

Total rewards for salespeople: 9 trends for 2017

Walter Ruckes,
Vice President,
Sales & Channel
Engagement,
BI WORLDWIDE

The end of a promotion, quarter or year has salespeople everywhere bracing for the inevitable dash to the finish line. Sales leaders prepare pep talks, goals are reset and meaningful metrics are tracked, stacked and attacked like there's no tomorrow.

Before you race toward what's ahead, take a deep breath and finalize your plan. Use these nine trends to help you reward reps at all levels and in turn, make your entire sales organization more effective than ever.

#1: The more the merrier

Sales organizations that regularly reward over 50% of their sales team (beyond salary and commission) show higher gains in revenue and retention than those who do not.

What you can do

It's tempting, and sometimes easier, to only focus on the top performers in your organization. However, why would you ignore the potential overall sales lift you could get from everyone else? Rewards don't have to be huge – they can be as simple as recognition for initial contributions or teamwork.

#2: Mix it up

We used to think just the mention of a big award would motivate everyone but that's not the case. Communications, technology and progress reporting are also keys to engagement and program success.

What you can do

Too many sales leaders put programs together, send out an email and expect everyone to focus on that message for the next 90 days. Connecting with your team takes an integrated approach that combines technology, a strong communications plan and frequent reminders of where they stand in relation to goal achievement.

#3: Unleash technology

Sales leaders have a love-hate relationship with technology. It offers so many long-term benefits but tracking and analytics can get in the way of short-term results.

What you can do

Sales reps who get out of number-crunching mode and set powerful, visual, short-term goals can greatly outperform those who don't. "Paralysis by analysis" is the last thing you want to happen as you head into year-end.

Unless otherwise indicated, all data is taken from BI WORLDWIDE's recent study: [Investing in Your Sales Team: Is Your Portfolio Diverse Enough?](#)



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#4: Intrinsic vs. extrinsic rewards

All salespeople are powered by some kind of reward; it's one of the main benefits of the job. Understanding the differences between internal and external rewards is key to knowing how best to motivate your team.

What you can do

It's hard to change behavior when someone is intrinsically motivated. They run marathons just to cross the finish line and say they did it. Get inside the heads of your reps and help them achieve their own internal goals – while they help you achieve yours. Those reps who aren't naturally motivated to run marathons might just need some outside help (hint: extrinsic rewards).

#5: If they're not learning, they're leaving

Ongoing, effective learning is one of the best ways to keep salespeople engaged. According to BI WORLDWIDE's New Rules of Engagement study across many industries, sales reps who don't believe they have an opportunity to learn at their organization are most likely to be looking for a new job.

What you can do

Rather than painful, long-winded training efforts, nimble sales organizations connect their reps with meaningful training content on a weekly basis. The pattern is easy: teach, quiz, reward. Three touchpoints each week provide a challenging, yet engaging way to succeed.

#6: Let the games begin

Games can engage your sales team in a variety of ways. Just be sure that you remember the behavioral economics concept of *idiosyncratic fit*: When you create a short-term incentive or game, does each person feel they have a fair chance to win?

What you can do

You're probably saying to yourself, "Why would I let everyone win? I don't have that kind of budget!" The key is not that everyone wins but that each person should feel they have at least a chance to win. This is why combining individual incentive structures, like stack-ranking or do-this-get-that, with team awards or sweepstakes drawings is the perfect way to promote your program and keep everyone involved.

#7: Front-line battles are key

Take a moment to envision your sales channel, from the top sales leader down to the newest rep just hired. Now ask yourself, "Who are the most important influencers of behavior?"

What you can do

The most powerful and well-aligned sales organizations are those where sales managers are the key influencers. And if you're selling through a channel, those key influencers are your field sales reps.

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[A recent BI WORLDWIDE study](#) showed that reps who have a key influencer or manager involved are more engaged with new products, more excited to sell and feel like they have a bigger advantage than those reps who don't.

#8: Fast brain/slow brain

When it comes to goal-setting, there is a huge say-do gap. It's likely the most fundamental issue preventing your new and middle sales reps from performing like the best of the best. Deep in the brain you'll find the reason why it's so easy to talk about and set goals but so hard to achieve them.

What you can do

The scientific name for the say-do gap is *preference reversals* and it teaches us that making a decision and taking action on that decision are two separate psychological transactions in the brain. One way to connect the two is to make goals visual. This will help bridge the gap and drive focus and commitment.

#9: Give it meaning

There are many theories as to why sales people are successful and the best way to motivate individuals and teams. But BIW's New Rules study recently correlated sales success to how much reps connect with the overall mission of their organization.

What you can do

Sales managers who don't kill the meaning, but reinforce and amplify their organization's overall mission, will find greater engagement from their reps. This may be easy in an industry such as medical device, where sales can equate to better quality of life. Other industries may be tougher to connect but those organizations that find the bigger meaning, and convey that to their front-line reps, often find bigger success.

To learn more about BI WORLDWIDE's research into how engagement, recognition and incentives drive sales behavior, visit biworldwide.com or email info@biworldwide.com.

