

Quad Coaching[™]



Tom Stanfill
Co-Founder & CEO



Quad Coaching: Four Strategies for the Four Types of Team Members

For much of the sales world, the notion that sales coaching is an essential ingredient in improving performance and rep retention is not up for debate. We all get it.

Coaching works but most sales managers still aren't coaching. The reason is simple: they can't find the time.

Like saving for retirement, they understand the need but struggle to execute. Their daily challenges hinder their ability to free up additional resources to invest in the future. But what if there was a simple solution?

What if you could cut your coaching time in half and get better results?

In our twenty plus years of working with leading sales organization executives and front-line managers, we've identified a simple strategy that addresses the two biggest barriers to coaching: **time and motivation**.

Coaches either struggle to find the time to develop their people or they struggle to remove the barriers to change.

Change is hard; coaching is even harder. And if your front-line leaders aren't seeing the fruits of their labor, they fall back to what they can control: the numbers.

Here's the good news → The shift required doesn't require learning a new skill set or a complex process. The only change required is for leaders to categorize their team members into four areas, or "quadrants," creating the cornerstones of our Quad Coaching methodology. It starts by measuring the number one driver of rep performance: desire.



Desire Determines Development

Who is responsible to improve sales effectiveness: you or your rep? Obviously, you are responsible for the overall results of your team, but are you responsible for a rep's willingness to improve? Absolutely not.

As a sales leader, you are responsible for helping people see the need to change. (More on that later). A rep's receptivity to change is the only requirement to coaching.

If you grasp this, it will not only shift the primary burden of change to your reps but will ultimately save you countless hours of wasted time spent trying to develop the wrong people. **Based on the average time spent coaching**, here is a truth that can give you back as much as 1 to 2 months per year and instantly boost performance:

It's not a mistake to care about everyone on your team. It's not a mistake to celebrate everyone's birthday. It's not a mistake to consistently meet with each person. But it is a mistake to coach every team member.

Effective selling requires a certain set of skills and that cannot be developed through coercion or osmosis. As a sales leader, you can leverage your position to require attendance to a coaching session, but you cannot mandate meaningful practice.

Therefore, desire, not talent or skill, is the only ticket required to enter a coaching session. The responsibility of the coach is to be prepared and available – but if the rep is unwilling to put in the effort to improve, coaching is futile. Just like a rep chasing an unqualified account, it's a complete waste of time. It also robs you of time you could be investing with reps that want to grow.





Identifying which reps to coach

You may be thinking, “How do I know if the rep is really willing to change?” This is an important question that highlights a gap in most sales coaching sessions. It’s not unlike a gap we often observe in sales meetings.

Often, sales reps fail to gain a commitment from decision-makers that would reveal their true level of interest or desire to proceed. The same holds true for a coaching session. In a coaching session, as with selling, there needs to be a commitment to a next step.

Effective coaching isn’t just a conversation – you cannot talk your way into learning a new skill.

High-performing coaches observe, diagnose, gain alignment to the gap, and end the session with a commitment to a development plan. This last, and most important, step is where desire is revealed.

Every coaching session should end with a developmental activity with an agreed-upon completion date and a specific goal. By drawing a line in the sand, and clearly defining what is required to improve, a rep’s desire is determined. Attitude is irrelevant; their true willingness is exposed by their engagement in the assignment.

The rep either did or didn’t do the development activity. Regardless of their attitude or how they responded to your feedback, desire is measured by action.

This approach opens the door to a whole new way of thinking about where to invest your time. Embracing the idea that desire determines development is just the first step to improving coaching ROI. The next step is to evaluate performance.

Four Reps, Four Strategies

Once you divide your team into two categories, those that desire to change and those that don't, there is one more axis to consider – results.

Based on the last 6 to 12 months (this number can be adjusted based on the complexity of the solution and sales cycle), is the rep at or above target or falling short of hitting their number?

When these two measures – results and desire to change – are combined, you can instantly organize your team into four categories:

Independents

Reps who are meeting or exceeding the required performance levels but show little or no desire to change.

Achievers

Reps who have a strong desire to improve and grow and are also meeting or exceeding the required performance levels.

Detractors

Reps who have substandard performance and lack the willingness to change.

Strivers

Reps who have a strong desire to improve and grow but are not meeting the required performance levels.

Now that your team is categorized into four quadrants, this sheds light on the need for four different development strategies. With this new lens in place, you can easily determine how much and what you do with your most precious resource: time.

Let's start with those who have desire and will yield the greatest ROI, the Achievers and Strivers.

Strategies for Strivers & Achievers

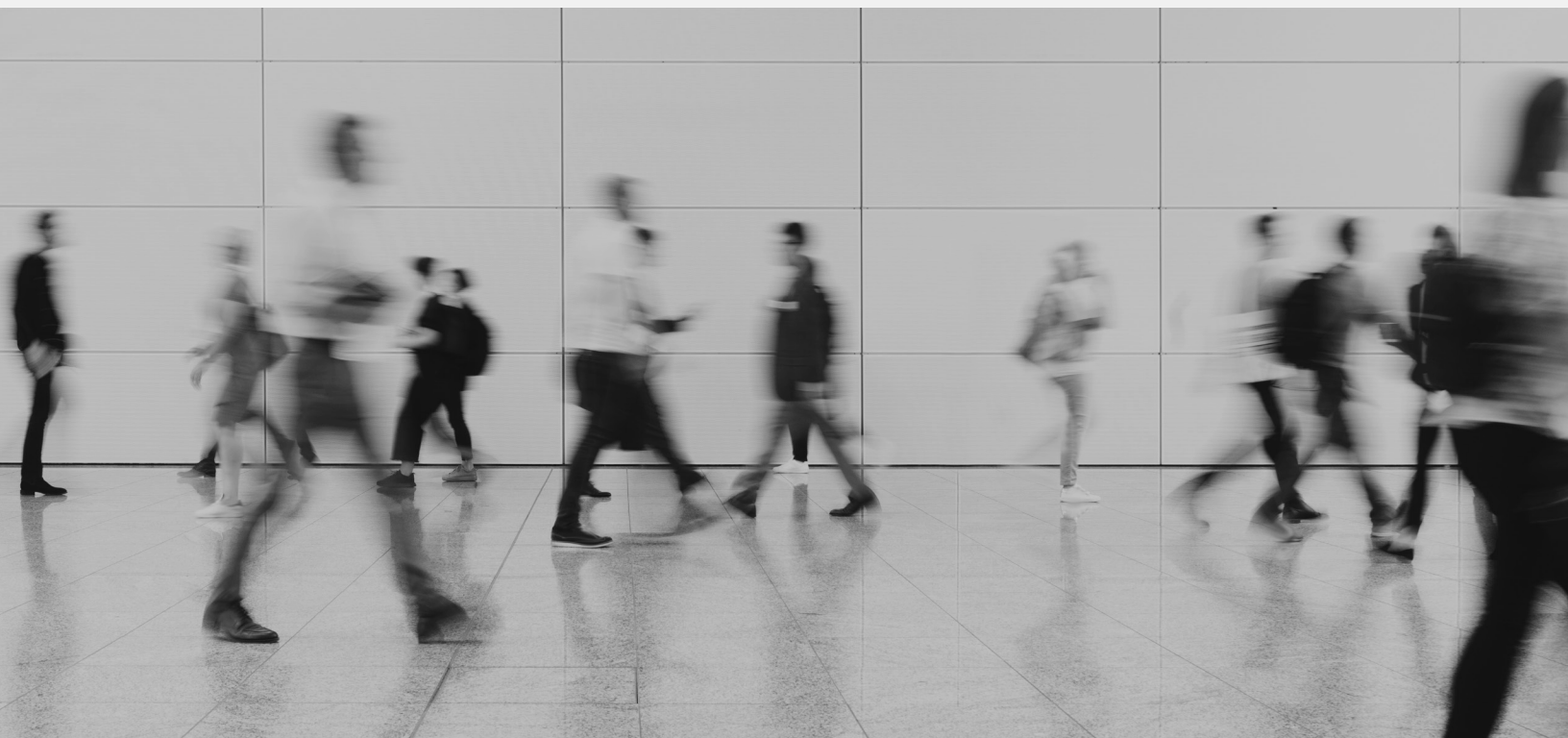
STRIVERS

Strivers are described as those reps who will do whatever it takes to “make the team.” This is where the greatest amount of coaching effort is required and where you will see the highest coaching ROI. It’s been proven that the biggest boost in performance (up to 90%) is realized when the **primary target of coaching is on the mid-tier performer.**

With Strivers, Your Focus Is To:

- Create a specific development plan to bridge the performance gap.
- Make coaching your highest priority (vs. productivity metrics).
- Ensure a safe environment to fail; remain positive, focusing on quantity not quality.
- Focus on one gap at a time to build confidence and momentum.
- Allocate the highest amount of development time.
- Communicate the timeline for required results to be achieved. Sometimes Strivers need reminding they are not being compensated for effort.

Of course, you still need to be clear about performance requirements, but a bit more grace should be granted if they are committed to the prescribed development plan.



ACHIEVERS

Second only to the Strivers, managers should invest a considerable amount of time with the Achievers. These are your rock stars who hunger to be the best. Here your strategy is to grow, challenge, and retain.

They may not need the same amount of one-on-one development, but unless you offer a path to growth, whether through yourself or another mentor, you are in jeopardy of losing an Achiever.

More specifically your strategy with Achievers is to:

- Determine the support needed to challenge and help them reach the next level.
- Place a higher priority on collaboration when coaching.
- Find additional mentors to challenge them and help them reach the next level.
- Prioritize development time, second only to time spent with the Striver.

If we coach the Strivers and Achievers, what is the most effective approach when working with those who lack the willingness to change, i.e., the Independents and Detractors? It starts with understanding the role that emotions play in addressing the barriers to change.





Emotional Barriers to Change & the Three P's

As a leader, have you ever looked across the table and thought, “This is so obvious. Why are you fighting me on this? What I’m recommending is clearly the best path forward.”

We scratch our heads at the push-back from reps. The truth is, most resistance to coaching is not logical, it’s emotional. You are faced with a receptivity problem, not a knowledge problem. This distinction is critical. When someone is emotionally resistant to change, the more you try to persuade them, the more closed they become. Your best argument inspires their best defense. A reasonable discussion turns into a boxing match of wits, where the end game has little to do with discovering the truth.

To influence the emotionally closed rep, a shift needs to occur. We need to resist the strong instinct to improve the quality of our argument and shift our focus to enhancing their receptivity to my message. In other words, first focus on creating fertile soil before planting your seed of truth.

So how do you create fertile soil? The answer is found by looking at the three P’s – Priority, Pressure & Point of View.

PRIORITY

Every time you sit down with a rep, it's either about your goals or it's about their goals. It's either about getting the seller to do what you want them to do or figuring out how you can help them get what they want.

Being aware of this is essential to removing the barrier to change, for one simple reason: no one is motivated by your goals.

Motivation is always a “wanting problem” and not a “discipline problem.” The first step to motivating the Independents and Detractors is to find out what they want. If your goals are the priority, you will focus on what you want and not what they want.

The key is, before every meeting or coaching session, to stop and decide to make the rep's goals your number one priority. Once the meeting starts, make your motive, to serve, known.

This should instantly change the temperature in the room. This approach not only changes their perception of you, but it's your best opportunity to help them discover how embracing your recommendation will help them get what they want.

Does this prohibit you from helping them find another job if what they want does not align with the responsibilities of their current role? Absolutely not. If there is an obvious fork in the road, the decision is clear for both parties. If results are below the line, they either need to change roles or change goals.

PRESSURE

The second driver to receptivity is pressure. It's our instinct as humans to do everything in our power to maintain control. We crave freedom.

When our freedom to choose is in jeopardy, our instinct is to rebel. And because of our position of authority, there is a perceived pressure to fall in line. Most reps buck against the perception that they are under your command. The best strategy? Eliminate pressure. Instead of playing tug of war, **Drop the Rope®**.

If you rely on pressure to influence, it's not influence.

Instead, communicate that results are nonnegotiable, but how they get there is. Control over our team is just an illusion. Therefore, by relinquishing the control you never had anyway, and “dropping the rope,” you trade the fantasy for the opportunity to influence.

The fight for control is replaced with a collaborative coaching session. If they fail to see the wisdom of your recommendation, if and when their approach fails, by dropping the rope, they will be far more likely to heed your advice in the future.

Remember that you are in control of the destination (i.e., required results); the best way to be embraced as a guide is to Drop the Rope® and allow them to feel the full weight of ownership.



POINT OF VIEW

The last key to removing the emotional barrier to change is to validate their point of view. Here is the simple truth when faced with a receptivity problem: people will not listen to your point of view until you first validate theirs.

The key word is “validate.” This requires more than listening. The team member needs to believe you genuinely understand and care about their point of view. You may not agree, but what’s required is an “oh” moment.

For example, “Oh, I see why you think the company is to blame for your lack of results. That makes sense.”

Until they respond with “Exactly,” your point about other reps, faced with the same reality are still managing to hit their number, will fall on deaf ears. You can’t ask them to be receptive to your point of view if you aren’t open to theirs. As leaders, we need to humble ourselves and role model the behavior we desire.

Will this always work? No, but remember, relationships determine influence. If you demonstrate that you are for them, communicate that it’s not “your way or the highway,” and convey that you want to understand their point of view, it creates fertile soil for receiving the seed of truth.

With that foundation, let’s look more specifically at the best strategies for working with the Independents and the Detractors.

Strategies for Independents & Detractors

INDEPENDENTS

Since Independents are unwilling to follow a development plan, very little time is required. They are meeting their performance requirements and lack interest in changing what they feel works. Here, your focus shifts from “developing” (coaching) to “leading,” igniting the spark of desire to achieve a higher level of performance.

To that end, here are a few ideas on how to work with Independents:

- Determine how the status quo will eventually fail to keep them above the line.
- Discover and validate their perspective on why change isn't required to remain above the line.
- Identify a personal or professional goal that would require change.
- Invest in the relationship – demonstrate that your relationship isn't dependent on their performance.
- Allocate very little development time.

Remember, your approach is to clearly communicate your desire to work with them. But until they exhibit a willingness to make the investment, why practice a sport they don't want to play?

Additionally, by focusing on the reps who are motivated to grow (Strivers and Achievers), you may be able to raise the average level of performance for the entire team, upping the minimum acceptable level of performance for everyone. And by “raising the bar,” more will be required of the Independent to stay afloat.

It's like the saying, “a rising tide lifts all boats.”



DETRACTORS

This puzzling rep category is probably the greatest drain on a manager's time and emotions. Therefore, the time invested in Detractors should be minimal. Like Independents, your strategy is not to roll up your sleeves and work on skills, but to focus on the barriers to change (leading versus coaching).

Secondly, it is important to be clear about the required level of performance (managing). We simply communicate what needs to be achieved, the specific time frame, and the clear consequences if results don't rise to an acceptable level. Again, no coaching is offered until initiated by the rep.

With Detractors, your strategy should be to:

- Break through denial and determine barrier(s) to change.
- Communicate a time frame to achieve desired results and consequences if results aren't achieved.
- Discover and validate their perspective on why they are not hitting their number (i.e., their barrier to change).
- Demonstrate that you are unwilling to coach until they complete the development assignment – don't engage in debates.
- Invest in the relationship – demonstrate that your relationship isn't dependent on their performance.
- Invest minimal time until desire to change is demonstrated - the lowest commitment of time.

It is important to note that when a manager shifts the responsibility of development to the rep and the rep feels the full weight of ownership, that alone may spark the desire to change. When the tug of war ends and the manager Drops the Rope®, the rep is left with a clear decision – to improve or admit they are unwilling to change.

Faced with that realization, many will make the right decision. But until the rep demonstrates the desire to improve, don't allow Detractors to rob you of the opportunity to invest in reps that are hungry for your attention.



Aren't You Playing Favorites?

Coaches who take this approach are often accused of inequitable treatment by reps as well as their superiors. The response is simple. The decision not to work together was made by the rep. Make it clear that you are more than willing to work together to improve performance.

Secondly, you should still be willing to meet with all reps on a regular basis. Again, you just have a different focus with each. Instead of playing the role of coach, your role is to manage and lead, communicate the outcomes that need to be achieved, and double down on your efforts to ignite the desire to change. High-performing coaches treat everyone equally, but aware they need to adjust their strategy to the needs of the individual members initiated by the rep.



The Benefits of Quad Coaching

The real question is this: how much does this approach improve performance? The simple answer: 30%.the rep.

By shifting the time spent on reps who aren't willing to change and adding just over an hour a week to coaching Strivers and Achievers, you can see an increase in results by as much as 30%. Like taking a pill that reduces cholesterol, it's really that easy.

This simple approach will also instantly boost motivation. Having a frank conversation with your Independents and Detractors about their lack of desire can sometimes be all that's needed to ignite desire. If not, at a minimum, you uncover the barrier to change, allowing you to spend time where needed.

If interested in assessing your team and learning more about Quad Coaching, download this Quad Coaching Assessment or talk to us about a 3-hour, **virtual Quad Coaching session** for your leadership team.





Transform Your Team with the QuadCoaching™ Micro-Workshop

The results speak for themselves

22x

Increase in number of meetings

365%

Higher response and click-through rates

44%

Average increase in rep performance

1.5

Months saved per year

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Assess needs, customize, align leadership.

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Embrace change through interactive learning.

Transform

Master skills with digital tools and coaching.

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