

FROM THE SIDELINES

# Nine Barriers to Coaching a Sales Team



**Excerpt From:**

***Coaching Salespeople into Sales Champions (Hardcover)***

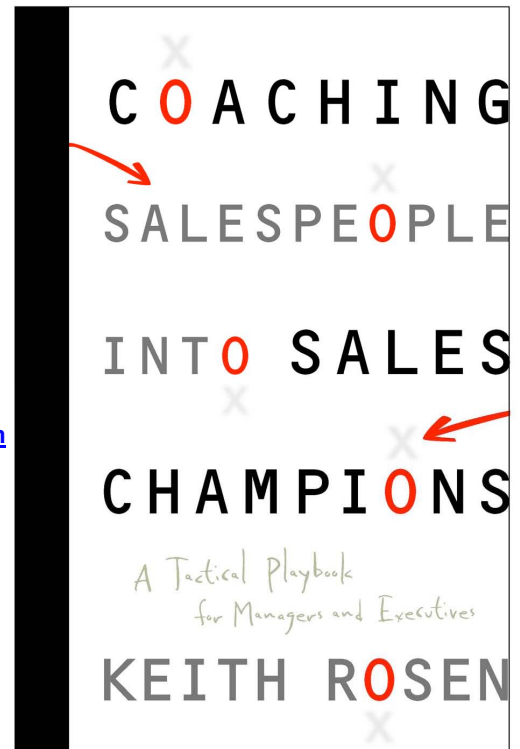
**By Keith Rosen, MCC**

# COACHING SALESPEOPLE INTO SALES CHAMPIONS

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# Nine Barriers to Coaching a Sales Team

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For any executive sales coaching initiative to be effective and long-lasting, there are important obstacles that a manager or internal sales coach needs to address.

## Barrier One: No Coach the Coach Program

One of my clients recently called me with questions about building an internal coaching program. It seems the person who was spearheading the initiative was having a difficult time putting the processes and procedures together as well as getting the managers to embrace the new philosophy and approach. Since the company felt they could build the internal coaching program on their own, they didn't hire an outside expert or consultant. The person in charge of the initiative wasn't even a coach but someone in HR. Without a coach training program to develop coaching skills and competencies, you can change your managers' titles, but not their essence, their thinking, or their skills.

## Barrier Two: Coaching Is a Choice—Not an Obligation

The coaching relationship is a choice, not an obligation. The relationship between the coach and the people who are coached is a designed alliance, a collaborative partnership, and more. As such, remedial or sanctioned coaching is often met with resistance rather than with open arms. How is coaching being offered to your team or to your employees? A perk, an incentive, an option, an obligation, or a remedial response to underperformance? Are you offering it to your entire team, to a select few, or to just one person?

## Barrier Three: Surrender Your Agenda When Coaching

What if your boss walked up to you today and said, “Your career, your bonus, your position in this company, and your salary will depend on how well your team performs. That said, I want you to start coaching all the people on your team, one on one. Hold them accountable and be unconditionally supportive, while surrendering your agenda and maintaining objectivity.” Could you do it?

My clients consist of a myriad of companies and professions, all shapes and sizes, selling products and services in practically every industry and profession. Yet, the one truth I share with them is this: “When you work with me as your coach, this will be the only relationship you have where it will always be 100 percent about you.”

**There’s a big difference between coaching people and changing people.**

If you’re an internal coach, this may be a stretch to fully surrender any agenda or attachment to your sales team’s performance, especially since their performance directly reflects on you. In such cases, there’s an inherent challenge for you, as the business owner or manager, to separate your agenda from theirs and have no personal expectation from the relationship other than your unconditional commitment to their continued growth and success. It’s going to take some adjustment on your part to develop an unconditional and authentic relationship with your salespeople. We tackle this in much greater detail in Chapter Two ([Coaching Salespeople into Sales Champions](#)).

## Barrier Four: You're Coaching People, not Changing People

There’s a big difference between coaching people and changing people. However, for executives or front line managers who are

commissioned to hit some aggressive sales numbers, coaching is the last thing they want to talk about. The real distinction is that coaching is a process of discovery. A coach cannot push for results or attempt to change people overnight. The traditional scenario to facilitate change is typically a stressed-out manager who lays the same stress on his salespeople that his boss dumped on him. “Work harder; get focused; our jobs can be on the line; just bring in some more business.” This hollow approach seldom drives change.

### **Barrier Five: Connection—It Has to Be the Real Thing**

In coaching it's critical for unrestricted, honest communication in the coaching relationship. It's extremely challenging to connect with your salespeople at a deeper level, the type of connection necessary between the coach and the person being coached. Many employees are afraid that if they disclose too much, it will be held against them in the future. So they limit their vulnerability level to what is absolutely needed to perform their job function. This restricts safe and open communication, limiting the chance to connect with your people in a way that allows coaches to get to the real issues and barriers;—barriers that are preventing improved performance.

### **Barrier Six: Confidentiality and No Judgment? Sure, Boss!**

Lets get right to what you're thinking. Your role as supervisor or boss presents some inherent problems with coaching that need to be addressed head on.

Given the parameters, guidelines, and principles necessary to be a masterful coach, trust is critical to make the connection. After all, if your employees can't trust you as their manager, forget even trying to coach them. Coaching requires an elevated level of trust that transcends the superficial trust between employees and management.

And what if some of your salespeople already have a problem with you as their boss and now you're going to try and coach them? How does that get handled? Do you think any of your employees are going to just come out and say that? Think again.

As a result, this relationship could quickly turn into more of a mentoring rather than a coaching relationship. This is a major reason why companies bring in an expert coach from the outside who doesn't have any direct ties to the company as a manager would.

### **Barrier Seven: Anyone Can Manage, Not Everyone Can Coach**

"I'm really not cut out to be a coach." The hard fact is there are managers who want to be coaches, managers who need to be coaches, and managers who shouldn't be coaches, and probably shouldn't be managers, either.

Companies that force all managers into a coaching role make a costly assumption that all of their managers would actually make great coaches, just like every college athlete should automatically make the pros. The rules work the same. Desire, attitude, ability, and skill will always be the formula for becoming a successful coach, or athlete. Then there is the mistake of pushing managers to do something they don't want to do. Managers can easily sabotage their own coaching efforts, and in the end, corporate may learn the wrong lesson: "I guess our internal coaching program didn't work."

**Companies often assume that all of their managers would actually make great coaches, just like every college athlete should automatically make the pros.**

[Get the Book](#) and coach your people into champions. [Click here](#) for more information or visit [CoachingSalesPeopleintoSalesChampions.com](http://CoachingSalesPeopleintoSalesChampions.com).

### **Barrier Eight: Full Accountability**

If you want to become powerful, hire a powerful coach. It's a simple, yet highly effective strategy. If you want your salespeople to be powerful, you need to be a good role model for them. As you evolve, so does your team. Consider this truth: Your team is a reflection of you. If you're not prepared to be 100 percent accountable for the success and failure of your team, if you skirt accountability in any way, if you lack professionalism or proficiencies in certain areas, your team will reflect these weaknesses. If you choose to evolve, so will your salespeople. If you want a world-class sales team, you have to become a world-class executive sales coach.

### **Barrier Nine: Competitive Managers**

The most effective leaders develop other leaders. They encourage their people to perform as well as they do—even better. That is the sign of a true master and the real testament of a great manager. But what if the manager perceives his coworkers and subordinates as a threat? What if the manager is driven strictly by ego, the need to prove himself and his worth? What if this manager thinks he has survived only by keeping a competitive distance from his peers and salespeople? I've known managers who don't share their tools and best practices with their salespeople for fear their salespeople will outdo them. These are likely to be inferior managers who will seek to selfishly leverage the coaching relationship in a way to better themselves and their position rather than for the betterment of their sales team.

Now that we've listed the barriers that can get in the way of implementing an effective internal coaching program, do not be disheartened. With greater awareness comes choice. The good news is you possess the power to make a difference. The majority of these internal obstacles can be overcome using the strategies outlined in *Coaching Salespeople into Sales Champions*. The remainder of this chapter outlines some very specific steps you can take as you begin your journey as a coach.

**Your team is a reflection of you. If you want a world-class sales team, become a world-class executive sales coach.**



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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**KEITH ROSEN, MCC**  
**THE EXECUTIVE SALES COACH™**

Keith Rosen is the President of Profit Builders and the executive sales coach that top managers, sales professionals, and executives call first. As a prominent, engaging speaker, Master Coach, and well-known author of many books and articles, Keith is one of the foremost authorities on assisting people to achieve positive, measurable change.

For his work as a pioneer and a leader in the coaching profession, both **Inc.** and **Fast Company** magazines named Keith one of the five most respected and influential executive coaches in the country. Software Sales Journal named Keith's company, Profit Builders, one of the Top Nine Best Training Firms. Keith also sits on the advisory board for several technology companies that are leading the Sales 2.0 evolution.

A best selling author, Keith has written several books including, **Time Management for Sales Professionals**, **The Complete Idiot's Guide to Cold Calling**, **The Complete Idiot's Guide to Closing the Sale** and **Coaching Salespeople into Sales Champions**.

Keith is one of the first out of only a handful of trainers and consultants who has earned the distinguished **Master Certified Coach** designation and most important, walks his talk.

Keith's articles can be found in **Selling Power** and has appeared in feature stories in the **New York Times**, **Inc. magazine**, **The Wall Street Journal**, **The New York Post**, **The Washington Times**, **TheStreet.com** and **Entrepreneur radio**. Keith is also a frequent contributor on **Selling Power Live**, **CBSNews.com**, **Sales and Marketing Management** and has been appointed as the Expert Sales Advisor for **AllBusiness.com**.

Keith lives in New York with his wife and three children.

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