



## Driving Your “B” Players to the “A” Team

Top performers make a company work. It’s more than their impact to the bottom line; it’s the way they work for an organization as a whole—whether it’s by taking on a leadership role or developing honest relationships with customers.

When you have top performers, they generate a lot of energy, enthusiasm, and excitement. They help fuel a healthy culture.

Every company wants more world-class sales performers, and few have as many in their ranks as they would like. First, you must understand what a top performer’s required traits and skill sets are as they pertain to your specific organization.

### What Makes a Top Performer?

Many believe this one skill separates the top performers: They’re exceptional *listeners*. Top performers know listening is more than being quiet. It’s about really listening to what the customer says and dovetailing smart and insightful lines of questioning from the information the client shares. I would submit that understanding the client’s concept, what they are trying to accomplish, fix or avoid, requires exceptional listening skills. Top performers have these skills and marginal performers often don’t.

Another trait that propels exceptional performers to the top: business acumen. A salesperson who understands, and is interested in business, will be more successful in uncovering customer challenges and making honest and credible connections. Interpersonal savvy, or EQ [Emotional Quotient], also comes into play. Some people have it; others just don’t. Situational fluency is so important in the sales world, and sales reps with high EQ are able to thrive regardless of ever-changing sales environments.

There also always needs to be a good cultural fit for top performers to excel. A top performer in one organization might not be a top performer in a different organization. Top performers blend well with culture and pace—it isn’t just skills, knowledge, and traits.

A sales rep could deliver numbers consistently, but not bring value to the organization in terms of leadership. Top performers bring an intangible value to an organization beyond the numbers.

There’s a lot to be said for the consistent, serious, and professional manner in which top performers sell to prospective clients and manage their portfolios. They aren’t haphazard. They have serious standards and disciplines that can be replicated. They regularly apply their own business processes to how they sell.



## **Get to the Core of Top Performers' DNA**

Organizations need to get to the core of their top performers “DNA” by using a scientific profiling assessment approach.

You also need to Identify the habits of rainmakers; top performers know that X calls a week result in Y live meetings and ultimately yield Z closed sales— and they’re disciplined, consistent and get results. Institutionalize this information to build management controls and drive compliance throughout the entire sales organization. A legitimate selling process with discipline and compliance through the ranks is fundamental to scaling sales growth. If the organization has bought in to the selling process, and if it’s practical and can be replicated by the entire sales force, then an environment for quantum sales growth is the result.

## **Bring Bs to As**

Many companies buy in to the concept of systematizing best practices and propagating them throughout the organization — and these companies are thinking in the right direction. But it’s easier said than done. Coaching B and C level players to become A-level producers isn’t easy. Companies must create a foundation that enables a consistent approach to selling to be driven down through the rank and file. It becomes increasingly important that there’s a common language, consistent process, and discipline about how you go to market. It’s only at this point that systematizing best practices is even possible.

There’s a fine line between your best people and the rest. Sometimes the line can be pushed. The trend has been to refine and manage operational efficiencies in all departments.

Traditionally, sales have been considered to be more nebulous—more of an art form. Thus, operational approaches to selling have been neglected. But this is changing fast: Companies are quickly realizing the tremendous value of systematizing their sales process. The “art of selling” is still important, but today’s market demands more than just a friendly personality and a low golf handicap.

Now, the trend has reached the sales world, and the result of systematizing sales processes can be just the push that’s needed to nudge the B-level players in the right direction. You won’t get the middle pack to shoot completely to the top. You can, however, get them to move up a rung or two. Moving the core middle forward even incrementally can be profoundly valuable to the entire sales organization in terms of performance.

The key to moving Bs to As is prompting sales managers to devote energy to the right group. Often, sales leaders get caught up in managing C-level salespeople, who seem to need the most resources. The other possibility is that managers are trying to be the A-level super-salesperson by handling deals themselves.



Both of these activities represent misallocation of the sales manager's time. Any organization that can help its sales management find more time to spend with the bulk of its sales force—the B players—will see the benefits of better revenue.

And, while the onus is on management to help the sales force reach the next level, by providing the right resources in terms of training and support, the rest is up to the individual salesperson. As a salesperson, so much of what's delivered comes from their individual efforts and contribution. That's part of the reason people are in sales.

## Measuring Performance

Three key elements should be gauged to determine the level at which any salesperson is delivering: skills, activity, and revenue. This is how I see it works:

1. Skills: the general sales ability and attributes required to be successful in the organization.
2. Activity: showing up, working hard, playing to win, being persistent.
3. Revenue: Meeting the Numbers

You need to have a development process in place, it requires companies to really think about ways in which they should measure progress rather than just top-line revenue. They can begin to think of the components for success on a more granular level: How effectively are my people executing on the skills for this job? If companies can define that and have a good process in place to make sure salespeople get feedback on execution of measurable skills, it will contribute greatly to the expansion of the A-player population.

Even an incremental positive difference in the core middle's approach to selling can significantly impact an organization's number: Not everyone will be a rainmaker; nudging the Bs and Cs forward just a little is arguably the best move a sales leader can make. It has an even greater impact than making the best better.

## About Suncoast Partners International

SPI brings science to the art of selling. We work with you to develop your Go-to-Customer strategy, implement a sales system, and build sales skills to raise your selling team to the top of their game. We help SMB organizations drive revenue, predictability, operational efficiency, and superior performance. Learn more about how we can help at [www.suncoast-partners.com](http://www.suncoast-partners.com)