

FROM THE COACHES PLAYBOOK

Fatal Coaching Mistake No. 6

**Mismanaging Expectations:
Are You Preparing Your Sales Team for Change?**



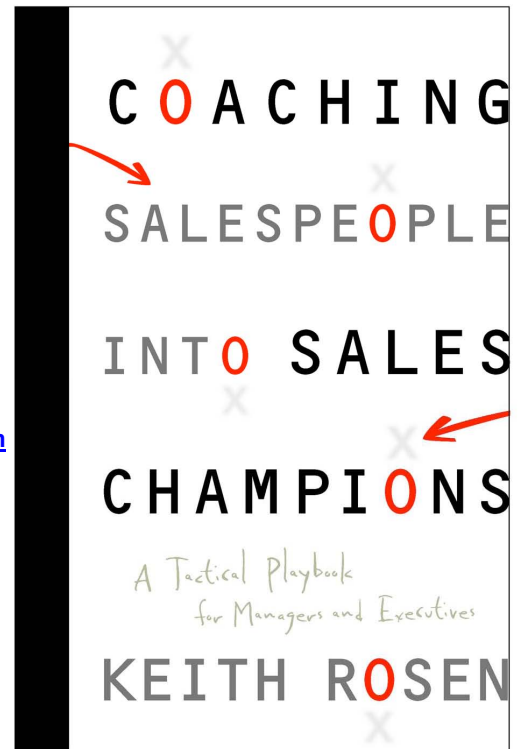
Excerpt From:
Coaching Salespeople into Sales Champions (Hardcover)
By Keith Rosen, MCC

COACHING SALESPEOPLE INTO SALES CHAMPIONS

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Fatal Coaching Mistake No. 6 Mismanaging Expectations: Are You Preparing Your Sales Team for Change?



Maria was a new sales manager hired by Media Pros, Inc., a sports management consulting firm. She was recently introduced to the coaching model at a seminar for senior managers in her company.

Maria went back to her team pumped up and ready to begin implementing some of the coaching methods. However, it seems that Maria missed the section of the seminar on how critical it is to prepare your team for coaching by managing their expectations.

Compound this with the fact that Maria has only been in her position for less than five weeks. It's difficult enough for a sales team to adjust to a new boss, but further changes without proper preparation and communication will cause a rebellion.

Question: What could a manager do to his team that would cause an uprising?

Answer: Make a dramatic change without preparing his team for it.

Maria's boss set up a meeting with her and an outside executive coach to discuss the resistance Maria was running up against when attempting to manage and coach her team. Maria told the executive coach that she felt she had assimilated herself

into her team and prepared them for any changes she was making. Since Maria's sales team worked remotely, she introduced herself to the team via a conference call and let them all know she was there to support them and help them become even more successful in their careers. Sounds pretty good so far, right? However, after further exploration, the executive coach uncovered the breakdown in Maria's new manager orientation process.

The executive coach asked Maria the following questions to help discover why Maria failed to manage her team's expectations as well as develop a strategy to communicate her objectives in a way her team would understand and embrace.

1. Did you conduct one-to-one meetings with each salesperson on your team?
2. Did you ask each of them how they like to be managed? Are they coachable?
3. Did you inquire about their prior experience with their past manager? Was it positive or negative?
4. Did you set the expectations of your relationship with them? Did you ask them what they needed and expected from their manager? What changes do they want to see?
5. Did you inform them about how you like to manage and your style of management? This would open up the space for a discussion regarding how you may manage differently from your predecessor.
6. Did you let them know you just completed a coaching course that would enable you to support them even further and maximize their talents?
7. Did you explain to them the difference between coaching and traditional management?
8. Did you enroll them in the benefits of coaching? That is, what would be in it for them?
9. Did you let them know about your intentions, goals, expectations, and aspirations for each of them and for the team as a whole?
10. How have you gone about learning the ins and outs of the company? Are you familiar with the internal workings, culture, leadership team, and subtleties that make the

company unique? Have you considered that your team may be the best source of knowledge and intelligence for this? Did you communicate your willingness and desire to learn from them as well, so that the learning and development process can be mutually reciprocated?

With each question, it became more evident that Maria did not plan or prepare her staff for change. She did not prepare her team for a new boss or for her new approach to management.

At the end of the conversation, it was clear to Maria what she had to do. She would start with a team meeting to address many of the questions posed to her by the executive coach. Maria would use this meeting to explain the changes she wanted to make and the benefits each person on the sales team would realize. Maria also knew that she needed to address any gossip, rumors, or negativity that could poison the team. She would acknowledge that with any change in management there is an adjustment period. Maria wants her team to know that she is sensitive to what they are going through during this transition, as well as to each of their individual needs. She needs to reinforce her role and the fact that even though her style, personality, and approach may be different from what they are used to, she is there to help them thrive in their careers.

Once Maria finished facilitating this team meeting, she scheduled one-on-one calls with each salesperson on her team to discuss these questions. More specifically, the questions that relate to their specific needs and goals and how they want to be managed and coached. This experience was a huge lesson for Maria and would be for any manager. If you fail to inform your salespeople of your good intentions, they have no idea what they are, thus leaving it up to each salesperson to form his or her own opinion.

A situation where a salesperson had a less than favorable experience with the old manager can be made worse and

repeated if the new manager does not take the steps to create a new experience between her and her salespeople.

If management does not break the cycle, they may encounter situations where their salespeople are not engaged at all, especially in the coaching process. New managers would then have to form their own conclusions, thinking that either the coaching doesn't work or it just may be the salesperson who doesn't work. In truth, what isn't working is the exchange of communication and as such, a critical message goes undelivered perpetuating conflicts, communication breakdowns, distrust, and underperformance.

If you fail to inform your salespeople of your good intentions, they have no idea what they are, thus leaving it up to each person to form his or her own opinion.

Ironically, you may be doing everything else right when managing your team. That is, your heart is in the right place, your intentions are pure and sound, and you truly want to be the best coach you can be for your team. But without defusing any faulty assumptions, gossip, or beliefs, resistance from your staff will be imminent and your coaching will be unsuccessful.

Whether you're a new manager or a manager who's a new coach, informing your team about any new initiatives or changes you plan on making and the enrollment process you will use to initiate buy in needs to happen prior to actually implementing the change.

To recap, first take that step back and assess your team's needs as well as the unique needs of each individual on your team. Let them know how you plan on supporting them. Then manage these expectations with surgical precision. This will foster a strong,

healthy relationship which you can build on right from the start, creating the nurturing and open environment that will enable you to earn your salespeople's deeper respect, trust and commitment to their objectives, even in the face of change.



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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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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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