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Sellers' values will determine the motivations they require

Denver Business Journal - by [Garry Duncan](#)

Many owners and managers experience frustration when motivating their salespeople. Company leaders overwhelmingly believe that salespeople require only a good commission or pay plan, an occasional pat on the back and a little recognition. While this may be true for many, it's not true for all salespeople.

Everyone agrees attitude is the most important factor in selling. Yet sales managers and owners commonly overlook attitudes in managing and motivating. Attitude is an umbrella term, and attitudes develop from many contributing factors.

Values play a significant part in a person's attitude. More importantly, values drive behavior. It's difficult to influence or change another's behavior without understanding the values and attitudes underneath.

A commonly repeated mantra is "manage behavior and activities, and reward results." The question is, "Why doesn't that work for every seller?" The answer is because different sellers have different values. Motivation is more effective when congruent with existing values.

Edward Springer, a German psychologist, teacher and philosopher, wrote a book in 1928 titled, "Types of Men." In this work, Springer identified six universal attitudes and value systems through which we observe and experience life. They still apply today, and three of those value systems -- utility, knowledge and individualism -- are common to a majority of successful sellers.

- Utility means functionality, practicality or what is useful in all areas of life, including the use of time, money and resources. Sellers with this value expect any investment of time and energy or resources to provide a return, usually a commission or bonus. It's a great value system for commission sellers because they'll be judicious in where they invest effort.

Because they tend to think in terms of future payout, they tend to work long hours and plan more than others because they want to maximize the use of their time. It's a waste of time for them to ask for reports, paperwork, etc. that don't readily help them sell more, be more efficient or help get a return on their sales.

Sellers with utilitarian value systems are easy to recognize. The stronger the utilitarian value, the more urgency and impatience they show. They like quick meetings and generally want the

bottom line, not a lot of detail. These people pack lightly for trips, taking only what they need, and complain about long sales meetings.

Manage and motivate these salespeople by removing obstacles for them. Streamline the administrative process. Keep meetings short, always start with the bottom-line message and help them see how change is going to help them be more efficient, even if it doesn't appear so on the surface.

This group responds well to money incentives and good commission plans.

- A second group of sellers is attracted to a sales position because they have a passion about an industry, product or service. They value knowledge and expertise, and enjoy the reward of being an expert in their field. They are passionate about learning and understanding their customers' business, and everything possible about their own industry, product and services.

These sellers believe knowledge is power and having too little knowledge is dangerous. They may try to overeducate the buyer. These sellers are put off by those who are uninformed or who lack facts in their arguments. They regularly read books, blogs, research articles or other information sources. Their favorite television shows are found on the Discovery, Learning, History or other informational-type channels, and they usually gather extensive information before making their own purchases.

Keep these sellers motivated by providing ongoing training and learning opportunities. Enlist their help in training colleagues, sharing their expertise and customer-education events. Make sure they have opportunities to keep up to date on technology changes. Avoid shallow conversations, and take the time to answer their endless list of questions.

Money alone won't satisfy these people. They're often attracted to fast-changing fields requiring extensive expertise, such as medical, technology, software and other complex sales.

- Finally, there is the seller who values individualism. They're attracted to sales because they want to be in control of their own destiny and outcomes. Others often see them as stubborn, resistant to direction and actively promoting their own cause, preferring freedom of operation in fast-paced movements.

They look harshly on those who don't challenge themselves. They have an ability to see the big picture.

Motivate and reward this person with recognition for accomplishments and providing a clear career path, providing opportunities for them to control. They're natural leaders and have a passion to control their own personal lives. They gravitate to positions of leadership. They like the limelight, and must have opportunity for advancement.

Many entrepreneurs possess these values. This person can be happy in many areas because they're flexible. They love startups, having power, titles and recognition.

When you help salespeople fulfill their values, they'll believe in themselves, and invest increased effort, determination and persistence. They'll be more productive and happy, and there'll be less turnover in your organization.

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