that their corporate strategies include explicit sales elements.
5. ***A detailed description of the steps of the processes / workflows is documented in written form*** - Flawless execution being the hallmark of good sales, top performing companies attach a premium to documenting detailed descriptions of the sales processes and work flows.
6. ***Your corporate structure fully supports cross functional approaches which are initiated by sales (e.g. matrix structures)*** - Top performing companies are far ahead at elimination of silos enabling sales to initiate and adopt a cross functional approach with other teams, to address Customer requirements holistically.
7. ***Your CRM tool is integral to the company, populated with relevant information and regularly updated by the sales teams*** - At top performing companies, CRM serves to hardwire the whole organization to Customer centric approaches. These companies ensure their sales teams update the CRM regularly so as to stay in tune with Customer requirements in real time.
8. ***The image of sales inside your company is excellent*** - Top performing companies recognize the inherent need for achievement and gratification in the sales mindset. They hold Sales in high esteem. The intrinsic pride of belonging to such an environment in itself could be a powerful driver of performance for sales people.

9. ***You use a blended approach when developing the sales competence of your sales staff (i.e. eLearning or virtual learning combined with classroom training)*** - Top performing companies leverage the potential of technology in supporting learning initiatives and appear to prefer an approach which blends class room training with virtual learning to develop sales competencies in their sales teams.

10. ***Your sales strategy is clearly defined*** - Defining a Sales Strategy is the first step to ensuring alignment around its objectives. Doing this much better than others could be one of the big enablers of sales success at top performing companies, getting sales people in diverse and dispersed locations to rally around the sales cause, with clarity and consistency.

Would the Survey Insights be relevant everywhere?

Our world is too varied to be painted with a single brush. While universal perspectives are valid and valuable, everyone cannot be outfitted with a single size. So, in addition to seeing through a global lens, the survey takes a closer look at the holy grail of sales excellence through three other lenses.

3 lenses: Taking a closer look at sales excellence

How do people across various positions in an Organization look at sales excellence?

The survey captures and analyses responses by position of respondents - CEO/Director (41%), Sales Managers (47%) and Others (12%).

How do respondents from different industries look at Sales Excellence?

The survey captures responses across 12 different Industry categories:

- Manufacturing Industry
- Other Consumer Goods, Retail
- Software, Information technology
- Pharma, Medical Devices and Diagnostic
- Construction
- Raw Material
- Bank, Finance, Insurance
- Chemical
- Utilities
- Telecommunication
- Logistic and Automotive
- Media

The industry wise drivers were analyzed in relation to the current state of each industry and the factors likely to impact sales.

How do Organizations of varying sizes look at Sales Excellence?

The responses were from sales organizations of 5 sizes:

- (i) 100 plus sales people
- (ii) 51 to 100 sales people
- (iii) 26 to 50 sales people
- (iv) 10 to 25 sales people
- (v) Less than 10 sales people

This helped make the Survey findings largely size agnostic.

How does the sales community see and manage its world?

Stepping beyond insights offered by the top drivers, the Survey explores if the top performers and bottom performers see their Customers differently.

The survey also peeps into Sales Management Actions such as different ways of structuring the sales organization and the nature and number of targets set, and measures reviewed.

Leveraging the Sales Excellence Survey 2017

The findings and insights from the Survey are available at www.mercuri.net. They have the potential to jumpstart reflections on where one stands vis a vis Global peers. Such reflective diligence in appropriate leadership forums, is sure to light up sparks in uncovering secrets of sales excellence that could take your sales to a higher level.

So it will, for Peter and John!

About Mercuri International

With our unique combination of consulting and training expertise, we help nearly 15,000 companies per year in more than 40 countries, and in over 30 languages, to become more efficient and effective in their sales activities, and achieve necessary improvements in results.

For more information about Mercuri International, please visit www.mercuri-int.si