

## A (Fictional) Day in the (Fictional) Life of a (Fictional) Printing Sales Manager

I got to the shop a few minutes before 8:00 this morning, and like most days, I had a non-sales issue to deal with before I could even think about my sales management responsibilities. This morning, it was a call from my graphics person who wouldn't be in until 10:00 AM because she had to take her kid to the doctor. I should explain that I'm not just the sales manager here. I actually own the business. But I wear a lot of hats, and it's a constant struggle to give each "hat" the time it requires.

Today I was glad that we do a production wrap-up every afternoon, because I knew what she'd finished yesterday, and what she was supposed to be working on this morning, and how her late arrival was going to impact production for today. I reviewed all that with my Production Manager between 8:00 and 8:15, and I was ready for my morning meetings with each of my three salespeople; 5-minute "stand-up" sessions that happen one after the other between 8:15 and 8:30.

### Plan For The Day

These meetings are pretty straightforward. They show me their plan for the day—meetings, phone calls and other tasks—and I comment on my view of their priorities. Sometimes that results in them adjusting their plan. Sometimes they convince me that their plan makes more sense. Today, for example, two of them were planning on making deliveries to particular customers, and in one case, it was pretty obvious that he was planning on making the delivery because he didn't have anything more productive to do. "This is just filling time," I said. "I want you to *use* your time, not just fill it. We've been talking about canvassing that new building out in South Town, and you've been telling me that you need to make the time to do it. I'd rather see you do *that* today instead of doing *this*."

The other one was a situation where we'd had a mix-up the last time this customer had ordered this particular item. I'd forgotten about that, but the salesperson reminded me, and she also wanted to remind the customer that we promised not to make the same mistake twice. "I want to bring it to him personally and remind him that I promised that I would take personal care of this order the next time around," she said. That made sense to me, so I approved her plan.

### Production Meeting

At 8:30 AM we started our morning production meeting, another "stand-up" session where we basically outline the schedule for each production department. I require the salespeople to be in this meeting, but they're not allowed to talk. They hear where their jobs are in production, and sometimes they hear that things are running behind schedule. But like I said, I don't allow them to talk in these meetings. If they have problems with the schedule, they come to me afterward and tell me their concerns. I use their input to make my final scheduling decisions, and I go over those with the production manager. We generally have all of this worked out by 9:00 AM, and today was no exception.

### Weekly Sales Meetings

Since today was Tuesday, the next item on my agenda was my weekly sales meeting with Sarah. I meet with each of them one-on-one for 30 minutes each week, Sarah on Tuesday, Emilie on Wednesday, and Pete on Thursday. We spend the first couple minutes going over their Weekly Sales Productivity Scorecard, and most of the rest of the half-hour reviewing their 100 Foot Tracking Spreadsheets. These are both things that I got from Dave Fellman's website. The Weekly Sales Productivity Scorecard tells me if they're doing enough prospecting activity; looking at "suspect" companies, getting the names of the decision-makers, sending introductory letters and getting appointments. It also shows me how many quotes they're getting with suspects and prospects, and how many new opportunities they're finding with actual customers. The 100 Foot Tracking Spreadsheet shows me how far they think they're getting in building relationships with suspects and prospects and turning some of them into customers.

The bottom line here is that I don't wait until the end of the month to see how much business they did. I talk to them every week about what's in the pipeline. And it's not just the "following-up-on-quotes" pipeline, these forms give me visibility into the "developing-new-customers" pipeline. We don't spend much time talking about the people they feel they're doing well with—other than me asking them to justify their feeling that they're making progress.

We spend most of our time talking about the people they're *not* making progress with, brainstorming ideas that might take the relationship to the next level.

On Friday, by the way, all four of us get together for 30 minutes. This meeting is mostly a training session. Sometimes we role-play sales situations—usually something that one of the salespeople ran into during that week. Other times it'll be “operational” training, with me explaining some sort of policy or procedure that I want to put into place. I've even brought people in from outside to do training at these meetings; for example, I had the guy who's trying to sell me a new digital printer come in last week to talk about variable data and image printing. On the first Friday of each month, this group meeting also includes a recap of how each salesperson—and the company as a whole—did against the goals for the previous month.

### **Out On Calls**

After my meeting with Sarah, I spent the next five hours alternating between several of the other “hats” I wear. I dealt with some production issues, and some administrative issues, and I even found time to eat a sandwich somewhere around 2:00 PM. Then at 2:30, I left the shop with Pete for a sales appointment and some prospecting calls. I try to spend three afternoons with each of them each month, which basically means I'm out with somebody twice each week.

I've had to learn not to “take over” their sales calls, and that was harder than usual today, because Pete got off to a slow start on our appointment. I took the lead for a moment and asked a question that I thought would get the conversation going, and then I tried to show with my body language that I wanted Pete to take back the lead. Thankfully, he picked up on my signal, and I thought things went pretty well from that point.

When we got back to his car, we “debriefed” the call, and we strategized on a follow-up plan. I'm not a great salesman by any means, but I'm a good watcher and listener, and I'm usually able to see what's working and what isn't. By talking about that afterward, I feel like I'm helping my salespeople to improve on their strategy and technique.

### **End Of Day**

We got back to the shop at about 4:30 PM. Pete went right to his computer to enter the notes on our appointment and the contact information for some new suspects into ACT. Emilie was also at her computer, updating ACT, and Sarah was expected in at any time. Unless I approve them “working their way home” in the afternoon, I require each of them to end the day at the shop no earlier than 5:00 PM. I've heard people say that “salespeople are different” and that you shouldn't hold them to 40 hours the same way you do with other employees. That's never made sense to me, and the way I look at it, I'm doing all of us a favor by preventing them from getting lazy. I made that clear all the way back in the interviews when I hired them, so it's not like they're being held to a different standard than what they started at.

As for me, I had a bunch of other things I had to do in connection with my other “hats.” We did the production wrap-up a little after 5:00 PM and I left the shop a little after 6:00. It was a pretty good day all around, and I felt especially good about my performance as the sales manager. I have to admit that I don't always feel this good about that particular “hat”—but I try to use the not-so-good days to motivate me to have a better and more effective sales management day tomorrow!

### **Pure Fiction?**

OK, the is Dave Fellman writing as Dave Fellman now, not as a fictional sales manager. I can picture you shaking your head as you read all of this, thinking “Yeah, wouldn't all that be nice.” Here's the point: It takes time to be an effective sales manager, and you have to make the time. I hope you'll look at today's fiction as a model of what effective sales management looks like, and then try to adapt that model to your own business.

By the way, the Weekly Sales Productivity Scorecard and the 100 Foot Tracking Spreadsheet are still available on the “downloads” page at [www.davefellman.com](http://www.davefellman.com).