

LESSONS LEARNED | BY GERSON ROSENBLOOM

# The Just-Hired Hump

When I owned my own business, I was better than most at keeping my sales staff informed and up to date. I used a program called “Sales Aerobics” to keep them constantly polished at their chosen vocation, through role playing and other proven sales training techniques. They were exposed to this training on a daily basis, so those who stuck around long term got themselves a pretty good education.



**Don't squander your resources. Training new hires properly is key**

The problem I had was getting people over the hump after they were first hired.

I had every excuse for being so lax in my initial training of new hires. I certainly did not have the time in my busy days to do the training myself. My veterans — those most likely to help do the training — were too valuable to lose from the sales floor. What should I do, hire a training manager? Who can afford that? Use NAMM University or other outside sources? I couldn't. I needed to get a quick return on this new hire, and get them on the floor earning their way.

So I watched people come and go, blaming them for not trying hard enough or interviewing beyond their talents. The reality was that I was squandering resources. I was letting potentially really good people slip away, and I was probably causing some who stayed to under-perform.

## SWEET SUCCESS

Today, I work for Sweetwater, and they've got training down to a science. Before anyone in sales ever has the opportunity to deal with the public, they go through an intensive 13-week, 8-hours-per-day training session. They learn the company philosophies, the products they're selling, sales techniques, and a full curriculum that's the equivalent of a master's level course. Let me tell you, these people are prepared by the time they graduate. And they only graduate if they're able to prove that they know their stuff. Sweetwater University graduates are sales superstars. And if you've followed Sweetwater's meteoric growth, you already know the results.

Most of us mere mortals don't have the resources to do what Sweetwater does. But simply willing our new hires to succeed clearly doesn't work either.

In hindsight, I would handle new hires a whole lot differently. For starters, sit down and create a set of non-negotiable skills that my new hires must possess before they “graduate.” Having this roadmap assures that essential knowledge and skills get taught.

Knowing the expense of having someone new fail, I'd personally devote an hour or a day — probably before normal business hours — and assign staff members specific topics to teach during the day. While they're in “teacher mode,” that would become their primary responsibility. If they're charged with doing this in one-hour blocks, it would be entirely feasible that they could be considered unavailable for anything else during that time. I'd schedule manufacturers' reps, use all available NAMM tools, and invest in outside resources. Running a small business makes it hard to find the time to do training properly. But your new employee and your business deserve no less. **MI**

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