High-Impact Questions to Level Up Your Coaching Conversations

A Sales Leader's Guide to Coaching Four Key Sales Skills

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Introduction

As a sales leader, you simply don't have unlimited time in your 1:1 coaching conversations with your team members. The coaching you do has to identify and target skill gaps in areas that are inhibiting growth. High-impact questions can help you assess how effectively your reps are demonstrating vital sales skills such as self-awareness, establishing rapport, multithreading, and account expansion.

Once you know where the gaps are, you can coach your reps more intentionally to ensure they address them and, ultimately, improve performance and drive stronger revenue results. Each page in this ebook will give you guidance on a specific sales skill including high-impact questions to ask sellers and what you should be looking for in their answers to help shape your coaching approach.

Sales Skill Coaching:
Self-Awareness

What it is:

A rep who lacks self-awareness will struggle to succeed. Self-awareness is the internal radar that enables sellers to recognize their own behaviors, gauge how those behaviors impact the buyer, and adapt to better align with the buyer's signals. Sellers that lack self-awareness have a significant disadvantage, especially given the multi-stakeholder decision teams in today's sales landscape. It is one of the biggest differentiators between an average sales professional and the elite ones.

Questions to Ask during 1:1 Coaching

How do you think you did with asking high-impact questions? How well do you think the buyer felt heard in the conversation?

What do you think the buyer picked up on from your tone, pacing, or energy? How do you think that shaped how they responded to you?

If you could do that meeting all over again, what would you want to do differently and why?

What to Listen For:

- A self-aware seller gives a thoughtful answer that shows they understand the impact of their behavior on the buyer. If they struggle to respond quickly, it's a giveaway that they haven't reflected on how the meeting landed.
- When a rep explains what they'd do differently, listen for the "why." A great answer will show you the thought process behind their original behavior because the thought process is what drove the behavior. Any issues there are what you will need to focus coaching on.

Sales Skill Coaching: Building Rapport

What it is:

Many sellers don't get the difference between establishing rapport and making small talk about sports or weather. Small talk is generic and feels forced or awkward. Genuine rapport happens when buyer and seller connect because of something they both relate to or have in common. Example: Seller says, "Waze just took me through a bizarre route to get here. I'm switching back to Google Maps." Buyer laughs and says, "You gotta try Apple Maps, it's actually good now." They both know the struggle is real, and the shared understanding sparks genuine rapport.

Questions to Ask during 1:1 Coaching

Walk me through how you establish rapport with clients early in the relationship, and how you continue to build it as you open each new conversation.

What buyer behaviors help you determine whether or not you've effectively established rapport?

How do you try to establish rapport with a client who seems standoffish or distant and clearly not wanting to talk to a salesperson?

What to Listen For:

- A good rep will understand that establishing rapport is not the same as small talk. They'll be able to explain that rapport requires connection and something that makes the buyer feel like they're talking to another human being, not someone trying to make a buck.
- The strongest reps often mention being humble or self-deprecating to humanize themselves and make the buyer feel safe. These reps know how to eliminate the typical image that "I'm just here to get a commission check." This is the mark of a sales professional with elite instincts. When you hear this viewpoint, it's probably a top rep, or someone who's about to be.

Sales Skill Coaching: Multithreading

What it is:

Multithreading is the skill reps need to protect their deals from the significant risk of a single point of contact. When a deal is single-threaded, it often dies the moment that one "champion" leaves, is let go, or loses influence. This is tricky, because going around a champion to connect with others can cause backlash and kill the deal anyway. The real skill, therefore, is earning the deep trust that makes a champion feel safe enough to grant access and make introductions.

Questions to Ask during 1:1 Coaching

Walk me through your relationship map for this account. Beyond our main champion, who are the other key players you've identified or connected with?

What do you believe is preventing your champion from introducing you to other stakeholders?

If your main contact were to leave the company tomorrow, who else there would keep this deal alive for us?

What to Listen For:

- A rep skilled at multithreading can name other key players, their roles, and influence on the deal. A vague answer is a clear sign they are still dangerously single-threaded. You'll also learn a lot about the level of multithreading in the account when the rep shares the relationship map with you. Be sure to ask them to explain the chains of influence among the stakeholders identified in their map.
- When answering about the hesitant champion, listen for if the rep is placing blame on the champion or taking accountability. A rep who dodges accountability may describe the champion as a "gatekeeper."
- How they answer the "what if they leave?" question is a direct measure of deal risk and the rep's sense of urgency in response to it. A response with specific names shows the deal has a solid foundation. Hesitation is a red flag that the deal is a house of cards.

Sales Skill Coaching:
Expansion (Cross Sell/Upsell)

What it is:

Expansion is the skill of growing an existing customer relationship through upsell or cross-sell. The hallmarks of effective expansion are: being a proactive partner and trusted advisor, continually seeking opportunities with different business units in the account, and always being curious and asking powerful questions.

Questions to Ask during 1:1 Coaching

How have you shown additional value to [key account/customer] in the last quarter, outside of regularly scheduled check-in meetings?

Based on changes in [key account/customer] business, what cross-sell or upsell opportunities have you identified and pursued in the last quarter?

What new relationships have you established in [key account/customer] recently? What did you learn from them that could fuel your expansion efforts?

What to Listen For:

- Listen for how much time the seller is investing in expansion efforts. Are they proactively approaching uncovering opportunities, or just reiterating what comes up in regular meetings or the QBR?
- Their explanation of how they create value should show whether they think proactively. Effective reps will share how they created unexpected value instead of describing value in response to a request.
- A rep who is serious about expansion will demonstrate a clear understanding of shifts in the customer's business. They'll be thoughtful about how to leverage that knowledge into opportunities.
- The rep should be able to give examples of introductions they've gotten to other stakeholders and explain what they did to get them. If a rep tells you they haven't had any, you need to dig further and work with them to address the issue preventing introductions.

High-Impact Questions Quick Reference

SELF-AWARENESS

- How do you think you did with asking high-impact questions? How well do you think the buyer felt heard in the conversation?
- What do you think the buyer picked up on from your tone, pacing, or energy? How do you think that shaped how they responded to you?
- If you could do that meeting all over again, what would you want to do differently and why?

BUILDING RAPPORT

- Walk me through how you establish rapport with clients early in the relationship, and how you continue to build it as you open each new conversation.
- What buyer behaviors help you determine whether or not you've effectively established rapport?
- How do you try to establish rapport with a client who seems standoffish or distant and clearly not wanting to talk to a salesperson?

MULTITHREADING

- Walk me through your relationship map for this account. Beyond our main champion, who are the other key players you've identified or connected with?
- What do you believe is preventing your champion from introducing you to other stakeholders?
- If your main contact were to leave the company tomorrow, who else there would keep this deal alive for us?

EXPANSION (CROSS SELL/UPSELL)

- How have you shown additional value to [key account/customer] in the last quarter, outside of regularly scheduled check-in meetings?
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- What new relationships have you established in [key account/customer] recently? What did you learn from them that could fuel your expansion efforts?

You don’t have to do it all on your own.

If you’re ready to take your team’s performance to the next level, LDK Advisory Services can help so you don’t have to do it all alone.

We work with sales leaders to build customized coaching plans and training programs aligned to your business objectives and team dynamics. Whether you need a more structured coaching approach, assessments to identify skill gaps, or targeted sales training to address gaps in knowledge, skills, and confidence, we’ll help address the issues so your team can sell bigger, better, and more.

If you’re struggling to find the time to do all the coaching and development your team needs, or you don't have enough support from your organization to help you coach effectively, let’s talk and see how LDK can take the load off your shoulders and help level up your team’s performance and revenue results.

Book a free consultation with us today!

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