

THE
FIRST-TIME
MANAGER



SALES

CONTENT OVERVIEW

MIKE WEINBERG

Bestselling Author of *Sales Management. Simplified.*

ADVANCE PRAISE

"Another Mike Weinberg Classic. The powerful principles in *The First-Time Manager: Sales* helped me secure my first sales leadership position, and this essential playbook **will help any leader build a solid foundation** and get out of the gate fast. Candid stories, actionable advice, and humorous blunt talk all rooted in the 'simple' **fundamentals** we've come to appreciate from Mike. It's not hard to call this a **must-read for both seasoned and new managers!**"

—DREW ELLIS,
vice president of Midmarket North America, SAP

"In *The First Time Manager: Sales*, Mike Weinberg has delivered **a comprehensive playbook covering not only everything a new sales manager needs but that veteran managers should revisit frequently**. Elements that resonated with me immediately were the focus on fundamentals amid the rise of so many technical toys and the absolute criticality of seeking to be the hero-maker, not the hero. Since reading it, I have already instituted open office hours and 1:1 sessions focused solely on accountability, and I am seeing immediate impact!"

—CARSON HEADY,
managing director of Microsoft Health & Life Sciences
and author of *Salesman on Fire*

"Mike Weinberg has done it again! Like his other heavily highlighted books with dozens of folded page corners, *The First-Time Manager: Sales* sits on my desk within easy reach. After twenty-plus years in sales leadership, **Mike somehow finds ways to remind me of the 'simple' principles that are so easily forgotten. This is a fantastic, fast read with easily understandable processes for both new and seasoned sales managers.**"

—DANA UPSHAW,
chief growth officer of Recom

"A refreshing and succinct take on all the fundamentals required for being a great sales manager. Mike Weinberg expertly **debunks many management fads and returns coaching, accountability, and time management to their rightful place as the key difference makers**. Sales managers ignore these lessons at their own peril, and the wise will successfully apply these practical insights for both their benefit and their team's!"

—JOHN P. KANAN
senior partner of Bain & Company

"The world's leading authority on sales management has done it again—this time imparting wisdom specifically to the first-time manager. Deploying his trademark practical truth-telling, Mike Weinberg offers **a stark reminder of what really matters in sales, and in chapter 9 he shares the formula for becoming the 'I'd-lay-down-in-traffic-for-them' kind of leader we all hope to become.** Deploy this approach to balance hard facts and empathy to lead your team to victory time and time again."

—JEFF BAJOREK

author, consultant, and host of the *Rethink the Way You Sell* podcast

"If the path to excellence is paved with mastery of the fundamentals, then there is no better guide than *The First-Time Manager: Sales*. Once again, Mike Weinberg has delivered a masterpiece in his simple yet pragmatic approach that is a roadmap for any sales leader, new or experienced, to follow. **Do what is in this book and you cannot fail. Do it well, and you will flourish.**"

—MIKE JEFFREY,

vice president of HCM Solution Sales, Paychex

"I feel like Mike Weinberg wrote this little book for me. It is **so packed with actionable content that, from front cover to back, I was taking notes and blocking time on the calendar to implement my takeaways!** My team at Salesforce is already benefiting from two best practices Mike preaches—the candidate interview framework and spending more time with our best people."

—JASON THOMAS,

vice president of sales, Salesforce

"This power-packed book is not simply for sales managers; it's a must-read for any first-time people leaders! Mike's practical wisdom, clear guidance, and, most importantly, his **straightforward approach to selfless, authentic leadership will not only help you capture the hearts and minds of your team but will put you on the path to driving outstanding results.**"

—ASHLEY SCHUELER,

senior leader of sales training, Vermeer Corporation

CHAPTER TITLES

1. Your Job Is the Most Critical Job in the Business
2. Your New Job (as Manager) Is Nothing Like Your Old Job (in Sales)
3. Your Number One Job Is Ensuring That Your People Do Their Jobs
4. Your Second Most Important Job: Helping Your People Do Their Jobs Better
5. Bad Things Happen When You Attempt to Do Your Salespeople's Jobs
6. Your Job Is Much Easier with the Right People on Your Team!
7. Your Job Will Be More Fun and You Will Drive More Results Spending More Time with Your Best People
8. It Is Sales Management Malpractice to Ignore Underperformance
9. Use the Massive Emotional and Mental Bandwidth You Occupy in Your Salespeople's Hearts and Minds Wisely
10. Slow Down to Speed Up Your Ramp-Up
11. Sales Management Success Is Driven by Mastery of the Fundamentals, Not Fancy Toys and Tricks

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INTRODUCTION

I WAS BEYOND HONORED THAT HarperCollins Leadership invited me to author this title for the expanded series of *First-Time Manager* books and could not be more excited to help you successfully launch your sales management career.

The transition into sales management is a unique and challenging one. As you will soon read in chapter 2, the role of leading a sales team often feels like the exact opposite of the job that precedes it—the individual contributor salesperson. Remarkably, there are precious few reputable resources to help first-time sales managers make this massive transition, which served as great motivation to pour energy into crafting the book you are holding.

I want you to know, before even diving into *The First-Time Manager: Sales*, that the mysterious journey of a brand-new sales manager is not unfamiliar territory to me. Quite to the contrary, as you'll discover in chapter 7, my entry into sales management was anything but smooth and successful despite my having been a top-producing salesperson in multiple organizations and having just concluded an amazing four years coaching and consulting sales teams. I understand the first-time manager's challenges firsthand because I suffered through them, and the irony is not lost on me that the very same person who struggled so mightily in his first sales leadership role years later authored *Sales Management. Simplified.* and now spends most of his waking hours helping companies around the globe increase sales management effectiveness.

An overarching theme running through this book is that you are the key—the key to your team's sales success. I truly believe that you have accepted one of most important jobs in the entire economy—leading a group of people responsible for driving the top line of the business. As the key person at the center of this critical cog in the organization, you have the unique opportunity to affect not just the livelihood of the business but the careers and lives of your team members. That's a substantial responsibility, and the frameworks and best practices presented here will prepare and empower you to lead exceedingly well.

You will quickly realize, however, as you progress through the chapters that much of the advice is counterintuitive, and many of the topics, while not considered trendy, are absolutely critical for success in sales management. Said more simply, topics that are quite popular on LinkedIn are often not that useful when actually attempting to lead a sales team, and while it seems that everyone in the sales-improvement industry wants to talk about cool new hacks, tricks, and tools, much of what I present will intentionally feel quite old school. For example, in chapters 3 and 4, I make the strong case that your two most important jobs are first, ensuring that your people do their jobs, and second, helping your team members do their jobs better. Simply mastering these two critical functions will propel you into the upper echelon of sales managers—guaranteed. Holding salespeople accountable and investing time to work alongside them are the two highest-payoff sales management activities. While not sexy topics, executing these fundamentals really well are what truly drive sales results.

Chapter 5 waves a giant yellow caution flag pointing out the causes, and awful consequences that result, when sales managers fall into the very common trap of attempting to do their salespeople's jobs. Instead of leading, coaching, and holding team members accountable, many managers attempt to play the hero and insert themselves directly into every imaginable situation. This approach is neither scalable nor sustainable and does untold damage to the culture, the salespeople, and to the often well-intentioned manager.

The three critical components of smart sales-talent management are covered in chapters 6, 7, and 8. From precise job descriptions that attract the right candidates and repel the poseurs, to radically improving your interview game, you will gain a passion for getting the right people on your team. Executing the counter-intuitive counsel in chapter 7 will ensure that you have more fun and drive more results as a manager. And after finishing chapter 8 you will be more comfortable and confident in quickly addressing struggling sellers, and you will never again turn a blind eye toward underperformance.

Over the past few years I have become more keenly aware that sales managers rarely comprehend the enormous head and heart space they occupy in their team members. Chapter 9 is devoted to helping managers appreciate this weighty responsibility and to use all of that mental and emotional bandwidth they consume wisely (for both the salesperson's and their own good).

Chapter 10 offers up one last critical, counterintuitive tip and a caution, which is that it's often the new manager's over-zealous desire to get off to a fast start that creates a longer, slower ramp-up period. You will discover why it is imperative to slow down in order to speed up, and you'll also receive practical, powerful input from two favorite, wildly talented and successful sales leaders offering their perspectives to maximize your early effectiveness as a first-time manager.

There is no more important job than being entrusted to lead a team responsible for driving revenue. I am truly excited for your new venture into sales management and thrilled you have chosen this book to help you become a world-class sales manager! Let's dive in.



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SAMPLE CHAPTER

2



YOUR NEW JOB (AS MANAGER) IS NOTHING LIKE YOUR OLD JOB (IN SALES)

BUCKLE UP BECAUSE IT'S VERY POSSIBLE that nobody has yet shared this important truth with you, so I will put it on the table right here at the outset as you begin your sales management journey. The title of this chapter is not hyperbole. It is a fact. Your new job is nothing like your old job.

My new sales manager friend, to quote the great Marshall Goldsmith, “What got you here won’t get you there.”

Almost the only similarity between your former job in sales and your new job as sales manager is the word *sales*! In many ways the roles are polar opposites, and the faster you recognize and adapt to this reality, the smoother your transformation will be into a highly effective sales leader.

. . .

RESPONSIBLE FOR ONE VERSUS RESPONSIBLE FOR MANY

When people ask me why I went into sales and why I love sales, it's easy to offer up a straightforward three-part answer: Freedom. Fun. Financial Reward. And of these three compelling reasons, the first one trumps the other two.

I love freedom, and there is nothing better than being judged by what I produce, not by how much I work. Sales is about results and to the successful salesperson, nothing beats the satisfaction (or confidence) that comes from putting up numbers . . . from exceeding your sales goal. There is something truly unique about life as a highly successful individual contributor. For the most part, you are responsible for one person—yourself! And the freedom from not having to play the corporate political game or caring what people think about when you arrive or what time you leave the office can be life-giving. It certainly was for me.

When you're in sales your job is crystal clear. As long as you are good with being judged by an objective scorecard, there is amazing freedom. Said another way, salespeople can maintain a simple, singular focus—their own performance.

But the shift to sales management changes everything. And I mean *everything*. Not only are you no longer just responsible for yourself, truthfully, “you” are no longer even viewed as an “individual.” That is a weighty reality and a burden that many new managers are not prepared to shoulder.

WINNING THROUGH YOUR PEOPLE

The mindset shift required to succeed in management is massive.

There is no plainer way to say this. While individual contributors win on their own, sales managers win through their people. Just pause for a few moments to reflect on the enormity of that statement—and the implications.

WHILE INDIVIDUAL CONTRIBUTORS
WIN ON THEIR OWN, SALES MANAGERS
WIN THROUGH THEIR PEOPLE.

What are the implications of having to shift from winning on your own to winning through your people? Think about it from both philosophical and practical perspectives.

Let's jump right in and start with a biggie—*ego*. In sales, a healthy, dare I say even a bit *oversized*, ego is a good thing. But in a management role, not so much. A strong ego, which is actually beneficial for the individual producer, can be deadly when it manifests itself in a leader.

It is fine when a salesperson craves the spotlight, seeks the credit, and is energized and motivated by recognition. We all understand this. In fact, it's not just accepted; in many environments it is encouraged. But the same is not true for the manager. The leader with an oversized ego gets old very fast. Who wants to work for someone who is constantly seeking a pat on the back? Or worse, is looking to grab the applause and limelight? Nothing kills a culture or sales team's morale faster than an egotistical, self-promoting manager acting like the hero.

Beyond the need to subdue one's ego, there is another significant philosophical shift required for transitioning into sales management.

FROM SELFISH TO SELFLESS

When I moved from top-producing salesperson into sales management, the biggest and most difficult adjustment stemmed from the necessitated shift to a *selfless* approach from one that was very much *selfish*.

I often remind sellers that the word *selfish* gets a bad rap. From the time we are little, we are instructed not to be selfish. We should share. Share our cookies. Share our toys. And now in the business world we are constantly reminded to be good corporate citizens, team players, and collaborators.

It all sounds nice, but my strong (and contrarian) message to individual salespeople looking to produce more results is that they actually need to become more selfish, but in a positive way. The highest-performing sellers are what I call *selfishly productive*. They own their calendars. They focus like mad on their highest-payoff activities that create, advance, and close (the only three verbs that matter) sales! They have no problem saying no to others who are looking to put extra work on their plates. They smile and respond with a definitive “no, thank you” when asked to volunteer for the holiday party committee.

The uncomfortable truth that most HR people don't want to hear is that the majority of highest-performing salespeople are not the collaborative team players they write about in flowery job descriptions. They are selfish sales killers who have mastered the ability to stay laser focused on the precious few high-value activities that move the needle and drive results.

This was instinctive for me, a top-producing sales hunter. When I was in full-driver go-mode, I figuratively put on blinders like a thoroughbred racehorse so I would not get distracted or diverted from running the race. And when I was executing a calendar time block doing outbound new business development, I'd go as far as putting a sign on my door (or the back of my chair before I had an office with a door) that said, On the Sell Phone—Do Not Disturb.

When you are in sales, time is your most precious commodity, and once it is spent or wasted, it's gone. So if you were a super-successful salesperson before moving into sales management, it's a pretty safe bet to assume you also became highly skilled at protecting your time. And while the discipline of blocking time is still very much relevant in a management role, it looks very different in its application.

One of the greatest challenges I observe with newly promoted managers is making that shift from *individual contributor/closed door* mentality to a *team leader/open door* posture. While it's easy to read about and intellectually grasp this required shift, actually adopting this new approach is infinitely harder. At least it was for me and many of the new sales leaders I have coached.

Here are a few practical, easy-to-implement tips to help you win through your people and assist with your successful transition from selfish to selfless:

1. **Office hours**—It doesn't get simpler than this. Block a couple hours per week for holding "office hours" similar to the practice of college professors. Let your team know you are blocking this time specifically for them. Your office is open (whether in person or virtually), and you are encouraging your people to pop in (or call you or hop into a Zoom or Teams meeting) as desired. You have no

preset agenda. Your “door” is open, and you are available to tackle any topic.

You may be shocked at how highly productive these office hours become and how much your team members appreciate the opportunity to bring their questions, challenges, or possibly even their loneliness to you. These sessions are mutually edifying and energizing, which is why it is surprising that more managers (in every area of the company) don’t make time for such a simple, rewarding, and productive activity. I often offer office hours for cohort groups I’m leading, and I have yet to walk away from one of these sessions disappointed or thinking it was a waste of time.

2. **Schedule One-on-One Coaching and Observation Sessions**—We will dive deeper into the best practices of coaching and working *alongside* your people in chapter 4, but for now, let’s start here: without a doubt, one of your highest-impact activities as a manager is working one-on-one with your team members. Often just *being with them* is valuable in and of itself, let alone having the opportunity to share observations, offer feedback, or coach them on skills, and so on.

Too many managers cheat themselves (and their people) of the benefit from intentional coworking sessions with their salespeople. They just don’t make the time to proactively cycle through working with each of their team members. Sure, managers jump in when there is a crisis or big opportunity or when someone is struggling. But they are missing out on the tremendous benefits, for both themselves and sales team members, that result from simply spending time with them while they are doing their job. My coaching to you is to go beyond just

stating that you believe that coaching and observing your people is a priority. Demonstrate it! Before your calendar fills up with other (less essential) tasks, get in there first and schedule one-on-one time with each of your people, even your very best sales reps.

3. **Show Love and Attention to Your Salespeople as if They Are Your Customers**—This is not an original thought. For years, I’ve heard strong leaders speak about the importance of treating team members as if they are their customers. As sellers, we all understand the importance of retaining and growing customer relationships. As managers, the same applies to our people!

Practically speaking, this means demonstrating that we care with actions. We check in, not to micromanage, but because we care. We initiate contact to let them know we are thinking about them, not just to ask for an order. When we see something in the news, or about their favorite sports team, we text message them the link and say, “This made me think of you.”

Relationships matter. Remember, we are leading humans, not robots. And as we will examine further in chapter 9, as managers, we take up way more emotional and mental bandwidth in our people’s hearts and minds than we tend to be aware. That’s a weighty responsibility worthy of further exploration.

For now, let me propose this practical tip: create a little journal to capture notes on each of your people’s personal favorites—hobbies, interests, sports teams, or family milestones. Every so often, peruse that journal and then find a current event or news story that would interest your team member. It may seem trite, but they will not think it’s trivial that you remembered a kid’s

birthday or the anniversary of a parent's passing. It shows that you care and are interested in that person.

And follow your people on social media so you are aware of key happenings in their lives. This is not stalking. This is smart! Just today as I'm writing this chapter, a colleague posted on Instagram about dropping off his daughter at college. It gave me the chance to send a text message encouraging him that every tear he sheds today is beautiful, and it provided an opportunity for us to bond over a common experience. That's what caring, empathetic humans do—they demonstrate that they care. And that is exactly what the best leaders do too.

THE TENDENCY TO DO INSTEAD OF LEAD, COACH, AND HOLD ACCOUNTABLE

Before we look ahead to mastering the most important aspect of managing a sales team (ensuring that your people actually do their jobs), I have one final thought on what your new job is *not*.

The very best salespeople are always in action. In fact, they are proactive. They understand that their job is to *do*. It falls squarely on them to get things done. They are the ones responsible for creating, advancing, and closing sales opportunities, and they own the outcome. They look in the mirror and say to themselves, *It's on me; I've got this*. They don't point fingers or make excuses. Again, the very best sellers own the reality that if it needs to get done, they are the ones to make it happen—even if that requires taking heroic action.

While it's all well and good when sellers see themselves as *heroes*, very often new sales managers bring that same hero mentality with them into their new job as team leader. It makes sense that they do this. A big part of the reason they were so

successful as individual contributors is because they played the hero role well. They did whatever was necessary to win, and it's only natural that they would continue with that mentality as managers.

The problem however is that the sales manager's job is not to play sales team superhero. Nowhere in any legitimate sales team leader job description does it list this as an expectation: "When in doubt, jump in and do your people's jobs for them." But, because that's exactly what most of us did in our sales roles, as managers we default to what worked so well for us as sellers. We take over. We insert ourselves in the middle of every deal. We *do* whatever we deem necessary to win.

While that worked marvelously for us in our old roles, it creates a disastrous and unsustainable situation when we are supposed to be *leading* a team. Really, really bad things happen when sales managers view themselves as sales team hero and attempt to do everyone's job instead of leading, coaching, and holding people accountable. The manager playing sales team hero is neither scalable nor sustainable. It also creates about a dozen other problems and traps that damage culture, run off top talent, and make the sales manager's life a living hell. My hope is this stern warning has caused you to pause and reflect on whether you may have already started down this dangerous path so early in your management career. I've got more for you on the causes and implications of managers playing team hero and how to avoid falling into this career-limiting and quality-of-life-damaging behavior in chapter 5.

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