

FROM THE COACHES PLAYBOOK

# Fatal Coaching Mistake Number Five

Share Ideas, Not Expectations



**Excerpt from:**

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

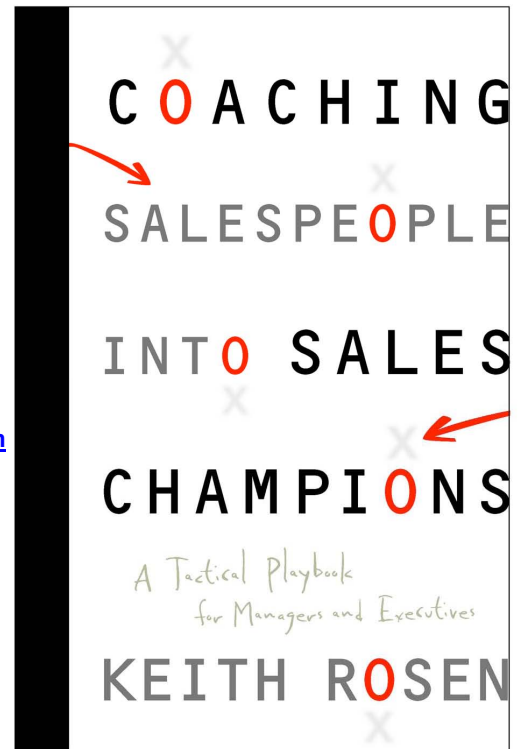
**By Keith Rosen, MCC**

# COACHING SALESPEOPLE INTO SALES CHAMPIONS

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# Fatal Coaching Mistake No. 5: Share Ideas, Not Expectations

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When it comes to exemplifying poor leadership tactics, here's one situation that took place at a recent company retreat. Gary was a senior partner in one of the top three accounting firms in Texas. The purpose of this retreat was for the partners to discuss the corporate vision, new ideas, and growth strategies as well as year-end goals. It was an opportunity for all of them to get together, removed from the daily stresses of the office. This

year's two-day retreat was at a resort built around a majestic 30-square-mile lake.

The first day and a half consisted of meetings, outings, and exercises, all of which were going well. Ken, the managing partner who helped coordinate the event, was pleased to see that people were enjoying themselves and benefiting from the experience. That afternoon, he was on his way to a small, invitation-only breakout group with several of the senior partners in the firm.

The meeting was going smoothly, given the diversity and dynamics of the group. Ken was doing a great job facilitating the conversation and moving from one topic to the next, all of which had been approved by the senior partners and placed on the agenda prior to this afternoon event—all except one person. It seemed that Buck, the founder of the firm, a gray-haired, well-respected, sharp elderly gentleman, never saw the e-mail that contained the agenda.

Although Buck is no longer involved in the day-to-day operation of the firm, something on the agenda not only caught his eye but stirred up quite a strong reaction in him. Even though Buck had been carefully directed by Ken to be more of an observer or facilitator, Buck delivered an edgy opinion on this particular topic. It was a line item listed in the meeting's agenda that dealt with new business development initiatives. Specifically, the firm was considering hiring an outside marketing firm to assist with their public relations and advertising campaign. "After all these years of sustained double-digit growth, you think we now need to go out and hire someone to do what we've always done naturally and quite successfully on our own? I remember about 10 years ago, we retained the services of a PR firm with very poor results. Since when are we no longer competent enough to handle this internally?"

After Buck shared his thoughts on the matter, the conversation just stopped. No more open forum. No more safe, open sharing, no more flowing dialogue. An issue that, less than 10 minutes ago, had full buy in and consensus from the team regarding the direction to go had now gone full circle, right back to the beginning. It was as if a new topic had just been introduced, which had no current buy in or solution. No one said a word until Ken redirected the conversation to the next item on the agenda.

**A possibility or an idea from the boss opens up further conversation.  
An expectation shuts it down.**

It is a fact that if you're a boss, manager, or executive responsible for managing people, you are their superior. And, therefore, you have a certain degree of influence over how your staff feels about certain subjects. Buck didn't make any decisions. He basically said, "This isn't the way it used to be. Why is it different now? Agree with me or experience my wrath."

Managers and executives have the power to shut down a conversation or open up a dialogue. Quite often, they don't realize how much of an influence they have over their staff and how influential they can be without even trying. When a manager takes a strong stand or position and makes a statement like, "Here's the solution" or "Here's how it is," it removes any opportunity for others to contribute a different and potentially better idea.

There's a difference between sharing an opinion or idea and sharing an expectation. It's one thing if the manager or boss shares an opinion that allows the dialogue and flow of the conversation to continue moving in a positive, collaborative direction. It's entirely different when the manager shares an expectation with a strong agenda or ultimatum behind it. An opinion or idea from the boss opens up further conversation. An expectation shuts it down.

Buck could have kept the collective conversation moving forward with an approach like this. "Here's one thought that I want to put on the table. It still has some wet paint on it and needs some further development. I would love to hear your responses and how you feel about it so that we can incorporate everyone's ideas and create something even better."

With an approach like this, it is likely that managers will get a response that encourages unfiltered collaboration and multiple contributions.



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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR



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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**.

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