

Why Your Top Salesperson Is Quitting

Why do you think top salespeople quit? I know why.

At least I know the number one reason cited by the top tech salespeople we work with on new roles – and it's not money.

Everyday we talk to dozens of top tech salespeople and sales engineers about their careers. Not all of them are interested in leaving, but approximately 50% are willing to talk to us about a career change. That means if you have a team of 10 strong performers, 5 of them will take our call and hear about an opportunity your competitor has in the marketplace. Look at your list of reps – which half would take my call?

When we poll our clients on why they're losing talent, they overwhelmingly said it was money-motivated, or that employees were going to an "easier sell" product. In fact, over 70% of them pointed the finger at the marketplace or the salesperson. But are these assumptions true?

We decided to do a study, collecting data from the salespeople we talked to over a 30 day period about why they're interested in a career change.

When we compared the actual reasons with the reasons our clients THOUGHT they lost their talent, it was an eye opener. Guess what the salespeople that wanted out gave as the #1 reason? The biggest problem was the direct manager, and more specifically, their manager's lack of regular and clear communication.

The people we included in our study were seasoned, fully on-boarded, and producing salespeople. Three out of four of the responses cited their "direct leader's lack of attention and their communication or access to them" as one of the main two reasons they wanted to move. Not the product offering. Not the compensation package. Not the changes in the sales process. Not their marketing support. Not their sales engineering or lack thereof.

Why is this so important? What do you think it costs to replace a ramped up and successful sales person? Studies say it costs three to four times a non-revenue producer's salary to replace and onboard an employee. I argue that a revenue producer can cost five to ten times the annual total compensation in terms of lost revenue – both in future deals and current customers, as well as the additional expense of hiring.

So, what can we do about it? Here's some advice directly from top-performing salespeople in the market, (all of whom planned to quit within six months):

1. Stop Cancelling One-on-One Meetings

"I've been blowing up quotas for four years now. My boss is a smart woman, and knows our business like none other. But, our weekly 1:1 has happened exactly twice so far this year. It's June 20th, and I've had a formal 1:1 twice to review numbers and funnel. And guess what happened when we did sit down? We talked about family, kids, and vacations. She told me I was on track to blow up my quota again...and left it at that. When I wanted to go deeper into my accounts, she said we should schedule time for that - that was the scheduled time! I've found in our company, if you're not hitting quota you get leadership's time and energy. We're the forgotten soldiers. I want to grow too. So I've decided to go join a company where even the top performers get invested in and there is a focus on growth."

2. Don't Forget Remote Employees

"I work from a home office, and dial in weekly to our main office for our regional sales call. So, you have 11 people in a conference room at our home office, and three of us in the field. This is about my only time I interact with the team as a whole anymore. It's off-putting to say the least. I am the #2 producer out of 14 reps in our sector. The three of us listen in to chatter, inside jokes, and banter over slideshow decks that haven't been sent out. It's amazing how we feel like the stepchildren of the organization. Our VP of Sales has been in the field to visit us once on average per quarter, and that's for four hours tops. The lack of communication has us feeling like we're vendors to our own company rather than part of the team. I'm not asking for a full process revamp, but put us on the same level with the folks at the home office. Simple stuff, send us the deck you're referencing the day before the meeting, use our case studies, and keep it to business while we're on the phone. Hearing about Susie in accounting's hair isn't how I want to spend my day - especially if I have never even seen Susie's bad hair."

3. Tell Us How We're Doing

"Tell us how we're doing, even if we are beating our numbers. Give us metrics, but give us metrics that we can drive back to our comp numbers. Metrics for the sake of satisfying sales operations or validating marketing costs are inevitable, but make sure they are meaningful to my bottom line. And communicate them to us regularly. We only hear about our metrics when we miss them, and they are about impossible to track without getting sales operations on the phone for 20 minutes. They're not given to us on time, they change every quarter, and no one knows why they're even important to hit. It would be nice to have a consistent message to guide us."

So, what's the common thread here? How can you avoid these issues? Communication. It's free. Talk to your top salespeople before I do. And do it regularly, because I am.