

You can coach your people to motivated performance with guidance, additional training

Excerpt from Chapter 5 of "Start and Run a Retail Business" by Jim Dion and Ted Topping, published in Canada and the U.S. by Self-Counsel Press. Available through amazon.com and in stores.

UNDER THE apprenticeship method of staff training, you will need to provide your sales associates with guidance and additional training in a process known as coaching. This will begin on every new employee's first day on the job and continue for as long as that person works in your business.

Just as you would if you were running a team of professional athletes, you will need to work with the sales associates on your team collectively and individually to get the best possible performance from them.

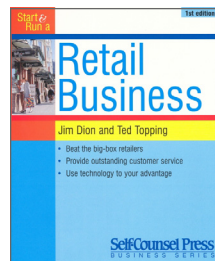
The guidance and additional training you provide should sound something like: "Good job. I liked the way you made that last customer feel welcome in the store by giving such a warm and friendly smile. And if you add the words 'Good morning,' you will find yourself in some great conversations with your customers."

Notice that this coaching contains no negative comments. You need to provide positively phrased comments and then direct your sales associates' behavior in the direction you want it to go.

To be an effective coach, you have to know the game yourself. This includes knowing, understanding and demonstrating the specific skill or behavior you are trying to teach. You also have to be there to watch and listen as your sales associates try first the basic components of the task and then the complete task. All through the learning curve, your role will be

the same: providing guidance and additional training.

When you provide this guidance and additional training in a positive manner, you will be praising the right behavior. This is important in the context of staff training and employee motivation because praise is an important reward – and your sales associates will do those things that you reward. We often remind retailers that what gets rewarded gets done.



You will understand this better if you take a moment to recall the many bosses and teachers you have had in your life. We are willing to bet that most of them had an uncanny ability to catch you doing something wrong. No matter how many times you did a task correctly, you always made a mistake right when they walked into the room, and they always pointed it out.

We would guess that the guidance and additional training you received from these people left you feeling demoralized, angry and totally unmotivated to try the task again.

If you have been lucky in life, you may also have had a few bosses or teachers who had an uncanny ability to catch you doing something right. It seemed that no matter how many

times you did a task wrong, you always got it right when they walked into the room, and they always pointed it out.

We would guess that the guidance and additional training you received from this second group left you feeling positive, happy and *very* motivated to try the task again.

This suggests that if you hired your sales associates based at least partly on their demonstrating good attitudes to begin with, the responsibility for employee motivation now rests with you.

Developing an uncanny ability to catch people doing something right is one of the most important things you can do in your business. If you give guidance and additional training in a positive manner, you will leave your sales associates feeling positive, happy and *very* motivated to try a task again.

Said another way, *your* attitude and behavior will largely determine whether your store is a positive place to work, with sales associates anticipating each new day, or a negative place to work, with sales associates dreading each new day.

Unfortunately, catching sales associates doing something right is not a behavior that comes naturally to most people. As a business owner, you will need to develop it consciously and practice it constantly. The very success of your business will depend on your ability to become an effective coach and to catch people doing something right instead of doing something wrong.

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To learn more about coaching, contact Ted Topping

Keynote speaker, trainer and retail consultant

305 – 1949 Barclay Street, Vancouver, BC V6G 1L1 Canada
tedtopping@telus.net • 604 685 7571