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SALES FORCE MANAGEMENT: A CONSIDERABLE ASPECT OF MARKETING MANAGEMENT

DR. RUPINDER SINGH

HEAD

PG DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE & MANAGEMENT

TRAISHATABDI GGS KHALSA COLLEGE

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ABSTRACT

Every organization is concerned with the efficient management of its finance, purchase, production, marketing and human resources. Sale force management is one of the essential parts of marketing management. An efficient sales force staff helps the management in achieving its market share, consumer satisfaction, healthy competition, and increased profits. Companies are spending lot of funds on advertisements and other promotional actions but still the sales personnel are doing lot for achieving the management targets. This paper considers the elements of sales force management and ways to improve the sales force management.

KEYWORDS

sales force management, recruitment, selection, and training.

INTRODUCTION

Marketing is one of the functional areas of management which needs special attention in the current era of global competitive business environment. Sales Force Management is a part of marketing management. The sales force is the main player behind the implementation of marketing strategies and plans. An active sales force in any form, may it be manager or sales representative, fulfills the marketing needs of a company. Companies now days are focusing specially on the consumers. For the purpose they are doing numerous promotional events like hi-fi advertisements. Even after those efforts companies are engaging better sales representatives, who profess the qualities of product to the prospective customers' viz. distributors, retailers or consumers. So we can say they are the backbone of the company's success.

SALES FORCE MANAGEMENT

Sales Force Management may be defined as an art of planning, coordinating, controlling and directing the sales force. It includes the ways to get effective results through proper recruitment, training, supervision, motivation, evaluation of sales personnel.

ELEMENTS OF SALES FORCE MANAGEMENT

- ❖ **Sales force structure:** This includes the planning, strategy making and placement of sales personnel. That is to draw a design which clearly explains duties, responsibilities, the objectives, targets, strategies etc. to every person in sales force. This will help the management in estimation of the type and number of persons required for sales.
- ❖ **Recruitment and selection:** Every concern wants to be the market leader. This is possible only if two things viz. the quality of product and the efficiency of sales department is at the peak. So the best recruitment and selection helps the management to achieve its sales targets with ease.
- ❖ **Training and development:** Training and developments keeps the sales personnel up to date. Technological changes open the doors for new entrants in the business which may lead to higher level of competition. So in order to beat that, the existing staff in sales must be provided with new skills.
- ❖ **Supervision, coordination and feedback:** Sales job is normally a target based job and the overall efficiency of the concern is mainly dependent on the efficiency of sales force and quality of the product. So the sales force must be supervised properly which includes clear cut directions through a good communication system for instance targets and ways to achieve those. Coordination on the other hand is also an important function of management which is too needed amongst the sales personnel. A coordinated sales team will easily achieve the targets. Feedback of the task be provided by each and every person in sales department so as to make review of marketing plan, strategies etc. if necessary.
- ❖ **Performance evaluation:** As discussed earlier sale force is the back bone of every concern and with the disturbed back bone no concern can work efficiently. Timely evaluation of the workforce be made so that inefficient person may be removed and efficient one be promoted.
- ❖ **Motivation:** Unexpected can be achieved if the concerned persons are motivated properly. Similarly, in the sales force as the persons are more in stress to achieve targets they need motivation from superiors at every level. Depending upon the circumstances the motivation may be monetary and/or nonmonetary.
- ❖ **Compensation:** Compensation is the amount paid by the management to the sales persons. Remuneration to be paid to sales force is normally based on their performance and bargaining.

SUGGESTIONS TO IMPROVE SALES FORCE MANAGEMENT

Following are certain suggestions which may help the management in managing sales force:

- **Strategic planning:** Since the sales personal have to face the threat of competitors, the taste and preference of consumers, technological advancements so it is important for management to continuously evaluate its production and marketing strategies and make them viable for the current prevailing situations. Sales personnel are not only the implementer of the strategy rather they may also be used as the data provider regarding the market demand, consumer preferences, new technological developments etc.
- **Viable Structure:** Structure is the model on which the sales assignment is fixed. This task should not be done arbitrarily rather experts may be engaged to identify the need of type of sales personnel based on the targets, competition etc. Positions in the department must be rationally defined. Viable structure does not permit over staffing. The requirements viz. qualification, experience, type of responsibilities, hierarchy of reporting and accountability, for each and every position must be clearly defined.
- **Scientific recruitment and selection:** Faulty recruitment and selection may pose problems for the concern. Management should follow scientific way of recruitment and selection. Nepotism, corruption etc. should be discouraged and qualifications and experience be encouraged in real sense.
- **Training essentials:** Training is an essential element for updating the staff. The management should verify the continuous need of training to the sales staff. Trained personnel will be able to convince the perspective customer easily by explaining the characteristics of their product and by making a comparison with their competitor's product, as they know minute details about the company and competitor's product(s). The trained and experienced sales staff may further be used to train the fresher ones as they are having the firsthand experience of market.
- **Relevant budget:** A concern can get the benefits as expected if it has relevant budget to perform the above said things. Nothing can be done if concern does not allot required budget for strategic planning, recruitment, selection, motivation etc. The management should make arrangements for sufficient funds for efficient staff.
- **Focus on customer needs:** The management should always have focus on fulfillment of customer needs so as to remain in the market. Since sales persons are the link between the concern and consumers they may make the management aware about the needs and tastes of consumers.

- **Right choice of distribution channels:** Since the sales force personnel are directly in touch with the customer they may suggest the management for adopting right type of distribution channels which in turn may lead to reduction in distribution cost and that benefit may directly be given to the consumers in order to have cost leadership.
- **Review and feedback:** The organizations do number of activities to increase or maintain their sales. These activities become useless if the implications of these are not reported. The sales force personnel must be trained to have such quality to understand the market responses and to report immediately. Timely feedback and review of any strategy or policy may lead to increase the market share of the company.
- **Periodically assessment of the motivational needs:** Every person in sales force works for the organization only if his efforts are properly recognized. If the personnel are made clear about the opportunities ahead after successful completion of the task given, then they will obviously work in full swing. It is suggested that the motivational needs of the sales force be assessed periodically so that they may have a sense of belongingness and work more efficiently to achieve the desired targets.
- **Proper remuneration to the sales force personnel:** Targets given to the sales force must be linked with the reward. Whosoever completes the target must be rewarded in proportion to his work. This will lead the others to work more for the organization to achieve targets in time or even before time. Remuneration may be fixed for all to some extent and variable after that. For instance, the sales persons may be given fixed salary for routine tasks and further commission, percentage on profit or whatsoever the name it may consider, on the sales affected over and above the targets. This allurements will enhance the efficiency of the personnel and they will work more in the interest of organisation.
- **Unbiased evaluation of the sales force:** If the management is able to do unbiased evaluation of the performance of sales force then it can easily differentiate between efficient and inefficient persons. Persons who are lethargic, inefficient, indecisive, corrupt, unfaithful and untrustworthy must be fired. Whereas the person who are selfless, hard worker, efficient, ethical decision maker, honest and loyal must be promoted. This will provide a moral check over all of the employees and they will try to work as desired.

CONCLUSION

The efficiency of marketing department is quite dependent on effective sales force management. If the company is able to manage its sales force it can easily achieve its targets. The outcome of sales force is related to its management. As discussed earlier a satisfied, motivated, qualified, experienced and trained sales force personnel is always loyal, selfless and works for the achievement of the targets assigned to him, whereas a lethargic, inefficient, unfaithful and corrupt person proves to be a hazard for company's success. In order to get maximum possible out of the sales force, they may be managed in such a way that they feel proud to be the part of the company. So we can conclude that sales force management is a considerable aspect of marketing management which must not be ignored. Rather a due attention must be provided to this.

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