



Renting Your Reps' Behavior to Get Results

By *Jeffrie Story*
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“Go get results! You need to meet quota!”

That’s a paraphrase of what most sales managers say to reps at one point or another. We view our jobs as managing people to meet and surpass financial objectives. While that’s true, it’s our *coaching* power that drives results even further.

We try to help, suggest, even entice and demand but too often it seems to fall on deaf ears. Why? It’s because we’re dealing with reps’ habitual behaviors, which have been etched as deep as the Grand Canyon. And changing habits is hard!

Before you throw up your hands in despair, there’s a simple mindset change you can make. Just remember that when you hired your salespeople, you didn’t hire their results. You made an unspoken contract to *rent their behavior*. You rented what they’ll *do* in the market. That’s what brings results.

If you rented a car and it wouldn’t turn left, what would you do? You’d insist your car drive the way you wanted it to drive. After all, it’s *your* money!

In a similar manner, you have every right to rent specific behavior from your salespeople. You can require written proposals, that they initiate a pre-determined number of new business calls or that they plan and prioritize their day. Whatever legal and ethical behaviors you want, you can rent!

The critical issue, of course, is to expect behaviors that will lead to successful results. Yes, you might get some resistance at first, but employees want to do a good job. Once the new behaviors start reaping benefits, their attitudes will change even more.

You don’t need to rent the exact same behaviors from everyone. If Mary is struggling for a different reason than Martin, you can decide what behavior to rent from each of them. Just change only one or two actions at a time, so they can focus their energy until cementing the new habit.

Then — and here comes the golden moment — you communicate it. Instead of saying, “Martin,

you need to contact more prospects,” you determine exactly what you want Martin to change. It might be as simple as making three appointments before he does anything else each day.

You can also communicate the concept of renting behavior. You might think this would be threatening or controlling, but it isn't. For example, “Martin, I want you to succeed. But I don't own you, and I don't own your beliefs. I just rent your behavior. Here's what I need to rent from you.” Won't that sound reasonable to the salesperson? Maybe even liberating — no one wants to feel owned.

An essential element is to be very specific so you can spot-check and reinforce. You'll want to follow up frequently on rented behaviors, especially at first. I call this “staying for practice” like any coach would do after teaching a new technique. In our example, Martin could send you a daily e-mail after he makes his three appointments. Easy, right?

Use your coaching power to rent behavior and your salespeople will start listening and taking action. For any who refuse and who struggle with results, consider renting a different car.

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