

# Manage your career like a top sales rep

Study and emulate top sales reps to become more effective in advancing your career

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“You want me to emulate a top sales rep?” executives will ask me in disbelief, sometimes in disgust.

Yes. Improving your ability to present and convince others is important if you work with other people, period. But adopting the mindset and strategies of sales stars is even more critical for mid- and senior level executives who want to rise in their organizations, inspire, and lead effectively.

As you go up the corporate ladder, [political and influence skills become critical to success](#) – in fact, they are greater determinants to effectiveness than working hard. Because sales, let’s be honest is dedicated to actually getting things done – much more so than its more palatable cousin marketing.

Sales isn’t sexy. That’s why non-sales executives don’t study it, or apply lessons from sales to managing their careers or leading their organizations. Sales people are often seen as slimy, under-educated hacks who focus only on commissions. Because of that, [elite academics and MBA programs give even less exposure to the discipline](#). Executives therefore [self-handicap](#), [missing out on effective leadership techniques](#) that pushes them out of their comfort zone, and thus [personal growth](#).

So yes, I emphatically respond to executives: Study and emulate top sales reps to become more effective in advancing your career. Specifically, executives should focus on five core areas:

### 1) Treat Colleagues as Customers

The best way to advance one’s agenda is to help powerful stakeholders advance theirs. This means executives must move from a *competitive to a collaborative mindset*, and find ways for their product or service (or agenda) to align with the needs of those stakeholders. A great place to start is the hallmark opening question many sales representatives deploy: “How can I help you?”

One bank director I worked with was a star contributor but suffered after getting promoted. His senior-level

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